HAMPI

a map made by Zostel for young travellers

FREE MAP · KARNATAKA

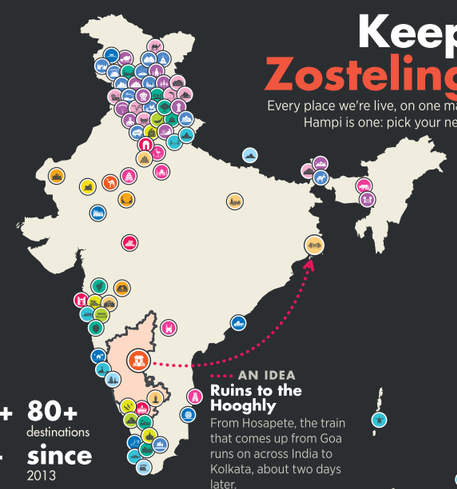


LIVE IT. NOW

ZOSTEL

Keep Zosteling

Every place we're live, on one map. Hampi is one: pick your next.



111+ Zostels · **80+** destinations · **5M+** travellers · **since** 2013

AN IDEA

Ruins to the Hooghly

From Hosapete, the train that comes up from Goa runs on across India to Kolkata, about two days later.



Around Hampi, by road

Drive times from our Zostel in Hampi

Boulders to beaches
Gokarna 6 h
From the ruins down to the sea.

South to the coffee hills
Bangalore 6½ h › Mysore 3 h › Coorg 2 h
The big city, a palace, then the estates.

