

## History

Formerly known as Kalinga, Utkala and more recently Orissa, Odisha (per a long-standing name-change campaign that finally received government approval in 2010) was once a formidable maritime empire that had trading routes leading down into Indonesia, but its history is somewhat hazy until the demise of the Kalinga dynasty in 260 BC at the hands of the great emperor Ashoka. Appalled at the carnage he had caused, Ashoka forswore violence and converted to Buddhism.

Around the 1st century BC, Buddhism declined and Jainism was restored as the faith of the people. During this period the monastery caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri (in Bhubaneswar) were excavated as important Jain centres.

By the 7th century AD, Hinduism had supplanted Jainism. Under the Kesari and Ganga kings, trade and commerce increased and Odishan culture flourished – countless temples from that classical period still stand. The Odishans defied the Muslim rulers in Delhi until finally falling to the Mughals during the 16th century, when many of Bhubaneswar's temples were destroyed.

Until Independence, Odisha was ruled by Afghans, Marathas and the British.

Since the 1990s a Hindu fundamentalist group, Bajrang Dal, has undertaken a violent campaign against Christians in Odisha in response to missionary activity. The often illiterate and dispossessed tribal people have suffered the most from the resulting communal violence, which has been as much about power, politics and land as religious belief.

Violence flared up again in 2008 after the killing of a Hindu leader in Kandhamal district, and thousands of Christians were moved to government relief camps outside the district after their homes were torched. There has been little Bajrang Dal activity in Odisha since, but the group has been implicated in violent acts in recent years in Uttar Pradesh.

The creation of the neighbouring states of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh has prompted calls for the formation of a separate, tribal-oriented state, Koshal, in the northwest of Odisha, with Sambalpur as the capital. A separatist political party, the Kosal Kranti Dal (KKD), fielded candidates in the 2009 state election and took to disruptive transport protests in 2010. Maoist activity flares up occasionally in Odisha's tribal country.

## **i** Dangers & Annoyances

Mosquitoes in some parts here have a record of being dengue and malaria carriers. Arm yourself with repellent and cover up.

## **i** Tourist Information

**Odisha Tourism** ([www.orissatourism.gov.in](http://www.orissatourism.gov.in)) has a presence in most towns, with offices for information and tour/hotel bookings. **Odisha Tourism Development Corporation** ([www.otdc.in](http://www.otdc.in)), the commercial arm of Odisha Tourism, runs tours and hotels throughout the state.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Air routes connect Bhubaneswar with Bengaluru (Bangalore), Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai (Bombay), Kolkata (Calcutta) and Chennai (Madras). Major road and rail routes between Kolkata and Chennai pass through coastal Odisha and Bhubaneswar with spur connections to Puri. Road and rail connect Sambalpur with Kolkata, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.

## BHUBANESWAR

☎ 0674 / POP 885,363

Once dubbed the 'Temple City', chaotic Bhubaneswar is a worthwhile pit stop for a day or two as you take in the old city's holy centre around the ceremonial tank called Bindu Sagar. Here once stood thousands of medieval stone temples; now around 50 remain. Temples aside, there are a couple of highly worthwhile museums, an ancient cave complex and

### TOP STATE FESTIVALS

**Adivasi Mela** (p599) Features art, dance and handicrafts of Odisha's tribal groups in Bhubaneswar.

**Rath Yatra** (p605) Immense chariots containing Lord Jagannath, brother Balbhadra and sister Subhadra are hauled from Jagannath Mandir to Gundicha Mandir.

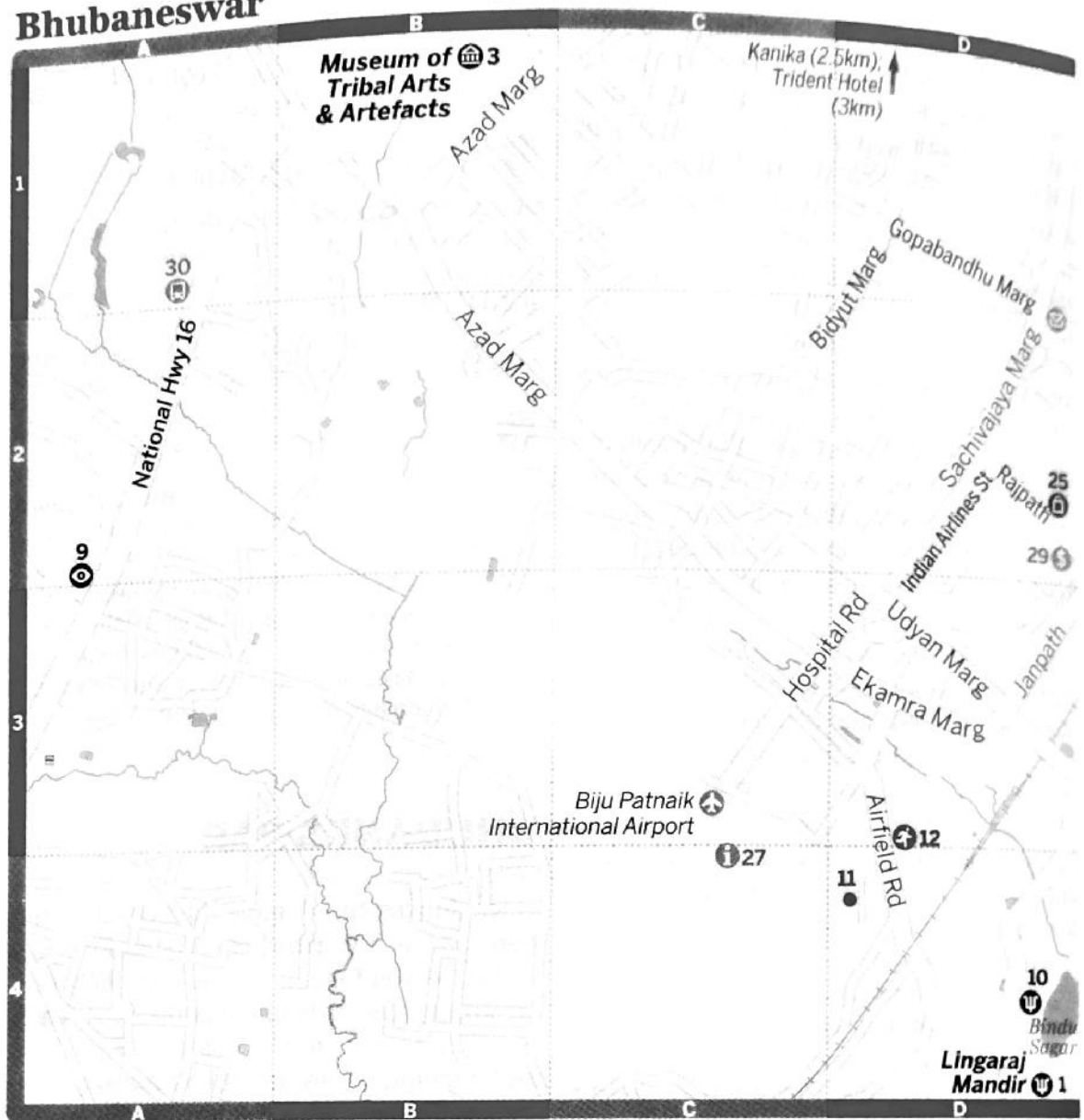
**Puri Beach Festival** (p605) Song, dance, food and cultural activities on the beach in Puri.

**Bali Yatra** (☺ Nov/Dec) Immense state fair in Cuttack, with fine silver filigree, *ikat* weaving and other crafts for sale.

**Konark Festival** (p609) Features traditional music and dance and a seductive temple ritual.

## Bhubaneswar

ODISHA BHUBANESWAR



the most varied dining scene in Odisha, along with a smattering of decent hotels.

## 👁 Sights

### ★ Lingaraj Mandir

HINDU TEMPLE

(Lingaraj Temple Rd; ☀dawn-dusk) The 54m-high Lingaraj Mandir, dedicated to Tribhuvaneshwar (Lord of Three Worlds), dates from 1090 to 1104 (though parts are more than 1400 years old) and is surrounded by dozens of smaller temples and shrines. The granite block, representing Tribhuvaneshwar, is bathed daily with water, milk and bhang (marijuana). The main gate, guarded by two mustachioed yellow lions, is a spectacle in itself as lines of pilgrims approach, *prasad* (temple-blessed food offering) in hand. Take bus 333 here from Master Canteen bus stand.

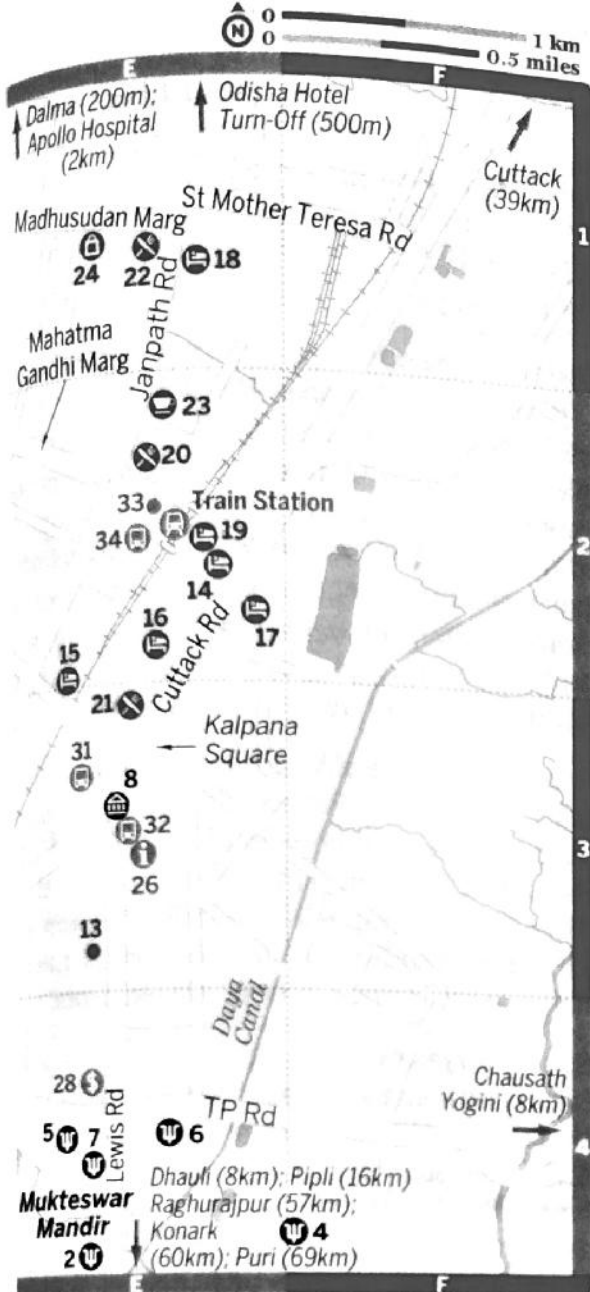
Because the temple is surrounded by a wall and closed to non-Hindus, foreigners can see it only from a viewing platform (this

can also include foreign Hindus). Face the main entrance, walk right, then follow the wall around to the left and find the viewing platform on your left, just before you reach Chitrakarini Temple. There is occasional aggressive hassling for 'donations' at the viewing platform. The money will not go to the temple; stand your ground and do not pay.

### ★ Mukteswar Mandir

HINDU TEMPLE

(Kedar Gouri Ln; ☀dawn-dusk) This small but beautiful 10th-century temple is one of the most ornate temples in Bhubaneswar; you'll see reproductions of it on posters across Odisha. Intricate carvings show a mixture of Buddhist, Jain and Hindu styles – look for Nagarani (Snake Queen), easily mistaken by Westerners for a mermaid, whom you'll also see at the nearby Rajarani Mandir. The ceiling carvings and stone arch are particularly striking, as is the arched *torana* (architrave) at the front, clearly showing Buddhist influence.



### ★ Museum of Tribal Arts & Artefacts

(off National Hwy 16; ☺ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE**

This superb museum is a must for anthropologically inclined visitors interested in Odisha's 62 tribes or considering a visit to Odisha's tribal areas. Complete with interactive elements, its galleries display traditional dress, bead ornaments, heavy silver collars, coin necklaces, elaborate headdresses, ornate wine pipes and musical instruments. One gallery is dedicated entirely to weaponry, fishing, hunting and agricultural equipment. You can buy colourful cloth paintings by the Saora people here. Bus 801 goes to nearby Azad Marg.

