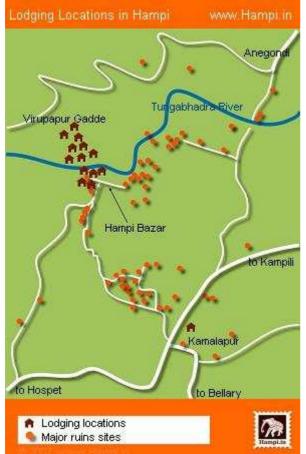
Hampi, as it is popularly known today was the medieval capital of the Hindu empire Vijayanagara (the City of Victory). Hampi in the Karnataka state of India is listed as one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Hampi is charismatic even in its ruined state. It attracts thousands of tourists and pilgrims every year. Vast stretches of boulder-strewn hills make the backdrop of Hampi unique.

Dotted around the hills and valleys are 500 plus monuments. Among them are beautiful temples, basement of palaces, remains of aquatic structures, ancient market streets, royal pavilions, bastions, royal platforms, treasury buildings..., the list is practically endless. Hampi is a backpackers' paradise, the same way the pilgrims' delight.





Hotels and Lodges in Hampi

- Hotels in Hospet Huts & guesthouses in Virupapur Gadde
- Hotels in Kamalapura Guesthouses in Hampi

And finally you've arrived at Hampi. In all probability you've taken that 30 minutes local bus from Hospet to Hampi. Just get out of the tiny Hampi bus stand and walk towards that soaring temple tower located at a distance (less than ½ Kilometers or about 3 furlongs) west of the bus stand. You would have gone through a wide but crowded street, reached the foot of the soaring temple tower, then seen a white & maroon stripped temple tank next to it & finally reached a stepped bathing 'ghat' by the riverside. It might've taken about 15-20 minutes to reach the riverside from the bus stand. Well. You've just walked through the middle of the main lodging scene in Hampi.

The street you've just passed through is the Hampi Bazaar; the large tower you've seen is of the Virupaksha Temple; the striped tank is the Manmantha Tank; and the stepped bath spot by the river side is from where you can catch a coracle ferry to the other side. Let's call this walk your first expedition in Hampi! Regarding Hampi's lodging locations a visitor has three options, in fact four, if you are prepared to cross the river by a coracle.

The first location is the Hospet town, about 15 kilometers from Hampi. This is where those of who can't forego the regular luxuries of a hotel would stay. In this area luxury means nononsense comfy hotel rooms one typically find in a small town.

Also it is to Hospet to which the tourists overflow when lodges at Hampi hang the houseful sign during the peak seasons. Most of the hotels and lodges in Hospet are located between the main bus station and the railway station. This is a small town and can be practically walked across, though it means a bit longer walk.

On the other hand the negative point of choosing Hospet as your base is its distance from Hampi. You need to travel about 12 kilometers to reach Hampi from your base in Hospet. If you are keen on an early morning stroll at the ruins or to watch the sunrise from the hilltop, Hospet is not your right base.

Also Hospet does not have that eerie charm that Hampi has. The second cluster of lodges, though not many, is located at Kamalapura about 3 kilometers from Hampi. The state run three star hotel (Hotel Mayura Bhuvaneswari) is located in this area

A typical Hampi guesthouses lane

The third and probably the most popular & largest of all lodging scenario is located near the Hampi bus stand, the scene explained at the very beginning. This stretches from the Hampi bus stand to the riverside nearby and even beyond. They are basically located on either side of the main road facing the Virupaksha Temple, whose tall tower you can notice from far. The narrow alleys (you and a cow many not be able to cross at the same time despite, the best cooperation from you both) are packed with guesthouses. The guesthouses are in fact simple houses with the glorified 'gust house' title glued to it. The households use it as their homes and the couple of extra rooms are rented to the tourists. Usually the family and the guests use the same public space in a house like the dining hall and at times even the bathroom. So if you are claustrophobic or a lot particular about privacy or sensitive about having non-shared bathrooms, it's better to explore one of the homes before you check in.

A hotel sign board with menu on display!