VDY 1 h, BEP 1½ h, HBX 3½ h

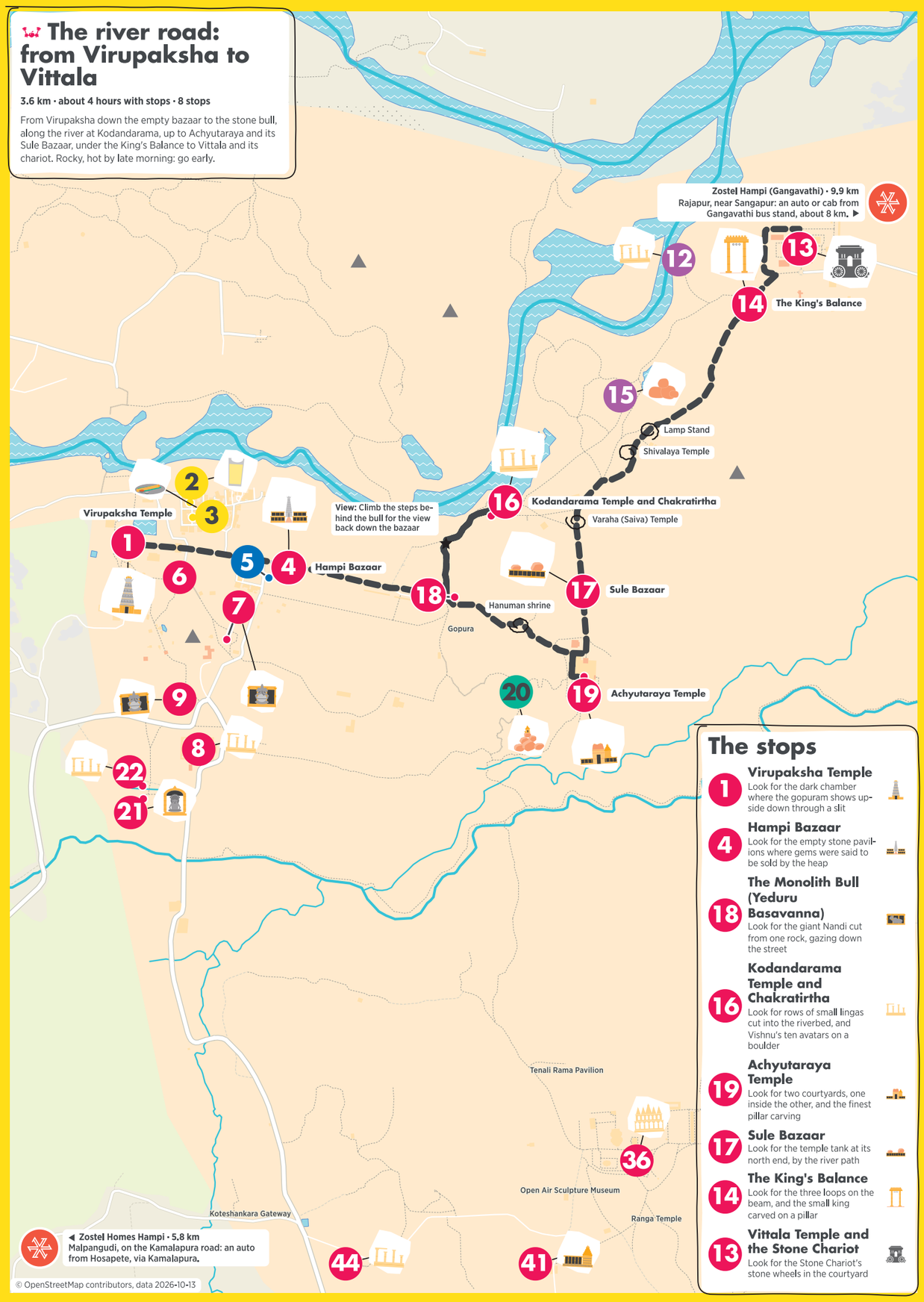
Gangavathi Railway station 10 km

India and its states: DataMeet (CC BY 4.0), the Survey of India outline. Roads, airports, station: © OpenStreetMap contributors; drive times by FOSSGIS OSRM, scaled to Zostel's own published times (2026-10). Pins nudged apart where they crowd; edge pins point the way. Flights and trains change: check before you plan.

The river road: from Virupaksha to Vittala

3.6 km · about 4 hours with stops · 8 stops

From Virupaksha down the empty bazaar to the stone bull, along the river at Kodandarama, up to Achyutaraya and its Sule Bazaar, under the King's Balance to Vittala and its chariot. Rocky, hot by late morning: go early.



The stops

1 Virupaksha Temple — Look for the dark chamber where the gopuram shows upside down through a slit

4 Hampi Bazaar — Look for the empty stone pavilions where gems were said to be sold by the heap

18 The Monolith Bull (Yeduru Basavanna) — Look for the giant Nandi cut from one rock, gazing down the street

16 Kodandarama Temple and Chakratirtha — Look for rows of small lingas cut into the riverbed, and Vishnu's ten avatars on a boulder

19 Achyutaraya Temple — Look for two courtyards, one inside the other, and the finest pillar carving

17 Sule Bazaar — Look for the temple tank at its north end, by the river path

14 The King's Balance — Look for the three loops on the beam, and the small king carved on a pillar

13 Vittala Temple and the Stone Chariot — Look for the Stone Chariot's stone wheels in the courtyard

Namaskara, Hampi!

Namaskara! We're the Hampi Zobus, and our town was once one of the biggest cities in the world. Now it's boulders the size of houses, a green river, banana groves and paddy, and a whole empire's temples, bazaars and baths lying among them. Climb a rock for sunrise, cross the river in a round boat, read the Ramayana off a temple wall, and chalk up on the granite on the north bank. Take water, take it slow. Hampi has had six hundred years to wait for you.

Every number is a tip on the map overleaf, in the colour of its kind: An Empire in Stone · Rocks, River, Bears · Oota Time · Fibre, Mirrors, Stone · Kishkindha Stories · The Slow Side. A drawing beside a line shows what you will find there:

Stay with us in Hampi

Two homes on two sides of the river: Zostel Hampi (Gangavathi) out on the north bank among the paddy, and Zostel Homes Hampi's cottages on the Hosapete side, close to the Royal Centre.

Zostel Hampi (Gangavathi)

Our hostel on the north bank, out among the boulders, palm groves and rice fields: hut-style rooms with stone floors and grass roofs, mud cottages with hammocks, sunsets by the ponds, and the Goan Corner cafe. Cats and dogs live here too.

Zostel Homes Hampi

Cottages on the Hosapete side, about 6 km from the ruins: A-frame cottages with porches, a common room with snooker and foosball, and a pure-veg cafe looking over the paddy fields.

Maps: © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL), data fetched 2026-10-13 (UTC) · Terrain: Terrain Tiles on AWS (Mapzen/Tilezen), from SRTM courtesy of NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey. Walk lines routed by FOSSGIS OSRM on OpenStreetMap. Drawings: the Zostel brand's own. Things change: check the day's timings at the gate.

Practical tips

Getting in

Hosapete Junction, 13 km away, is Hampi's railway station: the overnight Hampi Express comes from Bengaluru, and trains run from Goa and Hyderabad. Buses run from Hosapete to Hampi all day, by Kamalapura. The nearest airport is Jindal Vijayanagar, about 35 km east.

Getting around

The ruins spread over 25 square kilometres: walk the centres, cycle between them, and take an auto or the bus for the rest. The riverside path from the bazaar to Vittala is on foot only. Start early: the rock and the roads get hot by late morning.