Behind the museum are replicas of traditional houses of the Gadaba, Kandha, Santal, Saora and other tribes.

**Udayagiri & Khandagiri Caves** HISTORIC SITE  
(entry both sites Indian/foreigner ₹15/200, video ₹25; ☺ dawn-dusk) Six kilometres west of the

## Bhubaneswar

### 📍 Top Sights

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| 2 Mukteswar Mandir .....                  | E4 |
| 3 Museum of Tribal Arts & Artefacts ..... | B1 |

### 📍 Sights

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| 4 Brahmeswar Siva Mandir .....       | F4 |
| 5 Parsurameswar Mandir .....         | E4 |
| 6 Rajarani Mandir .....              | E4 |
| 7 Siddheswara Mandir .....           | E4 |
| 8 State Museum .....                 | E3 |
| 9 Udayagiri & Khandagiri Caves ..... | A2 |
| 10 Vaital Mandir .....               | D4 |

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

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| 11 Alternative Tours .....                      | D4 |
| 12 Kerala Panchakarma .....                     | D3 |
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### 📍 Sleeping

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| 14 Hotel Grand Central .....    | E2 |
| 15 Hotel Nirmal Inn .....       | E2 |
| 16 Hotel Upasana .....          | E2 |
| 17 Mango Hotel .....            | E2 |
| 18 New Marriion .....           | E1 |
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### 📍 Eating

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| 20 Hare Krishna Restaurant .....      | E2       |
| 21 Khana Khazana .....                | E3       |
| 22 Sri Ram Mandir Tiffin Centre ..... | E1       |
| Truptee .....                         | (see 21) |

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

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| 23 BNC ..... | E2 |
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### 📍 Shopping

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| 24 Ekamra Haat ..... | E1 |
| 25 Utkalika .....    | D2 |

### 📍 Information

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| 34 Master Canteen Bus Stand .....        | E2 |

city centre are two hills riddled with rock-cut shelters. Khandagiri is topped with a fine temple. Many of the caves are ornately

carved and thought to have been chiselled out for Jain ascetics in the 1st century BC. Buses don't go to the caves, but bus 801 runs to the nearby Baramunda bus stand. A shared/private autorickshaw shouldn't cost much more than ₹30/250.

Ascending the ramp at Udayagiri (Sunrise Hill), note **Swargapuri** (Cave 9) to the right with its devotional figures. **Hathi Gumph** (Cave 14) at the top has a 117-line inscription relating the exploits of its builder, King Kharevela of Kalinga, who ruled from 168 to 153 BC.

Around to the left you'll see **Bagh Gumph** (Tiger Cave; Cave 12), with its entrance carved as a tiger mouth. Nearby are **Pavana Gumph** (Cave of Purification) and small **Sarpa Gumph** (Serpent Cave), where the tiny door is surmounted by a three-headed cobra. On the summit are the remains of a defensive position. Around to the southeast is the single-storey elephant-guarded **Ganesh Gumph** (Cave 10), almost directly above the two-storey **Rani ka Naur** (Queen's Palace Cave; Cave 1), carved with Jain symbols and battle scenes.

Continue back to the entrance via **Chota Hathi Gumph** (Cave 3), with its carvings of elephants, and the double-storey **Jaya Vijaya Cave** (Cave 5), with a bodhi tree carved in the central area.

Across the road, Khandagiri offers fine views over Bhubaneswar from its summit. The steep path splits about one-third of the way up the hill. The right path goes to **Ananta Cave** (Cave 3), with its carved figures of athletes, women, elephants and geese carrying flowers. Further along is a series of **Jain temples**; at the top is another (18th-century) Jain temple.

**Siddheswara Mandir** HINDU TEMPLE  
(Kedar Gouri Ln; ☉ dawn-dusk) In the same compound as Mukteswar Mandir, Siddheswara Mandir is a later but plainer temple with a fine red-painted Ganesha.

**Vaital Mandir** HINDU TEMPLE  
(Rath Rd; ☉ dawn-dusk) This 8th-century temple, with a double-storey 'wagon roof' influenced by Buddhist cave architecture, was a centre of tantric worship, eroticism and bloody sacrifice. Look closely and you'll see some very early erotic carvings on the walls. Chamunda (a fearsome incarnation of Devi), representing old age and death, can be seen in the dingy interior, although her necklace of skulls and her bed of corpses are usually hidden beneath her temple robes.

**Parsurameswar Mandir** HINDU TEMPLE  
(☉ dawn-dusk) Just west of Lewis Rd lies a cluster of about 20 temples that are smaller than others in Bhubaneswar but nonetheless important. Best preserved is Parsurameswar Mandir, an ornate Shiva temple built around AD 650. It has lively bas-reliefs of elephant and horse processions, and Shiva images.

**Rajarani Mandir** HINDU TEMPLE  
(TP Rd; Indian/foreigner ₹15/200, camera ₹25; ☉ dawn-dusk) Built around AD 1100, this temple surrounded by manicured gardens is famous for its ornate *deul* (temple sanctuary) and tower. Around the compass points are pairs of statues representing eight *dikpalas* (temple guardians). Between them, nymphs, embracing couples, elephants and lions peer from niches and decorate the pillars.

**Brahmeswar Siva Mandir** HINDU TEMPLE  
(off Brahmeswar Patana Rd; ☉ dawn-dusk) Standing in well-kept gardens, flanked on its plinth by four smaller structures, this 9th-century temple is a smaller version of Lingaraj Mandir. It's notable for its finely detailed sculptures with erotic elements.

**State Museum** MUSEUM  
(www.odishamuseum.nic.in; Lewis Rd; Indian/foreigner entry ₹10/100, camera ₹10/100; ☉ 10am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) This museum houses Odisha's best collection of rare palm-leaf manuscripts, as well as *patachitra* (scroll paintings), traditional and folk musical instruments, Bronze Age tools, an armoury, and an impressive collection of Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical sculptures (look for the haunting 8th-century sculpture of Chamunda).

## Activities

**Kerala Panchakarma** AYURVEDA, MASSAGE  
(☎ 0674-2590053; 240/90 Airfield Rd, Airport Sq; treatments from ₹600; ☉ 6am-9pm) A small ayurvedic clinic offering stress-busting full-body massages.

## Tours

**Odisha Tourism Development Corporation** CULTURAL  
(OTDC; ☎ 0674-2431515; www.otdc.in; Lewis Rd; ☉ 7am-8pm) Daily bus tours by OTDC include city tours (₹300, 9am) to Nandankanan Zoo, Dhauli, the Lingaraj and Mukteswar temples, the State Museum, and Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves. Another tour goes to Pipli, Konark and Puri (₹380, 9am), while a third takes in Puri and Satapada on Chilika

Lake (₹400, 8am). Book the day before from this OTDC office behind Panthanivas Hotel. Tour prices do not include entry fees.

**Alternative Tours**

(☎0674-2590830; www.alternativetoursindia.com; TOURS Room 5, BDA Market Complex, off Airfield Rd; ☀10am-6.45pm Mon-Sat) A veteran for tribal tours in Odisha, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, its prices start at around ₹9000 per person per day, all inclusive. It also runs multiday wildlife and heritage tours of Odisha and organises private day tours to Puri and Konark.

**★ Festivals & Events**

**Adivasi Mela**

(☀26-31 Jan) Bhubaneswar goes tribal for the annual Adivasi Mela festival, celebrating the art, dance and handicrafts of Odisha's tribal groups. CULTURAL

**🛏 Sleeping**

Many hotels have 24-hour checkout. The cheapest and less salubrious hotels are clustered around the train station. There are several midrange places along Janpath and Cuttack Rds, while the city's plush offerings are found just north of Route 16 that circles the city, in BDA Colony.

**Mango Hotel**

(☎0674-7119000; www.staymango.com; HOTEL \$\$ Cuttack Rd; r ₹2616-3815; 📶📺) With friendly front-desk staff, a decent restaurant serving a mix of North Indian and Odishan dishes, and spotless rooms with comfy beds and decent wi-fi, this is the best midrange choice along Cuttack Rd. The train station is a five-minute walk.

**Hotel Upasana**

(☎9439865225, 9439865227; www.hotelupasana.com; HOTEL \$\$ 2282 Laxmisagar, off Cuttack Rd; r ₹990, with AC from ₹1300; 📶📺) This family-run place, located behind Bhubaneswar Hotel, has rather rundown rooms that could be cleaner, with hot showers and small balconies. There are computer terminals in the lobby and wi-fi extends to some rooms. No restaurant.

**Hotel Nirmal Inn**

(☎0674-2534411; Rajpath; r ₹1000, with AC ₹1400; HOTEL \$\$ 📶📺) This no-frills place has good-value rooms, which are of the can't-swing-a-cat variety but are relatively clean and modern. Has a restaurant, but wi-fi is in the lobby only.

**Railway Retiring Rooms**

(Platform 1, Bhubaneswar train station; GUESTHOUSE \$ dm ₹90-300, r ₹260-520, r with AC ₹480-940; 📶) These large

**SLEEPING PRICE RANGES**

The following price ranges refer to a double room with bathroom and are inclusive of tax:

- \$ less than ₹800
- \$\$ ₹800-₹2500
- \$\$\$ more than ₹2500

but simple rooms are a place for ultra-shoe-stringers to rest for a few hours before catching a train. Rooms are in a quiet corner of the station, but it's still a train station so it's pretty noisy. Secure your room at the booking window beside 'Enquiries', which is just inside the station's main entrance.

**★ Trident Hotel**

(☎0674-3010000; www.tridenthotels.com; RESORT \$\$\$ CB-1 Nayapalli; r/ste from ₹12,000/22,000; 📶📺) The spacious, stylish rooms at the Trident, decorated with fine examples of Odishan stonework, textiles and metalwork, look out onto the peaceful gardens. There's a private jogging track, luxurious pool and one of the best restaurants in town. It's located 6km north of the train station.

**Hotel Grand Central**

(☎9437001152, 9937439074; www.hotelgrandcentral.com; HOTEL \$\$\$ Old Station Bazaar; s/d incl breakfast from ₹2800/3200; 📶📺) Whitewashed corridors and marble floors lead to smart, well-fitted rooms at this business-class hotel, located just behind the train station. There's a restaurant, bar and car rental.

**New Marrion**

(☎0674-2380850; www.hotelnewmarrion.com; HOTEL \$\$\$ 6 Janpath Rd; s/d from ₹6100/6500; 📶📺) A central top-end hotel, Marrion has rooms with a contemporary, classy design - LCD TVs, dark-wood panelling and a small sofa space. Restaurants include South Indian, Italian-Mexican combo and Chinese, a great kebab house, a Café Coffee Day in the building out front and a contemporary Scottish bar. There's a Thai spa to round off the allure, and service is top-notch.

**🍴 Eating**

**Dalma**

(www.dalmahotels.com; 157 Madhusudan Nagar; ODISHAN \$ mains ₹70-180, thali ₹150-240; ☀11am-4pm & 7-10.30pm) This outlet of the small Bhubaneswar chain is widely regarded by locals as

ODISHA BHUBANESWAR

## ODIA CUISINE

Mustard is the staple in Odishan kitchens, used ubiquitously in seed, paste and oil forms, giving many Odia dishes a distinct pungent flavour. A typical meal consists of *bhata* (rice) served alongside a variety of tasty side dishes such as *ka-haru phula bhaja* (fried pumpkin flower); *dalma* (dhal cooked with pumpkin, potato, plantains and eggplant, then fried in a five-spice oil of fenugreek, cumin, black cumin, anise and mustard, topped with grated coconut); and *besara* (vegetables or river fish with mustard-paste gravy). *Saga bhaja* (leafy greens lightly fried with garlic paste and a five-seed mixture called *pancha phutan* (cumin, mustard, anise, black cumin and chilli) is also a treat here. On the coast, fish and prawns are omnipresent: *sarison macha* is a superb favourite fish dish cooked in a mustard-based curry.

the best place in town to sample authentic Odia cuisine, including *aloo bharta* (a delicious mashed potato and aubergine combination), *dalma* (the restaurant's speciality dhal dish, cooked with coconut), *chenna poda* (Orissa's cottage-cheese dessert from heaven) and numerous Odishan thalis.