With a few variations here and there, most of these are very basic backpacker type accommodations. That is, a tiny room with a metal cot and bedding, a mosquito net, fan and an attached or common bathroom completes the specifications. The bucket of hot water supplied for shower (most of the guesthouses have solar water heater), TV in the room and the much touted rooftop restaurants (because little space left on the ground to serve dinner and the roof comes handy) are definite bonuses. The rent for these ranges from Rs100 to Rs300. During the peak seasons, the rent typically doubles, faithfully following the supply-demand theory.

The fourth refuge of the backpackers is at the other side of the river called Virupapur Gadde. You've to cross the river to the north bank by a coracle. This area too has a number of guesthouse type accommodations explained before. Apart from the typical guesthouse type accommodations, you can look for some kind of huts to stay. The rates are comparable with the guesthouses. Some of the huts are provided with attached bathrooms and commands a small extra premium. Most of the accommodations are located adjacent to one another and practically you can walk from one end to the other to explore a bit before deciding on one. Generally the guesthouses & lodges here are on the edges of paddy fields, banana plantations or overlooking the boulder hills.

This is also the location for the few resort type of accommodations at Hampi. That's the ones with some fancy facilities like a swimming pool.

The ferry point is next to the Virupaksha temple where the holly bath (the stepped bathing spot) is also located by the riverbank. Both the plus and minus of staying at Virupapurgadde is its relative isolation. Each time, to reach the main ruins site and to go back to your lodge, you'll have to cross the river. Some times this is a bit hectic affair due to overcrowding at the ferry.

Virupapur Gadde area with the 'hut scene' in adistance

The funniest and sometimes greatly helpful accommodation is the Rs50 per person sleeping space available on rent. That is what typically happens when Hampi lodges bust at its seams during the peak seasons. The spaces offered on rent are typically a terrace or verandah or whatever can be made as a 6 feet by 3 feet kingdom to sleep on. Bring your own sleeping bag or bedspreads or whatever. It's not unusual for the household of the guesthouses to demonstrate to you how to sleep on such cramped space. No, they don't fancy sleeping on the roofless terrace; their bedroom has just fetched them the best rent the season has even seen.

Though advanced booking is advisable, especially for the peak season, gatecrashing in style is the check-in rule in town. You can practically walk into a guesthouse and check yourself if it is okay for you. Do it with a few places to get a hang of the options available before you finalize. This is an acceptable norm.

The email printed on their business card is mostly a fashion statement. Most of the small guesthouse owners usually don't check their emails regularly, that is if their email account is still alive. Calling over phone to enquire is essential if you are not getting a response after a couple of days. Call again to reconfirm your reservation after a few days or weeks. It may sound strange, but it is worth the effort.

The list of guesthouses provided here (for that matter the list in any of the guidebooks) is by no means a complete list of options or a recommendation. Also they are in no order of rating. At times it gives unfair advantage to the listed guesthouses over the unlisted ones; despite fact that the non-listed ones are no less good than the listed ones. The list is a representative sample and for obvious reasons it's not possible to publish a complete list. In most cases, a few meters away from the listed ones here, there exist another guesthouses offering comparable services.

Hotels in Hospet

Hotel Malligi - High end / JN Road, Off Hampi Road, Hospet

By far the luxurious hotel in the vicinity of Hampi. Located in the heart of Hospet Town. Internet facility, Restaurant, Swimming pool, Bar. Travel Desk...

Hotel Priyadarshani - Mid-range / Station Road, Hospet.

Hotel Priyadarshini is located on the main road that connects Hospet Railway station and the Bus stand, at few minutes walking distance from either. A/C and Non-A/C rooms. Attached restaurant.

Shanbhag Towers International - Mid-range / College Road, Hospte.

Attached Restaurant, Bar, A/C and Non-A/C rooms in the midrange tariffs

Hotels in Kamalapura

Hotel Mayura Bhuvaneswari - Mid-range / Kamalapur, Hampi

A hotel run by the state tourism promotion agency (KSTDC). The only three strar rated hotel in Hampi.

Guesthouses & Huts in Virupapur Gadde (the area also known as 'the other side of the river' or the 'hippy area'!)

Vijayanagar Hotel - Budget type

Huts & Rooms. Attached restaurant. Just cross the river from the Virupaksha Temple ferry and climb the ramp on the river side , you can spot Vijayanagar Hotel on your right.