Crossing the river

Boats and coracles cross between the two banks when the river allows; in the monsoon, when the dam lets water out, they stop and the way round is a long drive. Never wade or swim: the currents are strong and muggers live in the river.

When to come

October to February is the season. March to May is very hot, and many guesthouses close from April to September. The monsoon turns the fields green and the river high.

At the monuments

Don't climb, sit on or write on any monument; climb only natural boulders. Shoes off and shoulders covered in working temples. Carry water, a hat and sunscreen: there is little shade.

Money and network

Carry cash: Zostel's bazaar map warns there's no ATM in Hampi, and many places don't take cards. The north bank's network is weak; Zostel Hampi (Gangavathi) has Wi-Fi and a weak signal.

Monkeys

Monkeys grab bags, food and cameras, on Anjanadri's steps especially. Keep food out of sight and never feed them.





5 minutes of history

Long before
Painted rocks
People lived among these boulders long before any temple: red-ochre paintings of animals and people survive in the rock shelters below Anjanadri.

In the Ramayana
Kishkindha
Tradition places the Ramayana's monkey kingdom here: Pampa's lake, Hanuman's hill of Anjanadri, Sugriva's cave and Matanga's hill all carry its names.

7th century
Pampa's shrine
The earliest parts of the Virupaksha shrine by the river go back to the 7th century, with Hemakuta's small temples added over the following centuries.

1336
An empire on the river
The brothers Harihara and Bukka of the Sangama dynasty found Vijayanagara, the City of Victory, on the Tungabhadra's south bank, across from Anegundi.

1440s
Visitors stare
Abdur Razzaq, the Persian envoy, writes that the eye has seen no place like it on earth; later, Portuguese visitors compare it with Rome.

1509-1529
Krishnadevaraya
The empire's greatest king builds the Krishna temple, the Virupaksha hall and the Narasimha monolith, and Hampi becomes one of the largest cities in the world.

1565
The fall
After the battle of Talikota, the city is sacked for months and abandoned: what you walk through today is what was left.

1800
Mapped again
Colin Mackenzie, later India's first Surveyor General, surveys the ruins; photographers follow in the 1850s.

1986
World Heritage
UNESCO lists the Group of Monuments at Hampi as a World Heritage Site.

2012
The bazaar cleared
The shops and homes in Hampi Bazaar's old pavilions are cleared; in 2020 Virupapur Gadde's cafes follow, by court order.

Today
Boulders and backpackers
Climbers chalk up on the north bank, coracles still spin across the river, and sloth bears and otters have reserves of their own nearby.

Talk like a local

Namaskara
Hello
nuh-mus-kaa-ruh

Hegiddira?
How are you?
hay-gid-dee-ruh

Chennagiddini
I'm fine
chen-nuh-gid-dee-nee

Dhanyavadagalu
Thank you
dhun-yuh-vaa-duh-guh-loo

Eshtu?
How much?
esh-too

Beda
No, I don't want it
bay-daa

Neeru
Water
nee-roo

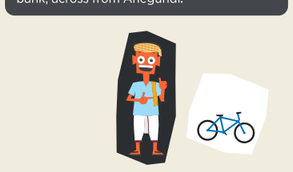
Oota
A meal
oo-taa

Saaku
Enough
saa-koo

Gottilla
I don't know
got-til-laa













Eat like a Hampi local

North Karnataka eats jolada rotti, the sorghum flatbread, with stuffed brinjal and peanut chutney, and everyone eats off a banana leaf. Hampi itself is vegetarian round the temples, sweet on bananas and sugarcane, and its cafes do pancakes and lassi for the boulderers.

47 Laughing Buddha. A river view with your meal; carry cash, no cards or UPI.
"Bring cash and a book."

The Goan Corner. Chill, eat, and pet the furry residents: Zostel's own words.
"The cats choose who gets cake."

28 Hoova Cafe. Coffee beside the banana-fibre bags the village's women make.
"Coffee, then the crafts."

42 Mango Tree. Probably Hampi's most famous restaurant, Zostel's page says: Indian food on a banana leaf.
"Order the thali, and leave room for curd rice."

3 Sagar Hotel. Cheap idli, dosa and gunta pongal, cooked fast: where the town eats breakfast.
"Whatever just came off the griddle."

2 Gopi Roof Restaurant. Indian, Chinese, even Mexican, and a cold lassi or a hot chai while they cook.
"Lassi first, gopuram second."

Dishes to hunt down

Jolada rotti. North Karnataka's flatbread of sorghum, slapped thin by hand and dried on a griddle; eaten with ennegai and chutney powders.

