

HAMPI: INDIA'S UNDER THE RADAR ANCIENT WONDER



It's rather nice on the top of this hill. A contrast to the bustle of Bangalore just a four hour drive north through the Indian countryside. Only a faint chant cuts through the silence as the slowly-rising sun illuminates the landscape. Tumbling high hills of hefty ochre boulders, palm trees and winding rivers bisecting them as rice paddies reflect the sparkling spires of Hindu temples in the distance. It's a wonder why so few people are here to witness this remarkable sight.

Every morning, from the top of Mathanga Hill, India's ancient "Lost City" of Hampi - a UNESCO World Heritage site that was once the second largest city in the world - reveals itself to wide-eyed travellers from around the world. Well, only the lucky ones.

India's Under the Radar Ancient Wonder

When we think about the ancient world, places like Machu Picchu, Angkor Wat and the Pyramids take the spotlight. But it also means they take all the visitors, so you can explore Hampi in peace.

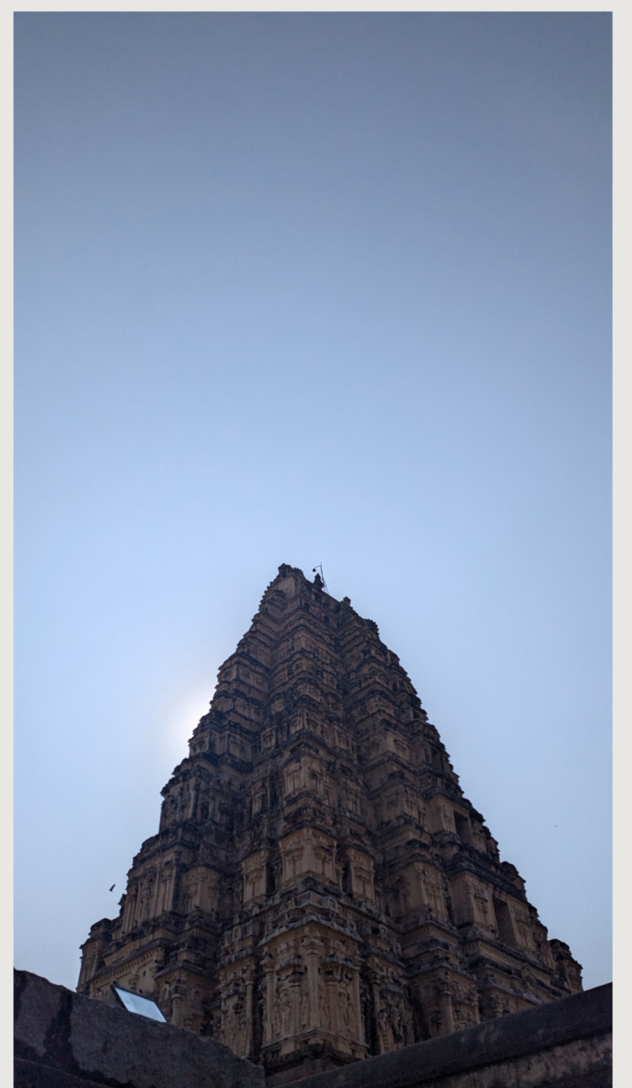
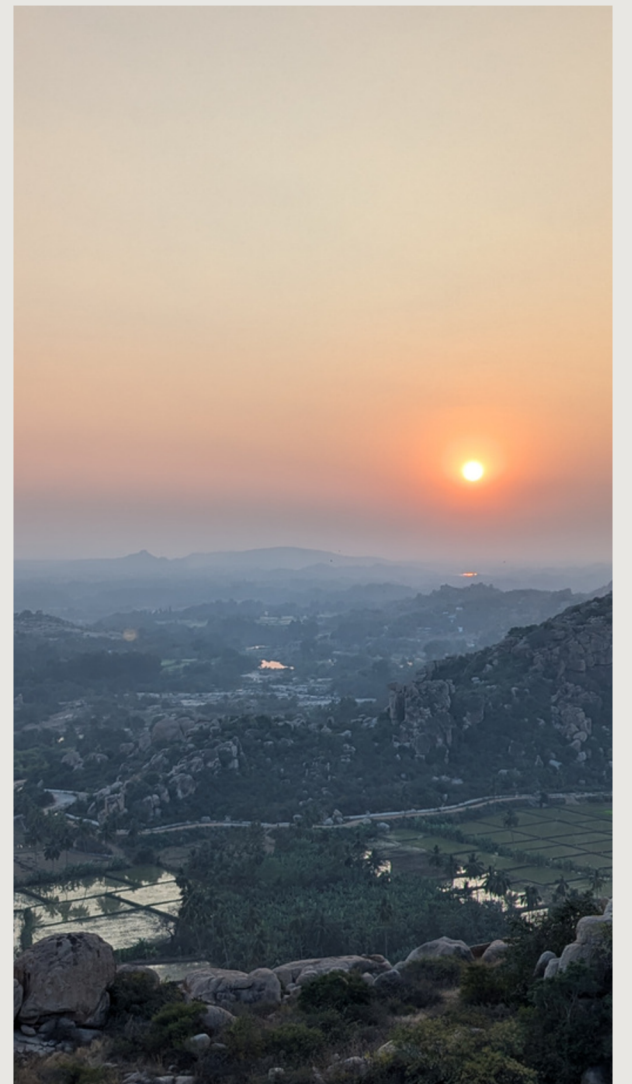
Once the capital of the south Indian Vijayanagara Empire from 1336 to 1646, Hampi was only bested in size by ancient Beijing. Quite a contrast to 2025. However, in 1565, the city and its surrounding empire was destroyed by Moslem sultanates in the Battle of Talikota.