Gautham Guest House - Budget type

Huts & Rooms. After climbing the ramp at the Virupapur ferry point, take the load towards the west. In a few minutes walk you can spot Gautham Guest House.

Mowgli Guest House - Budget type

Huts & Rooms. Again a popular guesthouse among the backpackers, located just after the Gautham Gust House.

Shanthi Guest House - Budget type

Huts & Rooms. About 5 minutes walk from the Virupapur Gadde ferry point. After the ramp by the riverside, take the left road that goes along a series of guesthouse. On the left you can spot the arch of Shanthi Guest House. Attached restaurant

Shree Laxmi Golden Beach Resort - Mid-range

Cottages, Rooms (AC & non-AC).Restaurant. This in fact a bit 'upscale' accommodation in the otherwise budget type accommodations dotted around this area.

Uma Shankar - Budget type

Huts & Rooms. Close to the Gautham Guest House

Hema Guesthouse - Budget type

Huts & Cottages. This again located on the fringes of the banana and rice fields. Ask for the direction just after crossing the river. The thatched huts with shared bath rooms are still cheaper. A restaurant is attached with the guesthouse.

Hampi Boulders - High end / Narayanpet

Luxury Cottages. 'Hampi Boulders' is located a bit off from the other clusters of accommodation in this area. After crossing the river at Virupapur Gadde, take an auto-rickshaw from the main road. This resort is roughly 5 kilometers (3 miles) west of the ferry point.

Guesthouses in Hampi

Vishnu Guest House - Budget type / Hampi Bazaar area

A row of small rooms with attached bathrooms. A solar powered community hot water tap. Take the lane just adjacent to the Tourist Info Office (close to Virupaksha Temple) in Hampi bazaar area.

Vikki Guest House - Budget type / Hampi Bazaar area

Rented rooms in a home. Located just behind the Tourist Info Office in the Hampi Bazaar area.

Rama Guest House - Budget type / Hampi bus stand area

Compact simple rooms. Attached restaurant. Located between the Virupakska Temple and the river side. Take the road that goes towards the sacred bath (Ghat) and you can spot the Rama Guest House on this road, by the lane goes along the Shanthi Guest House.

Gopi Guesthouse - Budget type / Hampi bus stand area

Compact simple rooms. Near Virupaksha Temple . Somewhat behind the Shanthi Guesthouse. Rooftop restaurant offers a nice view of the Virupaksha temple tower.

Rahul Guest House - Budget type / Hampi bus stand area

Compact rooms. Just across the Hampi bus stand. You can spot the sign board of Rahul bus stand if you look across the road the moment you get down from the local bus. A café is attached.

Padma Guest House - Budget type / Hampi bus stand area

Rented rooms in a home. Located just behind the Rahul Guest House. From the Hampi bus stand cross the road and walk into the lane opposite to the bus stand. On your left you can spot this house with the signboard.

Ranjana Guest House - Budget type / Hampi bus stand area

Rented rooms in a home. Located just next to Padma Guest House. From the Hampi bus stand cross the road and walk into the lane opposite to the bus stand.

Kiran Guest House - Budget type / East of Hampi village

Rented rooms in a home. Kiran Guest House is located about 150 meters (500 feet) behind the Tourist Info Office at Hampi Bazaar. Take the narrow lane by the side Tourist Info Office, by the end of the lane, close to the banana fields you can spot the guest house (ask for directions locally). A roof top restaurant is attached to the guesthouse.

Netra Guesthouse - Budget type / East of Hampi village

Almost near the Kiran guesthouse by the side of banana fields. A small shrine next to it is a landmark to locate this guesthouse

Sudha Guesthouse - Budget type / East of Hampi village

Sudha Guesthouse also is located about 150 meters (500 feet) behind the Tourist Info Office at Hampi Bazaar. The attached rooftop restaurant offers great view of riverside and the banana fields.

Bicycle and moped rentals

Hire a bicycle or moped or scooter at Hampi. This is one of the best means to explore Hampi ruins. Mopeds & Scooters obviously can cover the longer stretches faster than bicycle, but exploring the sites using a bicycle has its own charm & fun. The bicycles available for rental in Hampi are generally gearless, so you may find the uphills (though there are the same amount of downhills too!) a bit tiresome, if not impossible.