Ennegai. Small brinjals stuffed with a peanut and spice paste, the rotti's best friend.

A banana-leaf thali. Rice, sambar, rasam, palya and curd on a leaf: Zostel's page says eat one at Mango Tree.

Got a day to spare?

Badami. About 155 km: four cave temples cut into red sandstone cliffs above a lake, and its fort. Zostel's map gives about three and a half hours.

Pattadakal. About 22 km beyond Badami: a riverside group of Chalukya temples on UNESCO's list, with over 150 monuments round it, Zostel's map says.

Aihole. About 139 km: artisans' temples, old inscriptions and intricate stonework, Zostel's map says.

Idli, dosa, pongal. Breakfast at a thatched stall near the temple, cheap and fast.

Filter coffee. Strong, milky and frothed between two cups, the south's morning.

Bananas and sugarcane juice. The groves by the river grow small sweet bananas; the juice carts press cane on the spot.

Lassi. Zostel's page orders a cold glass at Gopi's rooftop.

51 Daroji's bears. Sloth bears from a watchtower, a short drive south-east. Bring binoculars.

53 The Tungabhadra dam. Gardens, a viewpoint and the lake above Hosapete; a government bus goes up.

Festivals worth timing a trip for

Hampi Utsav. The state's festival of the ruins: music, dance and the monuments lit up at night. Its dates change every year: check Karnataka Tourism's.

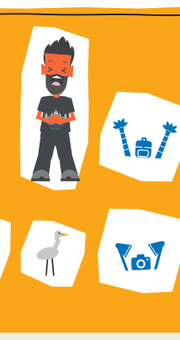
12 The Purandara Dasa festival. A yearly festival of the poet-composer's music at his mandapa below Vittala.

4 The Virupaksha car festival. Each spring the temple's huge wooden chariot is pulled down the bazaar street by the crowd.









Makara Sankranti. Mid-January, the harvest festival: sugarcane, sesame and jaggery everywhere.

The City of Victory

30 Two brothers. Harihara and Bukka founded it in 1336 on the river's south bank, facing the older Anegundi.

43 Water everywhere. Tanks, canals and stone aqueducts carried the river and the reservoirs to every quarter; some still run.

40 Horses from the sea. The kings bought warhorses shipped from Arabia and Persia; you'll see them on the walls.

17 Markets of gems. Travellers wrote of rubies and diamonds sold by the heap in its bazaars.

Talikota. In 1565 a coalition of the Deccan sultanates won the battle; the city was sacked and never recovered.

The Tungabhadra

48 Coracles. Round boats of woven bamboo, made waterproof underneath, paddled with one oar; they spin.

Otters. Smooth-coated otters live in the river's own reserve.

Muggers. Crocodiles live in the river too: one more reason never to swim.

53 The dam's say. When the dam lets water out in the monsoon, the ferries stop.

Made round here

Sandur Lambani embroidery. Mirror, bead and coin work on bright cloth by the Lambani women of Sandur, with its own GI tag.

30 Banana fibre. Anegundi's women turn banana stems into rope, bags, baskets and mats, undyed.

Kasuti. Karnataka's counted-thread embroidery, stitched so both sides look the same.

4 Carved stone. Small granite carvings by local artists, sold near Virupaksha.

Chalk on granite

11 Natural rock only. Climbing among the monuments is not allowed; the bouldering lives on the north bank's natural rock.

11 Hire, don't haul. Crash pads and guides are for hire round Hanumanahalli; go with a local who knows the lines.

Dawn sessions. The granite gets too hot by late morning: climb early, rest at midday, go back for the evening light.

Zostel's own pick. Zostel's page calls bouldering a great choice for the adventurous, with spherical rocks of all sizes.

Langurs, owls and bears

Grey langurs. Black faces and long tails on the ruins and the boulders. Watch, never feed.

The Indian eagle-owl. A big owl with ear tufts that roosts in the boulders and hunts at dusk.

Baya weavers. Their hanging woven nests swing from palms and thorn trees by the fields.

51 Sloth bears. Daroji's sanctuary, a short drive away, was set aside for them.

Peafowl. In the scrub and the fields round Kamalapura and Daroji, loudest at dawn.

Where to shop

1 Near Virupaksha. Jewellery, bags, clothes and shawls; bargain with a smile.

30 The Kishkinda Trust's shop, Anegundi. Banana-fibre bags, hats and mats; the money goes back to the trust.

38 Kamalapura's market. The everyday town: fruit, vegetables, snacks and the bus.

50 Gangavathi. The north bank's market town, for ATMs and anything else.

Hampi these days

The cafes moved across the water, the climbers moved north, and the ruins got their street back.