It's nothing flash - there's a canteen feel to the place, with dishes served on metal trays - but the food is nothing short of sensational, especially when you consider the prices. First-time visitors to the region will welcome the well-translated menu with clear, English descriptions of every dish.

### Khana Khazana

INDIAN \$

(Kalpana Sq; mains ₹50-170; ☎ 5.30-10.30pm) This long-standing evening-only street stall - with plastic chairs and tables spread across the pavement - does a bang-up job with tandoori chicken, delicious chow mein and tasty biryanis. The *chicken dum biryani* (₹100) is particularly popular with the locals, as are the great-value rolls (roti wraps that come with various fillings and are a speciality of Kolkata; ₹40 to ₹60).

### ★ Kanika

ODISHAN \$\$\$

(www.mayfairhotels.com; Jaydev Vihar, Mayfair Lagoon; mains ₹429-995; ☎ noon-3pm & 7-11pm) Located at the Mayfair Lagoon hotel, tiny Kanika does a don't-miss job with regional Odishan recipes, excelling with local seafood. Special-

ities include *kankada yarkari* (crab curry); slow-cooked, spiced pomfret; mustard-based dishes; and Odisha's most traditional dessert, the seriously addictive *chhena poda* (literally 'burnt cheese', cooked with sugar, cashew nuts and raisins). There are also excellent veg and nonveg thalis (from ₹399).

### Odisha Hotel

ODISHAN \$\$

(Market Bldg, Sahid Nagar; thali ₹140-340; ☎ 12.30-10.30pm) This dead-simple restaurant is one of the best spots to try authentic Odia cuisine, served in huge proportions thali-style. The menu board is entirely in Odia, so just order veg or nonveg and sit back and await this Hindu last supper! It's on the second street on the left if heading east along Maharishi College Rd, past Bhawani Mall.

Make sure you ask for a small spread, and double-check the price of it before you tuck in. Otherwise you'll be given the enormous ₹400 thali, which one person could never finish.

### Truptee

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(Cuttack Rd; mains ₹70-160; ☎ 7am-10.30pm) A great choice for South Indian breakfasts, this clean, family-friendly restaurant does a fine line in dosas (large savoury crêpes), *vada* (doughnut-shaped deep-fried lentil savoury) and *idlis* (spongy, fermented rice cakes) before bringing out the curries and tandoor flat breads later in the day. Also does thalis (₹100 to ₹150).

### Sri Ram Mandir Tiffin Centre

STREET FOOD \$

(Janpath Rd; dishes ₹10-40; ☎ 6.30am-9pm) *Dahi vada* (*vada* in a slightly spicy yoghurt sauce) is the classic Odishan breakfast dish, and locals flock to this streetside stall beside Sri Ram Mandir to have their fill of it, along with other tasty offerings such as samosas, *alu chops* (deep-fried potato snacks) and small portions of veg curry. Point at what you want and tuck in.

### Hare Krishna Restaurant

INDIAN \$\$

(Lalchand Shopping Complex, Janpath Rd; mains ₹120-260; ☎ 11.30am-3.30pm & 7-10.45pm) The beautifully lacquered Gujarati *sankheda* furniture stands out at this stylish but unpretentious veg restaurant where you can enjoy delicious curries, biryanis and tandoor flat breads in a soothing atmosphere. Enter through Lalchand Shopping Complex.



### Drinking & Nightlife

BNC

CAFE

(Brown n Cream; Janpath Rd; ☎ 8am-10.30pm) An AC-cooled coffeeshop with good-value fresh

coffee (₹80), plus sandwiches, muffins and ice cream.

## Shopping

### Utkalika

**ARTS & CRAFTS**  
(Odisha State Handloom Cooperative; ☎0674-2530187; <http://utkalika.co.in/contactus.php>; Eastern Tower, Market Bldg; ☀10am-8.30pm) Located in the busy all-day market streets known as Market Building, Utkalika features Odishan textiles, including appliqué and *ikat* (a technique involving tie-dyeing the thread before it's woven), as well as traditional palm-leaf paintings, fine stone carvings, silver filigree from Cuttack, brasswork and tribal jewellery.

### Ekamra Haat

**MARKET**  
([www.ekamrahaat.in](http://www.ekamrahaat.in); Madhusudan Marg; ☀9am-9pm) A wide-ranging exposition of Odishan handicrafts (and snack stalls) can be found at the 50 or so stalls at this permanent market, located within pleasant, well-tended gardens.

## Information

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Apollo Hospital** (☎0674-7150382, 0674-6661016; [www.apollohospitals.com](http://www.apollohospitals.com); Plot No 251, Old Sainik School Rd; ☀24hr) Private medical facility with a 24-hour trauma centre and pharmacy.

### MONEY

ATMs including **SBI** (Lewis Rd) are plentiful along Janpath Rd, Cuttack Rd and Lewis Rd. There are also a couple at the train station.

**State Bank of India** (Rajpath; ☀10am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) Exchanges foreign currencies and has ATMs.

### POST

**Post Office** ([www.indiapost.gov.in](http://www.indiapost.gov.in); cnr Mahatma Gandhi & Sachivajaya Marg; ☀9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 3-7pm Sun) Main post office.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Odisha Tourism** (☎0674-2432177; [www.orissatourism.gov.in](http://www.orissatourism.gov.in); Paryatan Bhavan, 2nd fl, Museum Campus, Lewis Rd; ☀10am-5pm Mon-Sat) The main branch of the tourist office, with maps and lists of recommended guides. Other branches are at the **airport** (☀by flight schedule) and **train station** (☀6am-10pm).

**India Tourism** ([www.incredibleindia.org](http://www.incredibleindia.org); Paryatan Bhavan, 2nd fl, Lewis Rd; ☀9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) Info on nationwide attractions; in the same building as the main Odisha Tourism office.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Bhubaneswar's modern **Biju Patnaik International Airport** (<http://airport-departures-arrivals.com>) is 2km from the centre.

Destinations served by Air India, IndiGo and GoAir:

**Bengaluru** ₹5585, two hours, three daily

**Delhi** ₹5720, 2½ hours, 10 daily

**Hyderabad** ₹2790, 1½ hours, five daily

**Kolkata** ₹3130, one hour, five daily

**Mumbai** ₹5360, 2½ hours, four daily

## BUS

For destinations northeast of Bhubaneswar, it's quicker catching a bus to Cuttack's Badambari bus stand and then catching an onwards service from there; jump on any of these **buses** heading east along Cuttack Rd. Puri-bound buses from Baramunda bus stand spend ages going around the city and picking up passengers; catch them **outside the State Museum** to save time, though they'll be pretty full by then.

Baramunda bus stand is reachable by bus 801 from Master Canteen bus stand (₹10, 20 minutes) or autorickshaw/Uber (around ₹100 from the centre).

Services from **Baramunda bus stand** (National Hwy 16) are listed below:

DESTINATION	FARE (₹)	DURATION (HR)	DEPARTURES
Baripada	300	6	hourly 9am-11pm
Berhampur	150	4	every 2 hours
Cuttack	25	40min	frequent
Jeypore	433-540	13-16	5 daily
Kolkata	non-AC seat/sleeper 340/700, AC seat/sleeper 475/800	9	frequent 7.30-9pm
Konark	55	2	hourly
Koraput	non-AC seat 420	14	five daily
Puri	40	2	hourly

**TRAIN**

Foreigners queue at window 3 at the **computerised reservation office** (☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun), in a separate building in front of the train station. Destinations:

**Berhampur (Brahmapur)** 2nd class/sleeper ₹35/170, two to four hours, more than a dozen, 7am to 9.25pm

**Kolkata** 2nd class/3AC ₹160/745, seven to eight hours, at least 10 daily, 4.55am to 11.55pm

**Puri** 2nd class/general ₹55/70, two hours, more than a dozen, 7am to midnight

**i Getting Around****AUTORICKSHAW**

An autorickshaw to the airport, if hailed on the street, costs around ₹200; an autorickshaw summoned with the Uber/Ola app costs around ₹60. The Uber/Ola apps also give you the option of hiring an autorickshaw by the hour if you want a tour of the city. Shared rickshaws ply main routes around the city and charge locals ₹5; they tend to demand considerably more from foreigners unless you just pay your fare and hop out.

**BUS**

Bhubaneswar has a relatively foreign-friendly numbered city-bus system that runs between 7am and 9pm from the bus stand known as **Master Canteen**, by the train station. Double-check your bus is going where you want it to, as some bus numbers run along more than one route.

City buses leaving from Master Canteen bus stand:

**Airport** Bus 207A, ₹10, 15 minutes

**Baramunda Bus Stand** Bus 801, ₹10, 20 minutes

**Dhuli** Bus 225, ₹10, 30 minutes

**Lingaraj Mandir** Bus 333, ₹10, 20 minutes

**Mayfair Hotel** Bus 207N, ₹10, 20 minutes

**Mukteswar Mandir** Bus 225, ₹10, 15 minutes

**Pipli** Bus 701, ₹50, 50 minutes

**Puri** Bus 701, ₹100, two hours

**Udayagiri Caves** Bus 801 or 405, ₹10, 30 minutes

**CAR & TAXI**

Uber and Ola trips all the way across the city cost around ₹100 or less. Ola also gives you the option of hiring a car on a per-hour basis (around ₹80) and organising a one-way drop-off (to, say, Puri or Konark).

**Odisha Tourism Development Corporation**

(p598) offers car-and-driver services for tours around the area. For destinations within 200km, the charges are ₹110 per hour and ₹11 per kilometre for an AC Indigo, or ₹72 per hour and ₹7 per kilometre for a non-AC Ambassador. Book in person at least a day in advance.

There's a prepaid taxi stand at the airport; taxis to the centre cost ₹300.

**AROUND BHUBANESWAR**

Scattered around the countryside, south, east and west of the capital, several worthwhile sites make easy half-day trips from Bhubaneswar. These include a zoo, wildlife sanctuary, craft village, tantric temple and centuries-old rock edicts.

**👁 Sights****★ Chausath Yogini**

HINDU MONUMENT

(☎ dusk-dawn) Rediscovered in the 1950s among rice fields 15km south of Bhubaneswar, this small but serene 9th-century open-roofed temple (pronounced 'chorsat jorgini') is dedicated to *yoginis* (female tantric mystics) and is one of only four of its kind in India. The temple – no larger than a village hut – contains 64 (*chausath*) carved *yoginis*, each shown standing on top of her *vaharna* (vehicle; often in animal form). No buses go here; a return trip by rickshaw/Uber costs around ₹450/540.

**TRAINS FROM BHUBANESWAR**

DESTINATION	TRAIN NO & NAME	FARE (₹)	DURATION (HR)	DEPARTURE
Chennai	12841 Coromandal Exp	560/1470/2110	19½	9.25pm
Kolkata (Howrah)	18410 Sri Jagannath Exp	270/715/1015	8¼	11.55pm
Koraput	18447 Hirakhand Exp	370/995/1425	14	8.25pm
Mumbai	12880 Bbs Ltt S Exp	705/1845/2685	30½	7.10am
New Delhi	12801 Purushottam Exp	705/1845/2685	29¼	11.15pm
Ranchi	18452 Tapaswini Exp	350/950/1355	13¾	9.20pm
Rayagada	18447 Hirakhand Exp	310/830/1180	8¾	8.25pm

Fares: sleeper/3AC/2AC



## SATKOSIA TIGER SANCTUARY

Comprising the Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary and the Baisipalli Wildlife Sanctuary, 964-sq-km forested **Satkosia Tiger Sanctuary** (☎ 8763102681; www.satkosia.org; per day Indian/foreigner ₹40/2000; ☀ 6am-6pm), 125km northwest of Bhubaneswar, is straddled by a breathtaking gorge, cut by the mighty Mahanadi River, and is one of the most beautiful natural spots in Odisha. However, tourists are not allowed inside the park's core zone, where most of the wildlife is found, and 4WD safaris are not on offer. The main appeal of coming here is to spend some time amid the stunning natural scenery.