So first makeup your mind and decide if you would go for a moped/scooter or game for the bicycle ride.

Most of the two-wheeler rental shops are located around the Hampi Bazaar area, some of them in Kamalapura and a few in Hospet town too. The ones at Hampi Bazaar & Kamalapura are the convenient for you if you are staying at Hampi.

If you are operating from Hospet (about 12km/ 8 miles from Hampi) and prefer a ride by yourself all the way to Hampi and a few side trips on the way, hire it from Hospet town itself. Just enquire at the hotel/lodge where you are staying for help and reference to get a two-wheeler on rent.

A typical trail in Hampi ruins

Using a two-wheeler in Hampi has a few advantages over the other options (i.e. by walk, car, auto-rickshaw or Horse cart). First of all it can practically get you to any nook of the ruins, where the rickshaws & cars won't take you. The next advantage is that you can pick and chose the paths you like and explore the sites at your pace. You may park your bicycle anywhere and opt to go for a local exploration by walk, for examples a trek to the hilltop temple nearby. The best part of using a bicycle or moped in Hampi is this flexibility and freedom you can enjoy in sightseeing.

Also you can ferry the bicycle or scooter across the river by the coracle (Rs10). This is especially helpful as the attractions on the other side of the river (ie. Anegondi area) is relatively far apart and the transportation options are sparse.

Lamps of the mopeds may not be in working condition, as they are used only during the daytime in general. So check this before you set out if you are planning for a late return. There is only one fuel station in Hampi. That is near the Kamalapura junction. The two wheelers are usually rented out with an almost empty fuel tank (may be with just enough fuel to reach Kamalapura).

The rental shops typically 'help' customers to get it filled locally at a slightly worst fuel cost (about Rs75 a liter) compared to the standard fuel cost. The mopeds offer a mileage of around 25kilometers (16 miles) a liter, the scooter around 40 kilometers (25 miles) a liter and the 100cc bikes about 65 kilometers (40 miles) a liter.

Ensure that you've filled enough fuel before you begin. A day's ride could be typically 40-80 km (25-50 miles).

A Moped

A great majority of the trails in Hampi are unpaved. Stick to the trodden trails as much as possible. Straying too much out of the trails can land you with flat-tyre, as the open expanse is strewn with thorny shrubs.

What if a puncture has happened? Head for the nearest main road and catch an auto-rickshaw to the puncture shop (ask help from the driver to locate one). Mopeds and bicycles can be easily loaded in an auto-rickshaw and taken to the workshop directly. For the larger two wheelers you may have to pull it all the way to the puncture workshop. Or go there and bring the mechanic along with his foot-pump and other gadgets. The whole puncture episode could set you poorer by about Rs150 including the rickshaw fare.

As a norm the rental shops look for some surety from your side. Typically people pledge an ID card or Driving License. As a matter of prudence try to avoid giving something like a credit card or a passport (just imagine by mistake the passport got swapped with another customer). Generally they may accept a photocopy of the passport along with a mention of your hotel address. An alternative is to get the help of the guesthouse caretaker. The next day probably you can approach them all by yourself.

Do not bother too much about the nitty gritties of this. You can manage to get a two wheeler of choice rented out once you reach Hampi. It is as much as in their (business) interest too to rent you a bicycle or scooter. The matter gets better since there is competition among the rental shops!

Rental shops in Hampi open typically by 8am in the mornings, some early birds even by 7am. You can leave back the rented bicycle by sunset; again some shops are open even till 9pm.

Bicycle (without gear): Rs 30 per day / Rs5 pr hour

Bicycle (with gear): Rs 50 per day. (a few places rent bicycle with gear)

Moped: Rs 200 per day Scooter: Rs 250 per day Motorbike: Rs 300 per day

Fuel cost: Rs55 per liter.

Bicycle: Many shops offer bicycle hire. Charge about 30rs a day (7 am to say 9 pm). Most of the bicycle rental places are located at the street in front of the main temple (Virupaksha Temple). The shop expects you to pledge something as a security to rent the bicycle. Usually they ask for something like a driving license or a similar identity proof.

Remember Hampi roads have a couple of steep uphills.