4 The bazaar, a monument again. The shops in the old pavilions were cleared in 2012; the street is the empire's again.

10 Hippie Island, quieter. Virupapur Gadde's cafes were demolished in 2020; the scene moved to Sanapur, Hanumanahalli and Sangapur.

11 Climbing, north bank only. Bouldering is not allowed among the monuments; it lives on the north bank's natural rock.

Workations on the slow side. Zostel tags Hampi for workations; the north bank has Wi-Fi, mud huts and weak phone signal.

Good to know

As large as Rome. Around 1520 the Portuguese trader Domingo Paes climbed a hill above the city and wrote that what he saw seemed as large as Rome, and very beautiful, and that he could not see it all from one spot.

Half a million people. By 1500 Vijayanagara is estimated to have been the second-largest city in the world after Beijing, with perhaps half a million people. Stand on Hemakuta and try to fill the boulders with them.

A wedding every year. Virupaksha is married to Pampa, the river's goddess, and the temple celebrates their betrothal and wedding every year with huge crowds; the car festival, the great wooden chariot down the bazaar, follows in spring.

In danger, then saved. From 1999 to 2006 UNESCO listed Hampi as a World Heritage Site in danger, over two bridges planned across the Tungabhadra in the heart of the ruins. A bypass road and less traffic took it off the list.

The oil woman's temple. Ganigitti, the oil woman's temple, is a Jain temple of about 1385, built by Irugappa, a general of Harihara II, for Kunthunatha. Nobody knows where its name came from. A stone lamp post with an inscription stands in front.

Builders who borrowed. Hampi's builders took from everyone: the Queen's Bath and fortified gateways wear Islamic-style arches, and Jain saints turn up carved inside Hindu temples. Look closely at any arch in the Royal Centre.

Look for the scorch. After the defeat of 1565, the city was looted for months. Archaeologists still find the signs: charcoal, heat-cracked basements and burnt pieces of buildings.

The Royal Centre: monoliths, palaces and baths

6.7 km · about 5.5 hours

From Hemakuta's rock past the Ganesha monoliths and the Krishna temple to Narasimha, the underground temple and Hazara Rama, into the Zenana for the Lotus Mahal and the stables, then the Mahanavami Dibba, the stepped tank and the Queen's Bath.

6 9 7 8 21 44 41 36 34 40 43 39



QUESTS

Dares for the brave and the curious. The map marks each with a star; tick them off as you go.

1 Find the gopuram standing on its head. Inside Virupaksha, a dark chamber catches the gopuram upside down through a slit in the wall: a pinhole camera. Photograph it.

20 Catch sunrise from Matanga. Climb before dawn with a torch and a friend; watch the light reach Vittala first.

23 Count Anjanadri's steps. Zostel's map says 570. Count them yourself, and don't feed the monkeys at the top.

14 Find the loops that held the scales. Three stone loops hang under the King's Balance's beam. Spot the little carved king on a pillar too.

41 Read the Ramayana off a wall. Walk Hazara Rama's courtyard clockwise and follow the story panel by panel.

8 A victory temple with its own market

Krishna Temple and its bazaar. Built by Krishnadevaraya in 1513 after his victory at Udayagiri. A long bazaar street runs east from it to a big tank. Look for the soldiers and horses on the gopuram, and Vishnu's ten avatars on the pillars.

9 Mustard-seed Ganesha, eight feet of rock

Sasivekalu Ganesha. An eight-foot Ganesha carved from one boulder, in an open pavilion on Hemakuta's slope. Its name means 'mustard seed', a joke on its size. His bigger brother, Kadalekalu, sits a few minutes down the hill.

13 The chariot, and the pillars that sing

Vittala Temple and the Stone Chariot. The empire's finest temple, with the Stone Chariot in its courtyard, the town's symbol. The great hall's carved pillars were made to ring like instruments; they are roped off now to save them. Go first thing.

14 Where kings were weighed against gold

The King's Balance. Two granite pillars and a beam on the way to Vittala. On festival days the king was weighed here against gold or grain, given away. Look up for the three loops that held the scales.

19 The last great temple before the fall

Achyutaraya Temple. Built in 1534 in a hollow under Matanga hill, two courtyards one inside the other: the last great temple before the sack of 1565. Fine carved pillars, few visitors. Sule Bazaar runs from its gate to the river.