The sanctuary as a whole is home to significant populations of gharial and mugger crocodiles, plus 38 species of mammals, including elephants, leopards, sambar deer, wild dogs, jackals, giant squirrels and around a dozen tigers. As of 2016, boat trips on the river have been discontinued but you may still spot crocodiles and birds from the river bank.

The main entry gate of the reserve is at Pampasar, 30km southwest of Angul.

You'll need to stop by **Satkosia Wildlife Division** (☎ 8763102681, 06764-236218; www.satkosia.org; Hakimpada, Angul) for permissions and reservations – a mere formality, but bring a copy of your passport and visa. From the train station it costs around ₹100 to get here in an autorickshaw.

Few tourists make it out here, which adds to the tranquillity of the location. For unique Odishan crafts, check out **Soumya Handicraft** (☀ hours vary) nearby.

### Dhuli

#### BUDDHIST MONUMENT

(Ashoka Rock Edicts) In about 260 BC, 11 of of Ashoka's 14 famous edicts were carved onto a rock at Dhuli, 8km south of Bhubaneswar. Above the edicts, the earliest Buddhist sculpture in Odisha – a carved elephant, representing Buddha – emerges from a rock.

From the Dhuli turn-off, accessed by Bhubaneswar-Puri buses (₹14, 30 minutes), it's a tree-shaded 3km walk or shared/private autorickshaw ride (₹10/70 one way) to the rock edicts and then a short, steep walk to the stupa. Uber drop off costs around ₹120.

Just beyond the rock edicts, each translated into English, is the huge, white Shanti Stupa (Peace Pagoda), built by Japanese monks in 1972 on a hill to the right. Older Buddhist reliefs are set into the modern structure, and there are great views of the surrounding countryside from the top.

### Pipli

#### VILLAGE

This colourful village, 16km southeast of Bhubaneswar, is notable for its locally made brilliant appliqué craft, which incorporates small mirrors and is used for door and wall hangings and the more traditional canopies hung over Jagannath and family during festival time. Inexpensive lampshades and parasols hanging outside the shops turn the main road into an avenue of rainbow col-

ours. During Diwali the place is particularly vibrant. Take any Bhubaneswar-Puri bus and hop off en route.

### Nandankanan Zoological Park

ZOO

(www.nandankanan.org; Indian/foreigner ₹25/100, digital camera/video ₹10/500; ☀ 7.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 8am-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) Famous for its blue-eyed white tigers, the zoo – one of India's better ones – also boasts rare Asiatic lions, rhinoceros, copious reptiles, monkeys and deer. Don't get food out of your bag in front of any of the monkeys that roam free around the zoo; trust us. Forty-five-minute safaris to see the lions and tigers cost ₹30 per person. Uber autorickshaw/car drop-off costs around ₹200/250.

## Getting There & Away

Pipli and Dhuli are easily accessible by frequent bus from Bhubaneswar. To visit the other attractions, you have to go as part of an organised tour or commandeer an autorickshaw or car with driver for a day or half-day.

## SOUTHEASTERN ODISHA

Southeastern Odisha hugs the coast of the Bay of Bengal and is home to the state's most visited spots, including the backpacker outpost of Puri and the Unesco-protected Sun Temple at Konark. Tiny Raghurajpur is craft central, Chilika Lake offers ample birding and dolphin-watching opportunities, and you can hit the beach at Golpalpur-on-Sea.

## Puri

☎ 06752 / POP 200,564

Hindu pilgrims, Bengali holidaymakers and foreign travellers all make their way to Puri. For Hindus, Puri is one of the holiest pilgrimage places in India, with religious life revolving around the great Jagannath Mandir and its famous Rath Yatra (Car Festival). The town's other attraction is its long, sandy beach – better for strolling than swimming.

In the 1970s, travellers on the hippie trail through Asia were attracted here by the sea and bhang (marijuana), which is legal in Shiva's Puri. There's little trace of that scene today (though the bhang hasn't departed); travellers come to chill out and visit the Sun Temple in nearby Konark.

The action is along a few kilometres of coast. The backpacker part of town is bunched up towards the eastern end of Chakra Tirtha (CT) Rd, while Bengali holidaymakers flock to busy New Marine Rd, where there is lots of hang-out action on the long esplanade.

### 👁 Sights

#### ★ Jagannath Mandir

HINDU TEMPLE

This mighty temple belongs to Jagannath (Lord of the Universe), an incarnation of Vishnu. Built in its present form in 1198, the temple (closed to non-Hindus) is surrounded by two walls, but you can spot its 58m-high *sikhara* (spire) topped by the flag and wheel of Vishnu.

Non-Hindus can spy from the Raghunandan Library roof opposite for a 'donation' (₹50 is fine; don't believe the numbers in the

ledger). On Sundays, touts who help you to nearby rooftops demand ₹100.

Jannagath, the jet-black deity with large, round, white eyes, is hugely popular across Odisha; his images are tended and regularly dressed in new clothes at shrines across the state.

Guarded by two stone lions and a pillar crowned by the Garuda that once stood at the Sun Temple at Konark, the eastern entrance (Lion Gate) to the temple is the passageway for the chariot procession of Rath Yatra.

Jagannath, brother Balbhadra and sister Subhadra reside supreme in the central *jagamohan* (assembly hall). Priests continually garland and dress the three throughout the day for different ceremonies. Incredibly, the temple employs about 6000 men to perform the complicated rituals involved in caring for the gods. An estimated 20,000 people – divided into 36 orders and 97 classes – are dependent on Jagannath for their livelihood.

#### Model Beach

BEACH

([www.puribeach.net](http://www.puribeach.net)) Puri is no palm-fringed paradise – the beach is wide, shelves quickly with a nasty shore break and is shadeless – but Model Beach, part of a sustainable, community-run beach tourism initiative, offers a 700m stretch of sand that's easily Puri's finest and cleanest. Palm umbrellas provide shade and cabana boys/lifeguards, known as Sea Riders, hawk fixed-price beach chairs (₹20) and massages (₹50 to ₹200) and are responsible for keeping the beach clean. They'll expect money for rescuing you, though.

### WORTH A TRIP

#### RAGHURAJPUR

The fascinating artists' village of Raghurajpur, 14km north of Puri, consists of a single street lined with thatched brick houses, adorned with murals of geometric patterns and mythological scenes – a traditional art form that has almost died out in Odisha.

Most houses double as artists' workshops, selling a mix of crafts, from palm-leaf etchings to colourful silk prints. The designs are copied from Odisha's Saora people, but Raghurajpur is particularly famous for its *patachitra* (Odishan cloth paintings). With eye-aching attention and a very fine brush, artists mark out animals, flowers, deities and demons, illuminated with bright colours. Some are traditional designs, of the kind that decorate temple walls; others are more contemporary, but both make unique souvenirs.

There is considerable competition for your business. Particularly fine *patachitra* examples are found at the far end of the street, in a house with red and white patterns. His neighbour does fine palm-leaf etchings.

To get here, take the Bhubaneswar bus from Puri and look for the 'Raghurajpur The Craft Village' signpost 11km north of Puri, then walk the last 1km.

**Swargdwar**  
(Off New Marine Rd; ☉ 24hr) These hallowed cremation grounds are the end stop of choice for eastern India's Hindu population and beyond - some 40 bodies are cremated here daily. You can watch or walk among the open-air ceremonies as long as you behave in a respectful manner and avoid taking photos. It's an obviously solemn affair, but a fascinating glimpse into Puri's role as one of India's holiest cities.

## Activities

**Barefoot**  
(www.heritagetoursodisha.com) This small local NGO, started by Heritage Tours, works to improve community lifestyles through sustainable tourism development. Volunteers must commit to a two-week minimum, which can involve teaching English, beach maintenance supervision and training in tourism. From ₹1500 per week including lodging and meals.

## Tours

**Grass Routes**  
(☎ 9437029698; www.grassroutesjourneys.com; CT Rd) Grass Routes' Indian-Australian husband-and-wife team has a stellar reputation for sensitive, all-inclusive, multiday tours of tribal Odisha as well as historical and nature tours. Pulak and Claire also organise excellent overnight island stays at a private tented camp at Chilika Lake and day trips by bicycle into the picturesque countryside around Puri. Contact them in advance.

**Heritage Tours**  
(☎ 06752-223656; www.heritagetoursorissa.com; Mayfair Heritage Hotel, CT Rd; ☉ 8am-8pm) Bubū is a tribal and cultural tourism veteran whose tour company focuses on rural and special-interest ethnic tourism. In addition to multiday tribal tours with stays at Desia, and Puri walking tours, Heritage also offers cycle-rickshaw tours (two hours ₹300) around old Puri, and Odishan-cuisine cookery classes (half-day ₹500) at Bubū's home, lunch included (₹1500/2500 for one/two people).

**OTDC**  
(☎ 06752-223524; www.otdc.in; CT Rd; ☉ 6am-10pm) Runs three day trips from Puri: Tour 1 (₹430, 6.30am Tuesday to Sunday) skips through Konark, Dhauli, Bhubaneswar's temples, the Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves plus Nandankanan zoo; Tour 2 (₹300,

6.30am daily) goes for a boat jaunt on Chilika Lake; while Tour 3 (₹80, 8am) is a two-hour trip to Raghurajpur village. Admission fees are not included.

## Festivals & Events

**Rath Yatra**  
(Car Festival; ☉ Jun/Jul) Immense chariots containing Lord Jagannath, brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra are hauled from Jagannath Mandir to Gundicha Mandir, beside Puri's main bus stand.

**Puri Beach Festival**  
(www.puribeachfestival.com; ☉ late Nov) Song, dance, food and cultural activities, including sand artists, on the beach.

## Sleeping

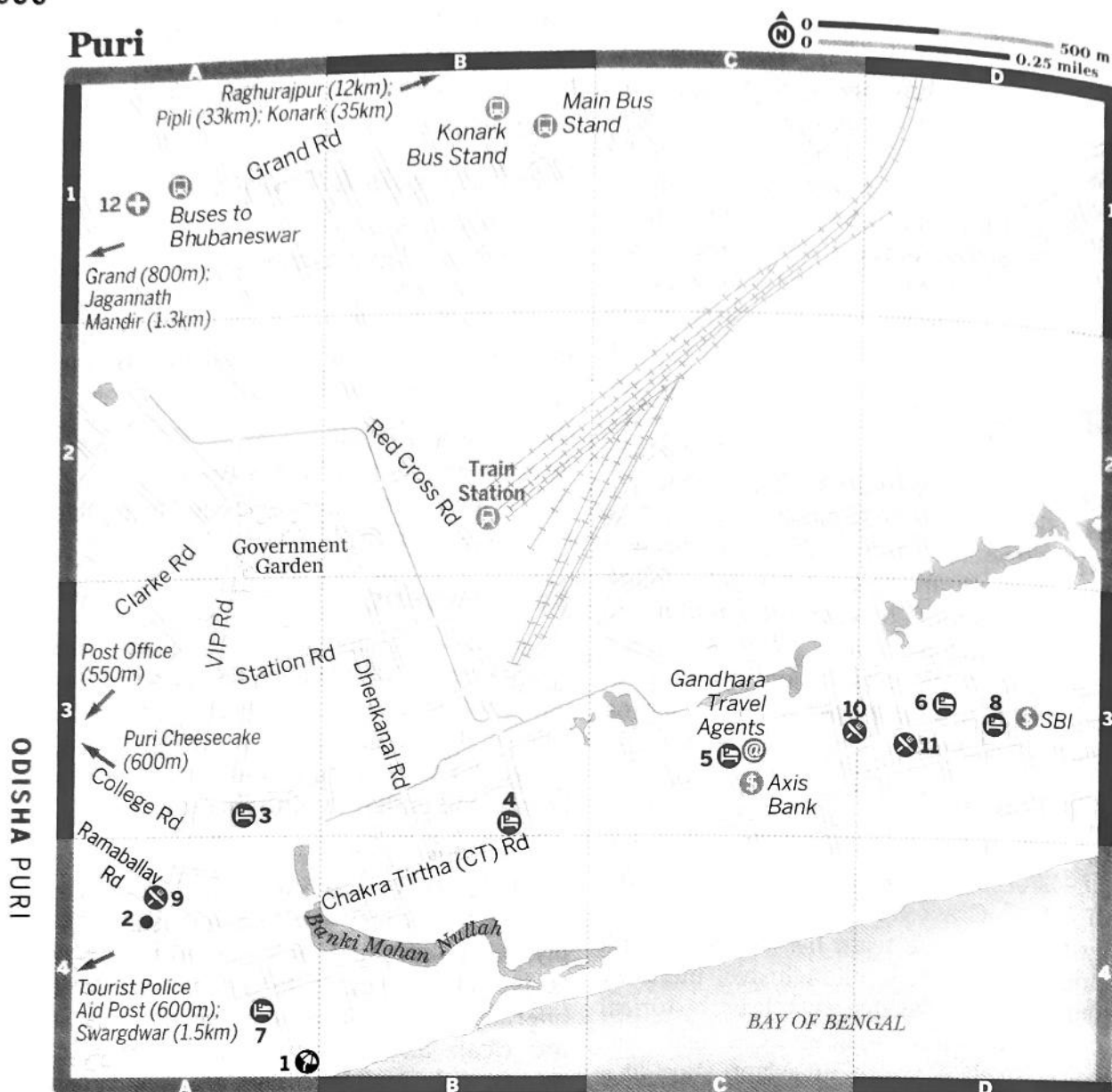
Lodgings accommodating foreigners are found east of VIP Rd, along CT Rd, while hotels catering to domestic tourists front Marine Dr. Book well in advance for Rath Yatra, Durga Puja (Dussehra) and Diwali. Many hotels have early-morning checkout times.