Though the coalition of Deccan Sultans reaped destruction, they were kind enough to leave a wealth of monuments and temples complete with ornate carvings storying the legends of Hindu gods. All in one easily explorable 16 square mile circle.

What To See in Hampi?

The temples at Hampi represent a major architectural feat and have been the blueprint of many Hindu designers since. Sure, Angkor Wat, a 12th century Hindu temple, is enormous and impressive. But Hampi's temples are more ornate and showcase a style of architecture the builders of Siem Reap could have only dreamed of.

You can find these styles best in some of the key temples, like Virupaksha Temple in the centre of Hampi's town. Frankly it's unmissable; one great golden triangle soaring into the sky as its centrepiece. The Shiva temple was originally built in the 7th century and is considered one of the most sacred in all of Hinduism. Inside, there is even an elephant, Lakshmi, who you can also find enjoying her morning or evening bath in the shallows of the nearby Tungabhadra river.



The surrounding area hides other wonders like the sandy 16th century Achyutaraaya Temple complex at the foot of a hill, complete with ornate details and designs. A few kilometres away lies Vittala Temple, complete with a half-millennia old stone chariot, 56 musical pillars and a mystical cragged but somehow blossoming tree. Other buildings like the Dasara Platform, a platform used by kings to review their subjects, and the unique Lotus Building within the beautiful Zanana enclosure boggle the mind about the scale of this ancient wonder.

But be sure to bring your sun cream, because there are hundreds of temples and unique structures accessible by hike. Or, if you're tired from the sunrise trek, just ask a tuk tuk driver to take you around for the day.

Picture yourself exploring, and just imagine 500,000 people wandering and worshipping at the same sites only half a millenia before. Pretty special, don't you think?



Explore Hampi, Actively

You don't have to visit Hampi just for its remarkable history. Some of the views are perhaps the best you'll ever witness, and even come with their complementary temples at the top.

For sunset, head to Anjanadri Betta near Hanumanahalli village complete with a temple dedicated to the monkey God, Hanuman. Only mind the steps - there are only a few hundred of them!

If you're an early riser, for a sunrise to rival all others, head to Mathanga Hill. Only a short walk from the town's bazaar, it offers magical, panoramic views over the temples and geologically confounding landscape.

But for those who fancy an extra challenge, the unique boulders aren't just for marvelling at. Since the 80s, when a group of Californians ventured to rural Karnataka, they have another use - climbing. As such, Hampi has become one of the world capitals for bouldering and was described by UK Climbing Magazine as "the size of Yorkshire and fully of boulders."

Whether you're a rookie or an experienced climber, a number of instructors are available who can show you the ropes - not that they're used in bouldering! Golden Boulders in Hanumanahalli or The Monkey Zone in Hampi town are great options, and you'll get a free chai first! We'll warn you - squeezing your feet into the shoes might present a problem, so it's always worth a helping hand.

How To Reach Hampi

Hampi can be found 216 miles south of Bangalore, the most major city nearby. From there, we can hire you a driver directly or you can travel by bus, with a brief stop 13 miles away in the city of Hospet. There are also overnight buses available from Goa.

Though Hampi may not be blessed with a nearby airport, it is very much a unique destination worth visiting. But, you know what they say. The hardest journeys that are the most rewarding.

Take a look at our other offerings in India and we'll be able to cater a route specifically to your taste.

UNLOCK ANCIENT WONDERS WITH CK TOURS

LET'S TALK