21 Hampi's largest statue, carved from one rock

Lakshmi Narasimha (Ugra Narasimha). Hampi's largest statue: Narasimha under a cobra's hood, carved in 1528 from one boulder, about 6.7 metres high. Lakshmi was broken off in 1565; her hand still rests on his back. Stand back to see the whole arch.

22 The biggest linga, standing in water

Badavilinga. Beside Narasimha, Hampi's largest monolith linga, about three metres, stands in a chamber a water channel keeps flooded. The story says a poor woman paid for it. Look in from the door.

23 Five hundred and seventy steps, one view

Anjanadri Hill. About 570 white-washed steps to the white temple on top, Hanuman's birthplace in the Ramayana's tradition. Sunrise or sunset over the river and the ruins. Keep food away from the monkeys; take water.

31 A riverbank shrine under the rocks

Chintamani temple. A small temple on the river's bank downstream of Anegundi, under the boulders. A quiet place to sit by the wide, rocky river; never go into the water.

34 Eleven domes for the royal elephants

Elephant Stables. A long row of eleven domed chambers for the royal elephants, the taller middle hall perhaps for musicians. Walk the lawn and compare the domes: no two alike.

35 A gate built to make you turn

Bhima's Gateway. A defence gate on the old road south-east of the Royal Centre, built so you had to turn under the walls. Panels tell Bhima's stories. On Zostel's map, found by few.

36 Lotus arches in the women's quarters

Zenana Enclosure and Lotus Mahal. The royal women's walled quarters, with the Lotus Mahal: a two-storey pavilion of cusped arches opening like a lotus, the empire's style and the sultanates' together. Watchtowers at the corners.

39 Plain outside, arches within

Queen's Bath. Plain outside; inside, arched corridors and balconies round a deep empty pool, in the Indo-Islamic style. A moat and an aqueduct fed it. On the road south of the Royal Centre.

44 A temple below the ground, often flooded

The underground Shiva temple. A Shiva temple built below the ground, entered down steps, its sanctum often half under water. Cool and quiet. Walk on the dry stones only.

ROCKS, RIVER, BEARS

20 Hampi's best sunrise, from its highest rock

Matanga Hill. The highest rock in the middle of the ruins, a small temple on top, every part of Hampi below. Climb before dawn with a torch and a friend; the path is rock steps and scrambles. Come down slowly.

33 Sunset hill with fish carved underfoot

Malyavanta Raghunatha Temple. A working temple on Malyavanta hill among boulders east of Kamalapura, lingas carved into a cleft behind it and fish on its walls. A quieter sunset than Hemakuta.

45 The empire's reservoir, still full

Kamalapura lake. The empire's own reservoir on Kamalapura's edge, still watering the fields. Zostel's map marks its viewpoint. Come in the late afternoon for the light and the birds.

OOTA TIME

2 Rooftop lassi with the gopuram in view

Gopi Roof Restaurant. A rooftop by Virupaksha that Zostel's page sends you to: Indian, Chinese, even Mexican, and a cold lassi or a masala chai while they cook. The gopuram is your view. Order the lassi first.

3 Idli and dosa under a thatched roof

Sagar Hotel. Wikivoyage's breakfast near Virupaksha: a thatched stall doing idli, dosa and gunta pongal, fast and cheap. Where the town eats, not the rooftop crowd. Go early; ask for whatever just came off the griddle.

28 Coffee where the crafts are made

Hoova Cafe and Craft Shop. The Kishkinda Trust's cafe in Anegundi: tea, coffee and simple food beside the banana-fibre bags and mats the village's women make; the money goes back to the trust. Coffee after the lanes, then shop.

37 The state hotel's vegetarian lunch

Mayura Bhuvaneshwari. Karnataka tourism's hotel in Kamalapura, Wikivoyage's tip for a vegetarian buffet lunch between the Royal Centre and the museum: rice, sambar, palya, curd, refills. Drink packaged water.

FIBRE, MIRRORS, STONE

29 Bags woven from banana stems

The Kishkinda Trust, Anegundi. Since 1998 Anegundi's women, with the Kishkinda Trust, have turned banana stems into rope, then bags, hats and mats, undyed and handmade. The money goes back to the trust. Ask to see the fibre spliced.

46 Granite carved while you watch

Stone carvers, Kaddirampura. Hampi's granite is still carved: small figures, lamps and panels made by local artists on the Kamalapura road, far cheaper than in the cities. Watch the chisel, buy small, never take a piece of the ruins.

KISHKINDHA STORIES

12 Where Carnatic music's father is remembered

Purandara Dasa Mandapa. A pillared pavilion on the riverbank below Vittala, for Purandara Dasa, the 16th-century poet-composer called the father of Carnatic music. A festival of his music is held here every year. Bring his songs.