**Hotel Lotus**  
(☎ 06752-227033; www.hotellotuspuri.com; CT Rd; r ₹750, with AC ₹1650; ☉☎) Friendly and humbly run, Lotus is probably the most popular budget choice among foreign backpackers, offering a range of inexpensive rooms that are clean and comfortable. The non-AC rooms, with small balconies, are great value. Long-term visitors fight over the one non-AC rooftop room (₹950).

**Backpackers' Inn**  
(☎ 06752-223656; www.heritagetoursorissa.com; off VIP Rd; r ₹1000; ☉☎) This welcome newcomer on the backpacker scene, hidden on a quiet street off VIP Rd, is run by Heritage Tours. There are common areas for mingling, including the fantastic roof terrace - ideal for sunset-gazing - and you can choose between cosy en suites and a dorm.

**Hotel Gandhara**  
(☎ 06752-224117; www.hotelgandhara.com; CT Rd; heritage r ₹850-1250, new-block s/d incl breakfast ₹1500/1570, with AC ₹2290/2700; ☉☎☎) Gandhara continues to steamroll the competition in this price bracket for its friendliness and value. The 200-year-old pillared heritage building - the former holiday home of a rich Bengali family - has three wonderfully atmospheric fan-cooled rooms. More expensive but unmemorable, modern AC rooms are in a new block at the back of the

## Puri



lawned garden, overlooking the swimming pool.

The wi-fi is super quick (for India), you get newspapers slipped under your door and there are beers (₹120) waiting for you in a fridge.

**Z Hotel**HERITAGE HOTEL **\$\$**

(☎06752-222554; [www.zhotelindia.com](http://www.zhotelindia.com); CT Rd; r from ₹2100; 📶📶) This charming yet understated heritage hotel (pronounced 'jed') – the former raja's home – remains one of Puri's most atmospheric choices. Rooms are large and airy, and come with high ceilings, chunky wooden furniture and spotless bathrooms. There's a restaurant, evening films shown in the TV room, and wi-fi in common areas.

**Chanakya BNR Hotel**HERITAGE HOTEL **\$\$\$**

(☎06752-223006; [www.therailhotel.com](http://www.therailhotel.com); CT Rd; r incl breakfast ₹4400; 📶📶📶) Conjuring up images of the Raj, this splendid 150-year-

old railway hotel features beautiful bygone touches throughout, including 90-year-old Lac mural art in the lobby stairwell and restaurant. Inside the enormous rooms, entered through 2.7m-tall wooden doors, there's period furniture and old framed Indian Railways photographs. The 1st-floor rooms open out onto a large shared verandah with sea views.

**Mayfair**RESORT **\$\$\$**

(☎06752-227800; [www.mayfairhotels.com](http://www.mayfairhotels.com); off CT Rd; d incl breakfast & dinner from ₹11,000, cottage/ste from ₹13,000; 📶📶📶) The benchmark for Puri luxury, this modern hotel is split between two buildings side by side. The 12-year-old Mayfair Heritage has spacious, stylish rooms and cottages, all with sea views, dotted around freshly clipped gardens, while the contemporary Mayfair Waves has luxury rooms and suites as well as a gym and spa. Both buildings have garden pools and top-notch restaurants.

## Puri

### 📍 Sights

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### 🎒 Activities, Courses & Tours

- Grass Routes.....(see 11)  
Heritage Tours.....(see 7)  
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### 🛏 Sleeping

- 3 Backpackers' Inn.....A3  
4 Chanakya BNR Hotel.....B3  
5 Hotel Gandhara.....C3  
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### 🍴 Eating

- 9 Chung Wah.....A4  
10 Honey Bee Bakery & Pizzeria.....C3  
11 Peace Restaurant.....D3  
Two States.....(see 7)  
Wildgrass Restaurant.....(see 9)

### 📍 Information

- 12 District Headquarters Hospital.....A1  
Odisha Tourism Office.....(see 2)

## 🍴 Eating

Puri has a decent dining scene that ranges from excellent Odishan specialities to Indo-Chinese and Western food. Many restaurants are clustered along CT Rd and VIP Rd; there are plenty of cheap eateries in the labyrinthine Old Town.

### Peace Restaurant

MULTICUISINE \$

(CT Rd; mains ₹50-260; ☺7am-4pm & 6-11pm) This Puri stalwart, with seating in a shaded front courtyard, is still the most pleasant budget option, doing nice work with Western breakfasts and pasta, but excelling at simple thalis. Save room for house desserts, a fried empanada-like banana or apple turnover laced with sugar, cinnamon and honey.

### ★ Wildgrass Restaurant

ODISHAN \$\$

(☎9437023656; VIP Rd; mains ₹100-240, thali ₹120-240; ☺11am-11pm) At delightful, tranquil Wildgrass, grab a table at one of the thatched pavilions dotted around the lush garden and tuck into excellent local and regional specialities categorised by their origins (Odishan, Chilikan and Puriwala). The tandoori pomfret is one of the best things we've ever had, anywhere, and the seasonal vegetable specialities are not to be missed either.

Ask about their Odishan-cuisine cookery classes (₹500), which include a morning trip to the local food market to buy the ingredients you'll cook for lunch.

### Grand

NORTH INDIAN \$\$

(Grand Centre, Grand Rd; mains ₹100-150; ☺11.30am-3.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm) This large, pure-veg locals' favourite offers plenty of off-menu dishes, so even if you don't see the *bhindi chatpati* (okra), *gobi Hyderabad* (cauliflower), or *kadh*ai veg (creamy curried vegies) on the menu, ask for them anyway. Also has a healthy list of dosas (₹40 to ₹80). From the open-air terrace there are striking views of Jagannath Mandir.

### Chung Wah

CHINESE \$\$

(VIP Rd; mains ₹220-360; ☺11.30am-3pm & 6.30-11.30pm) Inside the Lee Garden Hotel, this place certainly has the look of a classic Chinese restaurant: dark-wood booths, lattice screens, lots of red and gold and dragon imagery. The food, courtesy of Chinese transplants from Kolkata, is excellent Indo-Chinese: we particularly like the hot garlic prawns.

### Honey Bee Bakery & Pizzeria

CAFE \$\$

(CT Rd; pizza ₹220-340, mains ₹100-350; ☺8.30am-2pm & 6-10pm) Decent pizzas and pancakes, espresso-machine coffee (₹80), toasted sandwiches and breakfast fry-ups (including bacon!) – are here at this cute cafe-restaurant with rooftop seating. Popular for breakfast but otherwise fairly forlorn.

### Two States

INDIAN \$\$\$

(Mayfair Heritage; mains ₹275-600; ☺12.30-3pm & 7.30-10.30pm) This excellent new restaurant inside the Mayfair Heritage hotel specialises in two cuisines: Odishan and Bengali. Seafood is the star here and all items on the succinct menu are well executed. Try the prawn cutlet or the prawn *malai* curry.

### Puri Cheesecake

SWEETS \$

(Temple Rd, Dolamandap Sahi; per piece ₹20; ☺7am-11pm) Bikram Sahoo and his six brothers have been churning out this unique Odishan delight, known as *chhena poda* ('burnt cheese') – a cross between a cheesecake and a flan – for more than 45 years from their sweetshop in Puri's holy quarter. It's cottage cheese, sugar and cardamom cooked in an iron pan over an open flame – a real treat.

To find it, walk down Temple Rd from Jagannath Mandir, pass a small public square about 300m on the right, and it's

another 100m on your right next door to Jagannath Pump House.

### **i** Information

**Axis Bank** and **SBI** (CT Rd) are two of several ATMs along CT Rd.

**District Headquarters Hospital** (☎ 06752-224097; Grand Rd; ☉ 24hr). Has 24-hour emergency treatment.

**Gandhara Travel Agents** (www.gandharatravels.com; Hotel Gandhara, CT Rd; internet per hr ₹40; ☉ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun) All-in-one internet cafe and money changer.

**Odisha Tourism Office** (☎ 06752-222664; www.odishatourism.gov.in; cnr VIP Rd & CT Rd; ☉ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, closed 2nd Sat of the month) Some info on local attractions.

**Post Office** (www.indiapost.gov.in; cnr Kutchery & Temple Rd; ☉ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat) Main post office.

### **i** Getting There & Away

#### **BUS**

Frequent buses to Konark (₹30, 45 minutes) leave from the **Konark bus stand** (off Grand Rd). The last bus back is at 6.30pm. Next to the Konark bus stand is the sprawling **main bus stand** (off Grand Rd), where frequent buses head to Bhubaneswar (₹40, two hours) and Satapada (₹40, two to three hours), as well as AC buses (seat ₹950, 11 hours, 6pm to 6.30pm, two daily) and non-AC buses (seat ₹400, 13 hours, from 3pm) to Kolkata. Buses to Bhubaneswar can also be taken from **Grand Rd**.

For Pipli and also the Raghurajpur turn-off, take a Bhubaneswar-bound bus.

#### **CAR**

**Heritage Tours** (p605) and the **tourist office** (p608) can arrange cars and drivers for round trips to Konark (around ₹1500) and Satapada (around ₹2000).

#### **TRAIN**

At least a dozen daily trains run to Bhubaneswar (2nd-class unreserved seat ₹15 to ₹55, two hours, from 5.45am to 1.50pm).

## **Konark**

☎ 06758 / POP 16,779

The iconic Sun Temple at Konark – a Unesco World Heritage Site – is one of India's signature buildings and Odisha's *raison d'être*. Most visitors are day trippers from Bhubaneswar or Puri, which makes sense, as the temple is Konark's sole attraction.

Originally nearer the coast (the sea has receded 3km), Konark was visible from far

out at sea and known as the 'Black Pagoda' by sailors, in contrast to Puri's whitewashed Jagannath. The inland lighthouse near Chandrabhaga Beach is an odd testament to that fact.

### **👁** Sights

#### ★ Sun Temple

HINDU TEMPLE  
(Indian/foreigner ₹20/500, video ₹25, guide per hr ₹150; ☉ dawn-8pm) Conceived as the cosmic chariot of the sun god Surya, this massive, breathtakingly splendid temple was constructed in the mid-13th century, probably by Odishan king Narashimhadev I to celebrate his military victory over the Muslims. Seven rearing horses (representing the days of the week) move this stone leviathan on 24 stone cartwheels (representing the hours of the day) around the base. The temple was positioned so that dawn light would illuminate the *deul* (temple sanctuary) interior and the presiding deity.

The temple was in use for maybe only three centuries. In the late 16th century the 40m-high *sikhara* (spire) partially collapsed: speculation about causes ranges from marauding Mughals removing the copper over the cupola to a ransacking Kalapahad displacing the Dadhinauti (arch stone), to simple wear and tear from recurring cyclones – the truth was apparently lost with Konark's receding shoreline. The presiding deity may have been moved to Jagannath Mandir in Puri in the 17th century – the interior of the temple was filled in with stone in 1903 on the orders of Sir James Austin Bourdillon, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.