Auto rickshaw: There are two ways to go about this. Hire an exclusive Auto rickshaw driver cum tour guide for a day (about 300 to 450rs). (These are the second batch of touts who would approach, the first being the lodge touts). This is the best way to cover this area if you are hard pressed for time and also wants some kind of exclusivity. The trouble is you cannot enjoy the wandering and 'lost in nowhere' feel for which Hampi is ideal for.

The second option is to hire on a case-to-case basis. You may not find them everywhere, as these are not reachable to all locations. So, for example walk and cover everything in the Sacred area, and then hire a rickshaw to get you dropped (rs 25 to 40) at the Royal area to continue your exploration of that area again by walking.

Other options: Hire a car (Rs 1500+/ day) or tour by the organized (bus) operators as part of a larger package. I prefer bicycle for many reasons. First of all it's funny to ride one in the ruins. Then, the most important, is the flexibility. For example I've to reach from say point A to B to C to D. From A to B is somewhat far for walking, so scooter or rickshaw or bicycle are the OK options. Again B to C is a sort of semi trekking path. Scooter or rickshaw would not go any further. But you can walk with the bicycle. Again when you've reached C, it may be far to reach D by walk and you may not be able to get a rickshaw waiting there. If you have the bicycle with you, you can happily continue further by riding.

Itinerary

The ruins in Hampi are spread across a wide area. That makes it a bit difficult to make a perfect itinerary that covers all the sites in Hampi. There are multiple options to reach the same spot. The one opted for walk may choose a different path than the one exploring the sites on a bicycle. However there are many typical and well-trodden tourist circuits. You decide on at least three things that influence your itinerary - from where would you like to start and finish the day's

tour; how long is your stay in Hampi; and what is your nature of interest in Hampi?

If the hundred or so spots marked on the map may look confusing when you look at it for the first time. Leave the finer details aside initially and try to understand the **basic zones of Hampi**.

For example the **area where most of the temples** are concentrated is called the **Sacred Centre**. Similarly the citadel area where the **courtly structures** are scattered around is called the **Royal Centre**. Hampi is in general divided into a few such clusters. The zone map given here gives you some idea about these geographical circles and its relative locations.

The horse carts ride is a funny way to cover the sites.

Keep in mind the basic zones of Hampi and their relative positions. This would help you immensely in taking spot decisions on your plans, as you keep moving.

The itinerary map shown here connects the highlights of Hampi. Your tour essentially means moving along the principal paths with occasional deviations and side trips.

Some conventional routs are explained.

Your itinerary typically includes crossing the river by coracle.

It require at least 2 days minimum to cover Hampi in any reasonable way. However there are many tourists who would like to cover this in a day. The following explains a set of paths one can follow. Adjust your course a bit here and there to suit the situation.

Start from the Hampi bus stand area, where the local bus has dropped you. Visit the Kadalekalu and Sasivekalu Ganesha shrines. Trek to the Hemakuta hilltop. You can find the stepped path and the two-storied gateway to the hilltop just behind these shrines. Explore the Hemakuta hill shrines. Once completed, proceed towards the northern entrance tower (a towerless massive structure) of the hill, from where you can reach the Virupaksha Temple.

If you don't prefer this mini trek, skip Hemakuta tour and reach Virupaksha temple through the Hampi Bazaar.

After the Virupaksha temple tour, you may proceed towards the **Vittala temple**, located about 2 kilometers east. First reach **the Monolithic Bull** at the east end of the Hampi Bazaar. Trek across the hillock, you'll find yourself in front of the **Achyuta Raya's Temple**. From here proceed towards Vittala Temple. Follow the same path back and reach **Hampi Bazaar via Kodandarama Temple**. On this way can also explore the nearby attractions like the Varaha Temple, the Riverside ruins, Sugreeva's Cave, Narasimha Temple....

You may have your lunch at Hampi Bazaar and go towards the **Royal Centre**. One of the sensible things to do is to hire a moped or bicycle for this part of the tour.

Head towards the **Zenena Enclosure**, via the Underground Siva Temple. The main attractions you can visit on the way are **the Krishna Temple**, **Lakshmi Narasimha and the Danaik's Enclosure**.

After Zenena Enclosure tour, proceed towards the Queen's Bath. On this tour you can visit the Hazara Rama Temple and the Royal Enclosure just ahead of it.