38 See Hampi whole, before the ruins

The Archaeological Museum, Kamalapura. Kamalapura's site museum: sculptures, coins and weapons from the ruins, and a big model of the whole city. Go on day one, or on a hot afternoon. It closes one day a week.

THE SLOW SIDE

5 Where Hosapete's buses turn round

Hampi bus stand. Buses run all day from Hosapete by Kamalapura and turn round here by the bazaar. Carry cash: Zostel's bazaar map warns there's no ATM.

10 Across the water, the slow side

Virupapur Gadde. Once 'Hippie Island': its guesthouses were cleared by court order in 2020, and the scene moved north among the paddy, to Hanumanahalli and Sanapur. Zostel calls this the slow side of town. Ride the dykes.

11 Thirty years of chalk on granite

Bouldering on the north bank. Climbers have come for thirty years; the bouldering is on the north bank, round Hanumanahalli. Hire a crash pad and a guide, start at dawn, and climb only natural boulders, never a ruin.

40 Spot the foreign traders in the frieze. The Mahanavami Dibba's sides carry hunters, dancers, horses and traders from overseas. Find one of each.

43 Find a mason's mark on the tank. The stepped tank's stones carry the marks of the men who cut them. Look, don't climb down.

21 Find Lakshmi's hand. Lakshmi was broken off Narasimha's knee in 1565. Her hand still rests on his back: find it.

16 Find Vishnu's ten avatars on a rock. On the river path near Kodandarama, a boulder is carved with Vishnu's ten avatars. Name them.

34 Find two domes alike. The Elephant Stables have eleven chambers. Are any two domes the same? We say no.

48 Spin once in a coracle. Zostel's map says take a slow coracle on Sanapur lake. Ask the boatman for one full spin.

51 Spot a sloth bear. Zostel's page says bring binoculars. Wait at the watchtower in the late afternoon.

32 Spot an otter in the river. Smooth-coated otters hunt among the rocks at dawn and dusk. Sit quietly on a riverside rock.

16 The river's bend, and its riverside shrine

Kodandarama Temple and Chakratirtha. Where the river bends at the deep Chakratirtha pool, a working temple on the river path. Look for small lingas cut into the riverbed and Vishnu's ten avatars on a boulder. Never swim: the current is strong.

17 A ruined market street, a kilometre long

Sule Bazaar. A kilometre of stone pavilions in front of Achyutaraya's temple, one of the empire's great markets, called the courtesans' street. A temple tank at its north end, by the river path. Walk it, and picture every shop.

18 A stone bull guarding the street's end

The Monolith Bull (Yeduru Basavanna). A giant Nandi cut from one rock, sitting in its pavilion at the bazaar's east end, looking down the street to Virupaksha. The best view of the colonnade, and the start of the riverside walk.

25 A lotus lake from the Ramayana

Pampa Sarovar. A lotus lake under the hills near Anjanadri, one of the five sacred lakes, where tradition has Shabari waiting for Rama. A temple on its bank, Shabari's cave above.

26 The first capital's walls on the hill

Anegundi Fort. The old fort's walls along Anegundi's boulder hills, a tall gateway between round bastions on the road in. Climb a little way for the view across the river to Vittala.

27 A palace pavilion still standing whole

Gagan Mahal, Anegundi. In Anegundi village, an intact 16th-century palace pavilion with ornate balconies, on Zostel's own Anegundi map, a short walk from the craft shop. Look up at the balconies, then walk the lanes to the river.

40 The kings' stage, three storeys of carving

Mahanavami Dibba. The kings' great platform for the Mahanavami festival: three storeys of granite carved with elephants, hunters, dancers and foreign traders. Climb the steps for the view, then read the friezes.

41 The whole Ramayana, round one courtyard

Hazara Rama Temple. The kings' chapel in the Royal Centre, early 15th century. Processions of elephants, horses and dancers on its outer walls; inside, the Ramayana told panel by panel. Walk clockwise and read the story.

43 Perfect geometry, numbered stone by stone

The stepped tank (Pushkarani). A square tank of green-black stone, dug out in the 1980s, falling in five even tiers. The stones carry masons' marks; a stone aqueduct fed it. Look, don't walk down.

48 A blue lake inside the boulders

Sanapur Lake. A reservoir ringed by boulders north-west of Virupapur Gadde. Zostel's map says: a slow coracle ride, feet in the water. Never jump or swim: the water is deep. Come for the late light.

51 Bring binoculars: the bears come out

Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary. Zostel's page says bring binoculars: you see sloth bears for real. From the watchtower they come out on the rocks in the late afternoon. Check the day's opening at the gate.