The *gajasimha* (main entrance) is guarded by two stone lions crushing elephants and leads to the intricately carved *nritya mandapa* (dancing hall). Steps, flanked by straining horses, rise to the still-standing *jagamohan* (assembly hall). Behind is the spireless *deul*, with its three impressive chlorite images of Surya aligned to catch the sun at dawn, noon and sunset.

The base and walls present a chronicle in stone of Kalinga life; you'll see women cooking and men hunting. Many are in the erotic style for which Konark is famous and include entwined couples as well as solitary exhibitionists.

Persistent guides will approach you at the entrance. Guides can be useful here as the temple's history is a complicated amalgam of fact and legend, and religious and secular

imagery, and the guides' explanations can be thought provoking. But make sure you get a government-approved one; the tourist office at Yatrivas hotel, beside the Archaeological Museum, can help.

**Archaeological Museum** MUSEUM  
(₹20; ☀10am-5pm Sat-Thu) This museum contains many impressive sculptures and carvings found during excavations of the Sun Temple.

## ★ Festivals & Events

**Konark Festival** DANCE  
(☀1-5 Dec) Steeped in traditional music and dance, the Konark Festival takes place in an open-air auditorium with the gorgeous Sun Temple as a backdrop.

## 📍 Information

There's an ATM in the dusty lane leading to the Sun Temple.

**Odisha Tourism Development Corporation**  
(☎06758-236821; [www.odishatourism.gov.in](http://www.odishatourism.gov.in); Yatrivas hotel; ☀10am-5pm Mon-Sat) This tourist office can line up a registered guide to meet you at the Sun Temple. The temple can be visited as part of an OTDC day tour from Bhubaneswar or Puri.

## 📍 Getting There & Away

The bus stand is set back from the main road, 200m further away from the temple. Hourly buses ply the 33km road between Konark and Puri (₹30, one hour); a return trip from Puri by autorickshaw/car costs around ₹800/1500. There are also frequent buses to Bhubaneswar (₹50, two hours).

## Chilika Lake

Chilika Lake is Asia's largest brackish lagoon. Swelling from 600 sq km in April and May to 1100 sq km in the monsoon, the shallow lake is separated from the Bay of Bengal by a 60km-long sand bar called Rajhansa.

The lake is noted for the million-plus migratory birds – including grey-legged geese, herons, cranes and pink flamingos – that flock here in winter (from November to mid-January) from as far away as Siberia and Iran and concentrate in a 3-sq-km area within the bird sanctuary on Nalabana Island.

Other attractions are rare Irrawaddy dolphins near Satapada, the pristine beach along Rajhansa, and Kalijai Island temple, where Hindu pilgrims flock for the Makar Mela festival in January.

## Satapada

Little more than a bus stand, a hotel, and a cluster of road-shack restaurants beside a jetty, the tiny village of Satapada, on a headland jutting southwestwards into Chilika Lake, is the starting point for boat trips. These range from short dolphin-spotting excursions to all-day boat outings that take in several islands and a spot of birdwatching. The boats are noisy, so serious birdwatching is out; also, they tend to get too close to the dolphins, so make it clear this isn't what you want. In spite of this, it's a tranquil experience being out on this great watery expanse, watching fishermen pull in their catch, as their boats move through the labyrinthine reeds.

## DON'T MISS

### COASTAL RETREATS

For an idyllic getaway that's still within shouting distance of both Puri and Konark, consider one of these coastal retreats.

**Nature Camp, Konark Retreat** (☎9337505022, 8908621654; [www.naturecampindia.com](http://www.naturecampindia.com); tent incl breakfast ₹3000) This friendly, laid-back camp has fan-cooled, comfortable rather than luxurious tented rooms dotted around a slightly unkempt forest clearing. Tents come with cute attached shower rooms with sit-down flush toilets. Sumptuous Odia thalis are served. The camp is 500m off the main Puri-Konark road, on the banks of the Ramchandi River; jump off the bus when you see the sign. Book ahead.

**Lotus Resorts** (☎9090093464; [www.lotusresorthotels.com](http://www.lotusresorthotels.com); Puri-Konark Marine Dr; cottage incl breakfast from ₹4199; ✳) This collection of weathered Canadian pine cottages is a beautiful getaway across a calm and swimmable islet. Amenities include a small ayurvedic spa (high-season only) and a nice sandside restaurant. It's about 6km from Konark, on pretty Ramchandi Beach. Take any bus between Puri (₹25) and Konark (₹8) and look for the sign.

From Berhampur's new bus stand there are frequent buses throughout the day to Bhubaneswar (₹170, three hours, frequent), via Rambha (₹35, one hour) and Barkul (₹70, 1½ hours). There are two buses to Rayagada (₹180, eight hours, 9.45am and 1.45pm), and one daily bus to Satapada (₹85, three hours, 12.40pm) via the scenic route along the southeast shore of Chilika Lake and then on the ferry.

## SOUTHWESTERN ODISHA

Southwestern Odisha is one of the richest regions in India when it comes to traditional tribal culture. Of the 62 tribes that inhabit Odisha as a whole, the majority, including the Bonda, Koya, Paraja, Kondh, Mali and Didayi, reside in the villages around Koraput, Jeypore and Rayagada, leading lives that have remained largely unchanged for centuries, revolving largely around subsistence farming. For most visitors, the highlight of travel in this part of Odisha involves using the main towns of Koraput and Rayagada as springboards for visiting the colourful tribal markets and witnessing traditional village life – a vanishing world.

### Koraput

☎ 06852 / POP 47,468

Up in the cool, forested hills, the small market town of Koraput is by far the nicest of places from which to launch yourself into this region's tribal country. There's a hill-station feel to it, a weekly tribal market, and the main temple here is fascinating, especially for non-Hindus, who can't enter the Jagannath Mandir in Puri.

### 👁 Sights

#### Jagannath Temple

HINDU TEMPLE

(☀dawn-dusk) Jagannath Temple, whose whitewashed *sikhara* (temple spire) overlooks the town, is worth visiting. The courtyard around the *sikhara* contains numerous colourfully decorated statues of the wide-eyed Jagannath, the deity of Odisha, which you'll see painted on homes across the state. Below the *sikhara*, in a side hall, you'll walk past more than two dozen linga (an auspicious symbol of Shiva), before reaching some attractive displays of local *ossa* (traditional patterns made with white and coloured powders on doorsteps).

The temple is 200m behind the bus stand. At the bus stand, facing the police station, turn left up Post Office Rd then take the first left and look for the temple steps up to your right at the small staggered crossroads.

#### Koraput Market

(☀8am-5pm) There's a market here every day, but it's Koraput's big all-day Sunday Market that's worth exploring. Tribespeople and local traders alike buy and sell food produce and handmade goods in the lanes around the bus stand and behind the police station, and buying stuff from them is a rare opportunity for you to interact with tribespeople on your own.

### 🛏 Sleeping & Eating

#### Maa Mangala Residency

HOTEL \$

(☎ 06852-251228; Jeypore Rd; r ₹599, with AC ₹799, ste ₹1199; 📶📶) The pick of Koraput's rather lacklustre offerings, this new hotel on the outskirts of town actually has wi-fi in its spotless rooms, and there's a travel desk and a good restaurant. It's a bit of a trek down into town, though, if you're hoofing it.

#### Atithi Bhavan

HOTEL \$

(☎ 06852-250610; atithibhavan@gmail.com; d with fan ₹300, with AC ₹600; 📶) A decent budget hotel run by the Jagannath Temple. Rooms are relatively clean and attached bathrooms have bucket showers.

#### Raj Residency

HOTEL \$\$

(☎ 06852-251591; www.hotelrajresidency.com; Post Office Rd; s/d ₹750/950, with AC from ₹1250/1500; 📶📶) Raj Residency has some of the best digs in town, offering clean, modern rooms with plasma TVs, friendly service and free wi-fi (in the lobby only). The Indian/Chinese restaurant (mains ₹80-200; ☀7.30am-11am, noon-3pm & 7.30-10.30pm; 📶) is also one of the best places for food in Koraput. To get here, turn left up Post Office Rd, walk past the post office and keep going straight (for 400m).

### 📍 Information

There are ATMs along Koraput's main street. A few internet cafes are dotted around town.

### 📍 Getting There & Away

#### BUS

From the Koraput bus stand, there are half-hourly buses to Jeypore (₹25, 40 minutes) between 6am and 8.30pm. Seven buses



## WEEKLY MARKETS

There are weekly *haats* (markets) held every day at different villages in Koraput district, sometimes two or three at different places on the same day. Tribespeople from surrounding villages will descend on the market of the day to buy clothes, jewellery and foodstuffs. They are fabulously colourful places to visit, and the best chance foreign tourists have to interact with Odishan tribespeople.

Onkadelli Market (busiest at lunchtime) is the best known and, as a result, more touristy than the others: expect to be approached by enterprising Bonda women wishing to sell you bead necklaces and metal collars. Koraput itself has a Sunday *haat*, which, because of its location in the town centre, is open to foreigners even without special permission. At many markets you'll see tribeswomen selling alcohol brewed from sago palm and imbibed from a wine pipe (₹10 a shot).

Selected *haats*:

**Monday Subai** (☉ 5am-4pm Mon) Small produce market, 34km from Koraput.

**Tuesday Ramgiri** (☉ 5am-5pm Tue) Produce market, 64km from Koraput; **Kotapad** (☉ 5am-5pm Tue) Textile market, 63km from Koraput.

**Wednesday Podagada** (p614) Produce market attended by Paraja and Mali people, 18km from Koraput; **Chatikona** (p615) Dongria Kondh and Desia Kondh produce market, 39km from Rayagada.

**Thursday Onkadelli** (p614) Produce market, 65km from Jeypore, with numerous tribes represented, including Bonda.

**Thursday/Friday Kundli** (p614) The region's largest produce market, with a cattle section. Also numerous tribes represented; 20km from Koraput.

**Saturday Laxmipur** (p614) Kondh and Paraja produce market, 56km from Koraput.

**Sunday Koraput** (p612) In the Koraput town centre; also one of the bigger produce markets.

make the scenic trip to Rayagada (₹110, four hours) between 6am and 7pm. And at least four evening buses leave for Bhubaneswar (₹420, 12 hours) between 5pm and 7pm.

To get a bus to Onkadelli Market, you'll have to first catch a bus to the scruffy town of Jeypore and then the 7.30am or 9.30am bus to Onkadelli (₹45, three hours). The Onkadelli buses leave from Jeypore's private bus stand, which is located in front of Jeypore's government bus stand. From Jeypore's government bus stand, there are frequent buses to Visakhapatnam (₹270, six hours, 5am to 11pm) in Andhra Pradesh.

## TRAIN

The train station is 3km from the centre; it costs around ₹10/60 in a shared/private autorickshaw to get here from the bus stand. Destinations:

**Bhubaneswar** 18448 Hirakhand Express (sleeper/3AC/2AC ₹370/995/1425, 14½ hours, 5.25pm)

**Jagdalpur (Chhattisgarh)** 18447 Hirakhand Express (sleeper/3AC/2AC ₹150/510/715, three hours, 1pm)

**Kolkata** 18006 Koraput Howrah Express (sleeper/3AC/2AC/1AC ₹490/1320/1910/3245, 23¼ hours, 7.10am)

**Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh)** 58502 (general/2nd class/sleeper ₹45/60/110, seven hours, 1.45pm)

The journey to Jagdalpur is particularly scenic.

## Around Koraput

Koraput is not a destination in its own right, but the countryside around the town is. This unique, remote part of India is particularly rich in tribal culture that has survived largely intact. Most of the tribespeople are subsistence farmers and you'll see the villagers planting and harvesting in a traditional fashion and carrying heavy loads on their heads to sell at the region's many markets, often walking long distances as transport is scarce here. The gentle rhythm of rural life entices visitors to linger longer and explore, on foot and by bicycle.

