The former kingdom of the Wodeyars is a grand, historic city that surprises you with its interesting regal heritage.

**WHY GO?**
It’s probably the most vibrant city in South India, with magnificent monuments, popular markets and a history of yoga and ayurveda. Mysore’s economy is booming, too, with sandalwood, silk and incense production putting it on the map.

**WHAT IS THERE TO DO?**
With so many things to do in Mysore, it won’t be surprising if you lose count. There are more than enough sights, including the Rail Museum, St Philomena’s Cathedral, the Chamundi Hill and, best of all, the majestic Mysore Palace. The sweet and savoury dishes here are terrific, such as Mysore pak, a sweet delicacy that’ll have you coming back for more.

**Sleep**
While the Parklane Hotel’s exterior is a little utilitarian, its rooms are extremely comfortable, especially given the low price. It’s also very conveniently located next to the Mysore Palace (00-91-821-4003500; parklanemysore.com, parklanemysore@yahoo.com; 2720, Harsha Rd; from ₹1,800).

The Royal Inn is ideally located, close to the city’s major sights. It is an efficient business hotel with conference facilities (00-91-821-2415127; royalinn-mysore.com, info@royalinn-mysore.com; 435, KRS Rd, Metagalli; from ₹2,200).

The Green Hotel is possibly Mysore’s quirkiest. Rooms are named and designed along themes like Bollywood, Small Bollywood, Marigold and Writing (00-91-821-4255000; greenhotelindia.com, thegreenhotel@airtelmail.in; Chittaranjan Palace, 2270, Vinobha Rd, Jayalakshmiipuram; from ₹3,250).

The world-class Windflower Spa and Resort is a rare, Bali-style hotel, known for its stylish rooms and quality fine-dining restaurant (reservations: 00-91-80-41142408; thewindflower.com, reservations@thewindflower.com; Maharanapratap Rd, Nazarbad; from ₹5,100 with breakfast).

Originally built as a residence for British visitors of the Maharaja in 1920, the Royal Orchid Metropole is a four-star hotel showcasing the heritage of this city (00-91-821-4255566; royalorchidhotels.com, rooms@royalorchidhotels.com; No 5 Jhansi Lakshmibai Rd; from ₹5,700).

**See & do**

**BEST FOR PALACES**
The royal Mysore Palace or Maharaja’s Palace has luxurious interiors, with frescoes and some of Raja Ravi Varma’s paintings. Photography is prohibited (00-91-821-2421051; mysorepalace.gov.in; 10am – 5.30pm daily; ₹40 adult, child below 10 free).

**BEST FOR MUSEUMS**
The Rail Museum exhibits the ‘Rail Story’, which tells of how the royals rode the railways in the past. The main attraction is the Maharani’s saloon, built in 1899 (KRS Rd; 9.30am – 6.30pm Tues – Sun; ₹5 adult, ₹2 child).

**BEST FOR TEMPLES**
Located at the top of Chamundi Hill at an altitude of 1,062m, Shri Chamundeswari Temple was named after the Goddess Chamundeswari. It provides a great view of the city below. This temple has a gigantic 40m-high gateway or gopuram (00-91-821-2590027; mysorechamundi-temple.com; 7.30am – 2pm, 3.30pm – 6pm, 7.30pm – 9pm).

**BEST FOR CHURCHES**
St Philomena’s Cathedral, an example of Neo-Gothic architecture, can be easily recognised by its exquisite stained-glass windows (00-91-821-2563148; St Philomena St; 5am – 6pm, English mass 7pm; free).

**BEST FOR ART GALLERIES**
Located in the Jaganmohan Palace, Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery houses some rare musical instruments and traditional Mysore gold-leaf paintings (00-91-821-2423693; Jaganmohan Palace Rd; 8.30am – 5pm; ₹20 adult, ₹10 child).
MINI GUIDE
Mysore, Karnataka

Getting around

Eat & drink
The sweet shop Bombay Tiffany is great for snacks and sweets, especially the local delicacy, melt-in-your-mouth Mysore pak, made of ghee, sugar and besan, golden-yellow in colour and displayed as compressed bricks (Sayyaji Rao Rd; 7.30am – 10pm, Mysore pak ₹200/ kg).

Located on the Bangalore-Mysore highway, Kamat Lokaruchi serves authentic Karnataka vegetarian snacks, such as the chilli bajji, the neer dosa and the maddur vada, all delightfully deep-fried (00-91-9008555933; Janupada Loka, Archakrahalli, Ramanagara, Bangalore – Mysore highway; maddur vada ₹20).

The unassuming restaurant at the Parklane Hotel offers a surprising variety of dishes spanning Indian, continental, Italian, Mexican and Chinese cuisine. Weekends are a real treat with barbeque nights (00-91-821-2430400; parklanemysore.com; 2270, Sri Harsha Rd, mains from ₹40).

Try the excellent South Indian fare at Kamat Lokaruchi

You’ll find classic Andhra-style food at Hotel RRR, where one of the best dishes is the hot veg thali, served on a banana leaf. Some good non-vegetarian options are also available (00-91-821-2441979; Gandhi Square; 11am – 11pm, mains from ₹40).

The intriguing cane-themed multi-cuisine restaurant at Pai Vista, Gufha, offers brilliant food and fast service but the main attraction here is the ambience, which is reminiscent of an Indiana Jones film (00-91-9945615420; paihotels.com; 35/A Bangalore-Nilgiri Rd).

Side trip
Situated on one of the three islands of the Cauvery River, the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary is a great place for bird watching (19km north of Mysore). The best time to see the storks, spoonbills, cormorants, egrets and ibises is either early in the morning or late afternoon on a boat ride. Crocodiles, pelicans, hornbills and other birds and animals can also be found here. Keep your ears open for the chirping of the many birds flying around. There is also a restaurant located within the premises of the park. Be sure to pack your binoculars if you plan on visiting, and wear earth-coloured clothes that will help you blend in with your surroundings (00-91-821-2481159; 8.30am – 6pm; entry ₹25, boat ride ₹100).

Essentials
GETTING THERE
The nearest airport is in Bangalore. Most airlines fly to Bangalore from all major metros. Minimum return fares start at ₹ 4,000. Travelling by road on the Bangalore-Mysore highway is a convenient way to get to Mysore (140km south-west of Bangalore), and should take up to three hours.

THE COST

DIFFICULTY OF TRAVEL

WHEN TO GO
Mysore is at its best around the festival of Dussehra (September – October), when the Mysore Palace is completely illuminated and the city itself becomes a carnival with concerts, dance performances and cultural events from all over India.

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