53 The river, held back by a wall

Tungabhadra Dam. The 1950s dam above Hosapete that holds back a huge lake and feeds the canals and the paddy. Gardens below, a viewpoint on top. Its monsoon releases decide whether Hampi's ferries run.

42 Banana-leaf thalis, three generations on

Mango Tree. Probably Hampi's most famous restaurant, Zostel's page says: three generations of one family, food on a banana leaf. Order the thali. It has moved; ask where it is now.

47 River views, floor cushions, cash only

Laughing Buddha. On the north bank, Zostel's page and map send you here for a river view with your curry or pizza on a lounge terrace. Carry cash: no cards or UPI. A long lunch after the morning's boulders.

49 Paddy, boulders and a long lunch

Whispering Rocks. A guesthouse restaurant among the boulders past Sanapur, on Zostel's own where-to-eat list. The quiet end of the north bank: thalis, pancakes, pasta, the rocks all round. Ride out and add Sanapur lake.

15 The Ramayana's monkey kingdom, by the river

Sugriva's Cave and Sita's pool. Hampi is Kishkindha in the Ramayana's tradition. By the river path, a cave said to be where Sugriva kept Sita's jewels, with Sita's pond beside it. A lesser-known gem, Zostel's map says. Take a torch.

24 Paintings older than any temple here

The rock paintings at Shabari's caves. Rock shelters below Anjanadri with prehistoric red-ochre paintings of animals and people, older than any temple here. Look, don't touch.

30 Older than Hampi, still lived in

Anegundi village. A capital before Hampi, across the river from Vittala: whitewashed houses, old gateways, temples and the Gagan Mahal. The Kishkinda Trust's homestays and crafts keep it alive. Walk the lanes.

32 The old gate where boats cross over

Talarigatta gate and ferry point. The old gateway where the road met the river, east of Vittala. Boats cross from here to Anegundi, when the river allows: in the monsoon there is none. Ask at the jetty, never wade.

50 Rice town on the north bank

Gangavathi. The north bank's market town, a short drive from Zostel Hampi (Gangavathi), with a station and a bus stand. ATMs and the market are here.

52 Get off the night train here

Hosapete Junction. Hampi's railway station, 13 km away: the overnight Hampi Express from Bengaluru, trains from Goa and Hyderabad. Take an auto or the bus to Hampi.

4 Eat a jolada rotti oota. North Karnataka's sorghum flatbread, with ennegai and chutney powder. Ask for it by name at a meals place.

4 Say namaskara and dhanyavadagalu. Hello and thank you in Kannada. Try them on the coracle men and the chai stalls.

12 Hum a song by the river. Play one of Purandara Dasa's songs at his mandapa below Vittala, and listen to the river join in.

30 Watch a banana stem become rope. In Anegundi, women of the Kishkinda Trust splice banana stems into rope and weave them into bags. Ask to watch.

REACHING US

At Rajapur village, across the river by Sangapur

Zostel Hampi (Gangavathi). Our hostel on the north bank, out among the boulders, palm groves and rice fields: hut-style rooms with stone floors and grass roofs, mud cottages with hammocks, sunsets by the ponds, and the Goan Corner cafe. Cats and dogs live here too.

At Hosa Malapanagudi, on the Kamalapura road

Zostel Homes Hampi. Cottages on the Hosapete side, about 6 km from the ruins: A-frame cottages with porches, a common room with snooker and foosball, and a pure-veg cafe looking over the paddy fields.

AN EMPIRE IN STONE

1 Older than the empire, still open

Virupaksha Temple. Hampi's oldest working temple, its shrines from the 7th century, its tall gopuram the town's landmark. Shoes off, shoulders covered. Find the dark chamber where the gopuram appears upside down through a slit in the wall.

4 A kilometre of empty stalls, once rubies

Hampi Bazaar. The empire's market street, a stone colonnade running east from Virupaksha's gopuram. Cleared of shops in 2012, a monument again. Walk it end to end in the early light, to the stone bull and its steps.

6 Older temples, bigger sunsets

Hemakuta Hill. A granite sheet of small temples older than the empire, with stepped stone roofs. The easiest climb in Hampi and a sunset over the gopuram and the river. Take water, walk down before dark.

7 Gram-seed Ganesha, fifteen feet tall

Kadalekalu Ganesha. Hemakuta's bigger monolith Ganesha, about fifteen feet of granite carved from a boulder still in the ground, a hall of tall pillars in front. Walk round the back to see where the statue becomes the hill.