## Sights

The biggest attractions around Koraput are the colourful tribal markets and villages. Until recently, foreigners technically had to

be accompanied by a government-approved guide to visit any of the tribal areas where the markets are held, with an itinerary lodged with the local police station, though this wasn't strictly enforced. The guides themselves processed the 'prior permission' required for foreigners to visit these markets. All you needed to do was give them a copy of your passport and visa, and tell them where you wished to visit. This may still be the case, though since there is no longer a tourist office in Koraput, the information available to travellers is incomplete and conflicting.

Furthermore, there were plenty of complaints about these government-approved guides: that they would take their customers' money and abandon them at the market, for instance. In practical terms, there is nothing to stop travellers from getting on a public bus or chartering a car and driver in Koraput or Rayagada, and getting to their market of choice under their own steam.

### ★ Onkadelli Market

MARKET

(☉ 10am-6pm Thu) A particularly popular tribal produce market, with Bonda, Mali, Kondh and Paraja people attending.

### Kundli Market

MARKET

(☉ 6pm Thu-5pm Fri) The region's largest produce market, taking place from Thursday afternoon until Friday afternoon. Homemade alcohol is sold near the cattle section.

### Laxmipur Market

MARKET

(☉ 5am-5pm Sat) A produce market attended by Kondh and Paraja people, 56km from Ko-

raput. Reachable on any Rayagada-bound bus.

### Podagada Market

(☉ 5am-5pm Wed) Paraja and Mali people attend this produce market, 18km from Koraput. MARKET

## 🛏 Sleeping & Eating

### ★ Chandoori Sai

(☎ 9443342241; [www.chandoorisai.com](http://www.chandoorisai.com); Goudaguda Village; per person incl meals ₹4000; 🍷🍷) LODGE \$\$\$

🍃 Run by Aussie Leon, this is an earth-en-walled refuge with beautiful terracotta flooring, a colourful sari ceiling and five contemporary rooms. The Western food is fabulous, but the real coup is the guest interaction with tribal women on the property, and sensitive trips to nearby villages and markets. Trains between Bhubaneswar and Koraput stop at nearby Kakirigumma, as do Koraput-Rayagada buses.

Guests are free to do as little or as much as they like; some come as part of tribal tour packages arranged through Puri-based Grass Routes (p605), but independent guests are most welcome. Leon is passionate about local culture and about protecting it from unscrupulous tour operators. He has books for guests to peruse on India's tribes. Sometimes he'll drive the guests around himself; other times he'll get a local guide to take guests to nearby markets and for walks around nearby villages, including the potters' village of Goudaguda that's right outside the front door.

## ODISHA'S INDIGENOUS TRIBES

Sixty-two Adivasi (tribal) groups live in an area that encompasses Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. In Odisha they account for one-quarter of the state's population and mostly inhabit the jungles and hilly regions of the centre and southwest. Their distinctive cultures are expressed in music, dance and arts.

Of the more populous tribes, the **Kondh** number about one million and are based around Koraput in the southwest, Rayagada and the Kandhamal district in the central west. The 500,000-plus **Santal** live around Baripada and Khiching in the far north. The 300,000 **Saura** live near Gunupur near the border with Andhra Pradesh. The **Bonda**, known as the 'Naked People' for wearing minimal clothing but incredibly colourful and intricate accessories, such as beadwork, have a population of about 5000 and live in the hills near Koraput.

In 2012, permission from the District Collector was required to visit specific areas designated as home to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and bans on overnight lodging and private home visits were put in place. This has recently changed. It is possible to visit tribal regions independently, but most travellers choose a customised tour, best organised through reputable private tour agencies in Puri or through Chandoori Sai (p614) and Desia (p614) in Odisha's tribal country.

The 18447 Hirakhand Express from Bhubaneswar to Koraput gets in to Kakirigumma at around 8.20am every morning. From Koraput the reverse journey stops there at 7pm. Three trains daily stop at Laxmipur Rd, 25km from Chandoori Sai, en route from Koraput to Kolkata. Call ahead for pick-up.

### ★ Desia

LODGE \$\$\$

(☎) 9437023656, 9437677188; www.desiakoraput.com; Bantalabiri Village, Lamptaput; s/d incl meals Apr-Sep ₹3000/4000, Oct-Mar ₹3500/5500

This gorgeous rural four-room lodge, made of local materials and decorated by tribal artists, is run by Heritage Tours (p605). Activities on offer include half- and full-day walks to nearby villages, cooking, cycling through the countryside, craftwork, cooking and local market trips. Desia is 70km southwest of Koraput, near the village of Machkund. It's best to call for a pick-up from Koraput.

This place is seriously remote: no wi-fi, little phone signal, total silence after dark and the most beautiful starry sky on a clear night. You can come here independently or with an all-inclusive 'tribal tour' package, starting at ₹19,000 for a four-day trip for two people. Since the lodge is along the rural road to Onkadelli Market, visitors to the market are welcome to drop by for a delicious lunch (book in advance). If you're seriously interested in cultural immersion, an overnight stay in a nearby village can be arranged; evening visits are also possible and you might get sucked into a local full-moon dance. Desia also runs a nursery and primary school for children from surrounding villages, teaching them English.

### ① Getting There & Around

Some of the markets, including Laxmipur, Onkadelli, Koraput and Chatikona, can be reached by public transport; for the rest you have to hire a car. Consider the tribal people, many of whom walk for hours to get to the markets!

## Rayagada

(☎) 06856 / POP 71.208

The only reason for staying in the industrial town of Rayagada is to use it as the base for visiting the weekly Wednesday Chatikona market. The market is considered tourist-friendly.

Rayagada's own daily market, between the train station and the bus stand, is where colourfully dressed tribespeople weave bam-

boo baskets alongside local traders selling fruit and veg, spices, dried fish and the like.

### 👁 Sights

#### ★ Chatikona Market

MARKET

(☎) 5am-4pm Wed) The weekly Chatikona market takes place at Bissamcuttack (about 40km north) and is mostly attended by the Dongria Kondh and Desia Kondh villagers from the surrounding Niayamgiri Hills. It's largely a produce market, but also for sale are bronze animal sculptures made locally using the lost-wax method.

#### Rayagada Market

MARKET

(off R 326; ☎) 7am-5pm) Rayagada's daily market is between the train station and the bus stand; turn right out of the bus stand, take the second right and it's on your left. Here you'll see colourfully dressed tribespeople weaving bamboo baskets alongside local traders selling fruit and veg, spices, dried fish and more.

### 🛏 Sleeping & Eating

#### Hotel Rajbhavan

HOTEL \$

(☎) 06856-223777; Main Rd; d/tr ₹700/990, with AC from ₹1360/1670; 🍷) Friendly Hotel Rajbhavan is a decent option and has a good multicuisine restaurant (mains ₹60 to ₹200). It's located across the main road from the train station - don't confuse it with nearby Hotel Raj, which isn't as good.

#### Tejasvi International

BUSINESS HOTEL \$\$

(☎) 06856-224925; www.hoteltejasvi.in; Collector Residence Rd, Gandhi Nagar; s/d incl breakfast from ₹1500/1800, ste ₹4000; 🍷🍷) Tejasvi International is an architecturally odd business hotel with good service, comfortable rooms and wi-fi throughout. To get here, take a right out of the train station, then take the first left and keep walking to the end (500m).

### ① Getting There & Away

The bus stand is a 1km-walk from the train station; turn right out of the train station, walk over the railway line and it's on your left; both are on main Rte 326.

From Rayagada bus stand, there are three early-morning local buses to Chatikona (₹38, two hours, 4.45am, 6.30am and 9.30am). Buses to Jeypore (₹120, five hours, five daily) all go via Koraput (₹100, four hours); the route over the forested hills is fabulously scenic. There are frequent evening buses to Bhubaneswar (non-AC ₹390, 12 hours) between 4pm and 7pm.

Of the three trains between Bhubaneswar and Rayagada, the 18447 Hirakhand Express

(sleeper/3AC/2AC ₹310/830/1180) departs Bhubaneswar daily at 8.25pm, reaching Rayagada at 5.10am – good timing for catching the market bus. The return (18448) leaves Rayagada at 10.30pm.

## NORTHERN & NORTHEASTERN ODISHA

Northeastern Odisha is best known for its nature sanctuaries, notably Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and Similipal National Park, and the excellent Buddhist ruins at Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Lalitgiri. To the north of Bhubaneswar you can stay in heritage palaces and explore the peaceful countryside by foot and by bicycle. While Cuttack is not a particularly attractive city, it's worth stopping here to check out the new Odisha State Maritime Museum (p616), which puts Odisha's history into context.

### Sights

**Odisha State Maritime Museum** MUSEUM  
([www.odishastatemaritimemuseum.org](http://www.odishastatemaritimemuseum.org); Jobra, Cuttack; ₹300; ☉10am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) This excellent new museum, sitting on the bank of the Mahanadi River, focuses on Odisha's centuries-old maritime history of trade and boat-building. The partially interactive displays walk you through the Kalingas' maritime activities, rituals and tools. The boat display shed features river-boat models from different parts of India, while the Jobra workshop gallery introduces you to the world of sluice gates and boat repair. An aquarium entertains visitors with displays of Odisha's marine life, while the temporary gallery showcases contemporary art.

### **Ushakothi Wildlife Sanctuary**

WILDLIFE RESERVE

(per day Indian/foreigner ₹20/1000; ☉Oct-May) The Ushakothi Wildlife Sanctuary, 45km east of Sambalpur, shelters elephants, tigers, panthers and bears. It can be closed with no notice in the event of bad weather. Transport (4WDs) can be arranged through your hotel in Sambalpur if you don't have your own wheels.

### Sleeping & Eating

★ **Kila Dalijoda** HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$\$  
(☎9438667086; [www.kiladalijoda.com](http://www.kiladalijoda.com); s/d ₹4500/5500; 📶📶) In the village of Man-

garajpur, an hour's drive from Bhubaneswar, Debjit and his family welcome visitors into his ancestral home, a rambling mansion surrounded by peaceful countryside. The home-cooked food is among the best we've had in Odisha, and Debjit takes his guests on walks and bicycle rides through tribal villages. Visits to tribal markets and nearby temples are also arranged.

The former hunting lodge of a local raj, this castle-like stone home was built in 1931 and features three well-appointed guest rooms with antique furniture and enormous bathrooms. Instead of AC, the rooms use traditional root curtains, dampened with water during the summer to cool the rooms down. The family are a delight and Debjit likes to introduce his guests to the quirks of rural life – by visiting an old cows' home, or walking through jungle to a tribal village of subsistence farmers who get raided nightly by wild elephants. The roads around the property are empty and ideal for two-wheeled exploration. Food-wise, duck and quail is served instead of chicken due to a rule regarding the family deity.

Kila Dalijoda can be used as a base for trips further afield; Debjit arranges day trips to Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and to the craft villages and temples north of Cuttack. Pick-up can be arranged from Bhubaneswar or Cuttack.

★ **Garh Dhenkanal Palace** HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$\$  
(☎9437292448; [www.dhenkanalpalace.com](http://www.dhenkanalpalace.com); ₹6000) This mighty fort-cum-palace full of rooms, courts and gardens nestles against the foothills of the Eastern Ghats in the village of Dhenkanal. The 19th-century home of the Raja of Dhenkanal, it now accepts guests; sumptuous rooms have en-suite bathrooms and guests have access to the present Raja's library. Trips to surrounding crafts and tribal villages can be arranged.

★ **Gajlaxmi Palace** HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$\$  
(☎9861011221, 9337411020; [www.gajlaxmipalace.com](http://www.gajlaxmipalace.com); Borapada, Dhenkanal; s/d incl meals & nature walk ₹3500/6000; 📶) Located 10km from Dhenkanal, this heritage palace, tucked away amid stunning scenery in the untapped forests of the Dhenkanal district, dates back to 1935. The palace belonged to a member of the Dhenkanal royal family. Today, his grandson, JP Singh Deo, and Navneeta, his lovely wife, have opened up two rooms inside their tranquil slice of royal history to guests.

Sleeping here is like overnighting in a museum – the whole place is chock-full of Singh Deo's antiques collected from around the world and the palace lives and breathes of decadent days gone by. The surrounding forest hides at least 22 wild elephants, a common sight on JP's morning and evening nature walks. Wild boar, jungle fowl and barking deer also roam freely outside the palace doors. JP grew up here and is ever too pleased to take you to rarely visited Sabara tribal villages or nearby Joranda temples, or tell tales of elephant and tiger kills in crazier days over wonderful meals sourced from their own organic gardens. Paradise found.