If time and energy permits crossover to **Kamalapura village** for a tour of the Archeology Museum & the **Pattabhi Rama Temple nearby**.

Visitors cover a large number of monuments by walk.

By Walk: A large number of places can (only) be covered by walking and to some level of trekking. Some times it's fun to walk to a site, sometimes it's necessary as access paths are not motorable. A few of these walking trails are sort of semi trekking. The others are sort of climbing the rock (stepped) to see a place at the top of a few hills.

If you are a hardcore trekking fan, go ahead, there are hills all around with heaps and heaps of boulders, which look like a lunatic surface.

Local Sights

Most of the ruins are along **the road leading from Kamalapura to Hampi**. Three kms down the road, on a commanding site, stands the **temple of Malyavanta Raghunathaswamy**. It is built in the Dravidian style. Strange-looking fishes and marine monsters carved along its outer walls are worth noticing.

The Hampi Bazaar, 35 yards wide and nearly 800 yards long was known to be a "very beautiful street with very beautiful houses".

The Virupaksha Temple rises majestically at the western end of the famous Hampi Bazaar. The temple has a 120 feet tall tower on its eastern entrance. The temple contains the shrines of Shiva, Pampa and Bhuvaneswari.Parts of this temple are older than the Vijayanagar kingdom itself. The work of this style dates back to the 11th or 12th century.

Nearby is the 6.7m tall **monolith of Ugra Narasimha**. An inscription nearby states that it was hewn from a single boulder in 1528 during the reign of Krishnadeva Raya.

Vithala Temple Complex: The most splendid monument of Hampi is undoubtedly the Vithala Temple Complex with its 56 musical pillars.

To the east of the hall is the famous **Stone Chariot with stone wheels** that actually revolve. In front of the shrine stands **the great mantapa**. Resting on a richly sculpted basement, its roof is supported by huge pillars of granite, about 15 feet in height, each consisting of a central pillar surrounded by detached shafts, all cut from one single block of stone. Several of the carved pillars were attacked with such fury that they are hardly more than shapeless blocks of stones and a large portion of the central part has been destroyed utterly.

Nearby is the 'Purandra Dasara Mantapa' which has been also declared a protected monument.

House of Victory: It was built when Krishnadeva Raya came back from his victorious expedition against the King of Orissa. The spaces between the rows of the plinth-mouldings here are most elaborately and elegantly carved. The kings of Vijayanagar used to sit on a grand throne in the House of Victory and witness the nine-day Dasara festival.

Westwards from the House of Victory, leading through two ruined gates, the path leads to the **Hazara Ramaswami temple**. This temple is believed to have been the private place of worship of the royal family. The chief attraction of the temple is the series of scenes from the Ramayana carved on two of the inside walls of the mantapa. The genesis of the place known today as Hampi dates back to the age of the Hindu epic Ramayana when it was the site of Kishkinda, a monkey kingdom.

King's Balance: Hampi is also full of surprises: like the King's Balance where kings were weighed against grain, gold or money which was then distributed to the poor, the Queen's Bath, a swimming pool, 50 ft.long and 6 ft.deep, with its arched corridors, projecting balconies and lotus-shaped fountains that once sprouted perfumed water, the two-storeyed

Lotus Mahal: shaped like a lotus flower from top, this two-story structure has beautiful arc ways set in geometric regularity. It was an air-cooled summer palace of the queen.

Elephant Stables: This huge stable, a beautiful example of Hindu-Muslim style of architecture, housed about 11 elephants in separate compartments.

Pushkarini Tank

Mahanavami Dibba: The foundation of a lion story wooden structure from which the royalty viewed Hampi with pomp, colour and revelry during the Mahanadu festival. This platform has beautiful carvings.

Mustard Ganesh: This is a 9 feet tall single stone statue which is also known as Sasivikalu Ganesha.

Noblemen's Palace: This place was recently discovered and they suspect this was for aristocrats and high-ranking officials.

Daroji Bear Sanctuary is very near Hampi. Though the sanctuary is relatively new, which began in 1994 in the eastern plains of Karnataka, it has proved to be a suitable habitat for the Indian Sloth Bears in a span of few years.