Dhenkanal is an easy train ride from Bhubaneswar.

## **i** Getting There & Away

The village of Dhenkanal, with its palaces, is easily reachable by train from Bhubaneswar, while Kila Dalijoda arranges pick-up from Bhubaneswar or Cuttack. It's easy to combine a visit to both. From Kila Dalijoda, Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary is a viable day trip, while Dhenkanal is within easy reach of Angul and the Satkosia Tiger Reserve.

## Pusphagiri Ruins

These fascinating Buddhist ruins, the oldest of which date back to around 200 BC, are the remnants of one of India's earliest *mahaviharas* (Buddhist monasteries, which were, effectively, the universities of their day). Pusphagiri Mahavihara had three campuses – Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Lalitgiri – each built upon a small hilltop in the low-lying Langudi Hills. The Kelua River provided a scenic backdrop, and these days supports small farming communities and their mud-and-thatch villages, which dot the rural landscape.

If you start early, it's possible to visit the area in a day trip by bus from Bhubaneswar, but having your own wheels or staying overnight in one of the villages gives you the chance to explore each of the three sites properly. Stop by the excellent museum at Ratnagiri first, as it puts the three sites into context.

## **i** Sights

### ★ Udayagiri

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

(☉ dawn-dusk) **FREE** These two monastery complexes date back to the 10th to 12th centuries AD. At the first one, there's a large

pyramidal brick stupa with a seated Buddha image on each of the four sides. Beyond, a large Buddha statue is locked away behind some fine doorjamb carvings. The second site, marred by graffiti, features an exquisite deity carving, a seated Buddha statue and monastic cells. Unhelpful 'guides' fish for donations (not compulsory). The ruins are a 2km walk from the main road.

### ★ Ratnagiri

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

(Indian/foreigner ₹15/200, video ₹25; ☉ dawn-dusk) Ratnagiri has the most interesting and extensive of the Pusphagiri ruins. Two large monasteries flourished here from the 5th to 13th centuries. Noteworthy are an exquisitely carved doorway inside the first monastic complex and an intact Buddha statue beyond. Up on the small hillock are the remains of a 10m-high stupa, surrounded by smaller votive stupas; all are covered in graffiti in spite of a security guard presence.

### Lalitgiri

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

(Indian/foreigner ₹15/200, video ₹25; ☉ dawn-dusk) Several monastery ruins, some dating back to 200 BC, consisting largely of brick foundations, are scattered along a gentle incline; one is surrounded by several dozen small votive stupas. Next to a small museum housing some fine carvings from the site, steps lead up a hillock crowned with a shallow stupa. During excavations in the 1970s, a casket containing gold and silver relics was found. A museum was being built near the site entrance at the time of research.

### Ratnagiri Museum

MUSEUM

(₹5; ☉ 9am-5pm) The four galleries at this fine museum tell the story of the Pusphagiri ruins. Two of them display beautifully preserved sculpture from all three Pusphagiri sites, while the other two galleries are devoted to terracotta plaques, copper plates engraved with Sanskrit, sacred bronzes and other objects found on-site.

## **i** Sleeping & Eating

### Toshali Ratnagiri Resort

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎ 9937023791, 06725-281044; [www.toshaliratnagiri.com](http://www.toshaliratnagiri.com); r from ₹6000; 🍷 🍷 🍷) The Toshali Ratnagiri Resort, opposite the Ratnagiri Museum at the far end of Ratnagiri village, is surrounded by rice fields and a peaceful village pond. Tastefully decorated rooms flank an interior courtyard and there's a restaurant (mains ₹100 to ₹250) and a bar. It's overpriced, but you're a captive audience.

**Toshali Udayagiri Resort**

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎ 9937212110; [www.toshaliudayagiri.com](http://www.toshaliudayagiri.com); r ₹4000; \*) This hotel is in the Udayagiri village, around 2km from the Udayagiri ruins. Facilities include an ayurvedic spa and decent multicuisine restaurant.

**Toshali Lalitgiri Resort**

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎ 9937003223; [www.toshalilalitgiri.com](http://www.toshalilalitgiri.com); r ₹4000; \*) Comfortable hotel near Lalitgiri with a small ayurvedic spa on-site.

**i Getting There & Away**

Udayagiri is 23km from Chandikhol. Ratnagiri is 9km past Udayagiri. Lalatgiri is 22km from Chandikhol, but down a different lane, 8km beyond the Ratnagiri/Udayagiri turn-off.

If coming by public transport from Bhubaneswar, catch a bus to Cuttack (₹25, one hour, frequent) then change for a bus to Chandikhol (₹31, one hour, frequent) where, from the road leading off to the right, you can catch shared minivans to Ratnagiri (₹30, 45 minutes) via Udayagiri (₹24, 30 minutes), or to Lalitgiri (₹24, 30 minutes) via Hotel Toshali Pusphagiri. Minivans start drying up at around 3.30pm.

A day trip to the three sites with a car and driver from Bhubaneswar costs around ₹3500.

**Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary**

Spanning mangrove forests, vast wetlands, and three rivers flowing into the Bay of Bengal, Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary is an immensely wildlife-rich ecosystem, home to crocodiles, diverse birdlife and endangered turtles.

**👁 Sights****★ Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary**

NATURE RESERVE

([www.bhitarkanika.org](http://www.bhitarkanika.org); per day ₹40, camera/video ₹200/10,000; ☀ 7am-4pm Aug-mid-May) Three rivers flow out to sea at Bhitarkanika, forming a tidal maze of muddy creeks and mangroves. This is India's second-largest mangrove region, and most of the 672-sq-km delta forms this wonderful sanctuary, a significant biodiversity hot spot. The only way to get around most of the sanctuary is

**ODISHA'S OLIVE RIDLEY MARINE TURTLES**

One of the smallest sea turtles and a threatened species, the olive ridley marine turtle swims up from deeper waters beyond Sri Lanka to mate and lay eggs on Odisha's beaches. The main nesting sites are Gahirmatha (in Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary), Devi river mouth near Konark, and Rushikulya River mouth by Chilika Lake.

Turtle deaths due to fishing practices are unfortunately common. Although there are regulations, such as requiring the use of turtle exclusion devices (TEDs) on trawl nets and banning fishing from certain prohibited congregation and breeding areas, these laws are routinely flouted in Odisha.

Casuarina trees have been planted to help preserve Devi beach but they occupy areas of soft sand that are necessary for a turtle hatchery. Other potential threats include the upcoming Astaranga Seaport and Thermal Power Plant and the proposed Palur port, which is planned right next to the Rushikulya River mouth nesting site (which it would destroy if allowed to continue as planned).

In January and February the turtles congregate near nesting beaches and, if conditions are right, come ashore. If conditions aren't right, they reabsorb their eggs and leave without nesting.

Hatchlings emerge 50 to 55 days later and are guided to the sea by the luminescence of the ocean and stars. They can be easily distracted by bright lights; unfortunately NH5 runs within 2km of Rushikulya beach. Members of local turtle clubs in Gokharkuda, Poddampeta and Purunabandha village gather up disoriented turtles and take them to the sea. It's best to visit the nesting beach at dawn when lights are not necessary.

The best place to see nesting and hatching is on the northern side of Rushikulya River, near the villages of Purunabandha and Gokharkuda, 20km from the nearest accommodation in Rambha. During nesting and hatching, activity takes place throughout the night: don't use lights.

Ask staff at Panthanivas Rambha (p611) what conditions are like, or contact the Wildlife Society of Odisha (p620). Rickshaws between Rambha and Rushikulya cost around ₹500 return for a half-day and ₹1000 for the full day.

## SIMILIPAL NATIONAL PARK

The 2750-sq-km **Similipal National Park** (☎06792-259126; [www.similipal.org](http://www.similipal.org); per day Indian/foreigner ₹40/1000, camera per 3 days ₹50/100; ☀ Oct-mid-Jun) has long been Odisha's prime wildlife sanctuary. However, due to on-off Maoist activity in the region, the park has been off-limits to foreign tourists in recent years. At the time of research it was open again to visitors, but check ahead with the **Similipal National Park office** (☎06792-259126; [rccfbaripada@gmail.com](mailto:rccfbaripada@gmail.com); ☀ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) or Odisha Tourism (p601) in Bhubaneswar before visiting, as the security situation is volatile and subject to change. There are waterfalls to see and wild elephants are relatively common, tigers less so. Most visitors tend to be Bengali tourists who come with their own vehicles; if you don't have your own wheels, the easiest way to visit the park is by organised tour. Odisha Tourism can arrange a car and driver, otherwise some of the lodgings in Baripada can arrange transport to the park, 25km away.

There are several basic hotels in Baripada.

Most accommodation options either have basic restaurants or offer meals.

Regular buses go from Baripada to Kolkata (₹200, five hours), Bhubaneswar (₹210 to ₹240, five hours) and Balasore (₹45 to ₹60, 1½ hours). The 12892 Bhubaneswar-Baripada Express (2nd class/AC chair ₹135/475, five hours, 5.10pm) runs from Bhubaneswar every day except Saturday, and returns as the 12891 at 5.10am every day except Sunday. A car and driver to the park from Baripada should cost around ₹2500.

by boat, and the main reason to come is to spot crocodiles and birds (particularly at the Bagagahana heronry).

There are long-snouted gharials, short squat muggers, and enormous estuarine crocodiles, or 'salties', which bask on mud flats before diving into the water for cover as your boat chugs past. One particular 23-foot beast that you're likely to see has made the Guinness Book of World Records.

The best time to visit is from December to February, but you'll see crocs all year round, and may also see monitor lizards, spotted deer, wild boar and all sorts of birds, including eight species of brilliantly coloured kingfishers. Herons arrive in early June and nest until early December, when they move on to Chilika Lake, while raucous open-billed storks have set up a permanent rookery here. A short walk through the mangroves from one of the docks inside the sanctuary leads to a birding tower. There is also a 5km nature walk along one of the islands, though that's best done on weekdays when there are fewer visitors.

It's also worth knowing that this area has the highest concentration of king cobras found anywhere in India, as well as half a dozen other potentially deadly viper species.

The park entrance is at the beautiful, but very poor, mud-hut village of Dangmal (Dang-ger-mal), and all tour boats depart from the same dock at 7.30am. You can learn more about the crocodile conservation pro-

gram at Dangmar Island; the sanctuary is off-limits to visitors during the May-August crocodile breeding season.

### Sleeping & Eating

#### ★ Aul Palace

HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$\$

(Rajbati; ☎9437690565; [www.kilaaulpalace.com](http://www.kilaaulpalace.com); r incl breakfast ₹4000; ✱) In the village of Aul, this centuries-old former royal palace has been converted into an intimate retreat. The rooms are splendidly furnished with antique furniture, the tranquil grounds and the riverfront location add charm, and meals may include giant river prawns. Half-/full-day boat trips (₹4000/6000) into Bhitarkanika are arranged. Several direct buses serve Aul from Cuttack (₹70, three hours).

The raja splits his time between Cuttack and Aul, and it's particularly interesting to stay here when he's around to host you.

#### ★ Nature Camp

##### Bhitarkanika

CAMPGROUND \$\$\$

(☎9437029989, 9437016054; [www.bhitarkanikatour.com](http://www.bhitarkanikatour.com); per person incl meals & transfer from Bhubaneswar s/d/tr/q ₹12,000/6675/4821/3894; ☀ Oct-Apr) 🍃 A special experience awaits at this small, sustainable, privately run tented camp at the heart of Dangmal village, built with the help of villagers and just 200m before the sanctuary gate. The stylish Swiss Cottage tents are a tad musty but fully equipped with electricity, fans, sit-down

flush toilets and pleasant terraces, and the rustic Odisha cuisine is excellent.

Nature Camp does accept walk-ins, though you'd be wise to contact them in advance. The majority of their customers come as part of overnight or multinight packages that include transfers from Bhubaneswar, visits to the Pusphagiri ruins en route, park entry, boat trips and nature hikes in the reserve and all meals. A two-night all-inclusive trip for one/two/three people costs ₹22,000/25,000/29,000.

**Dangmal Forest Rest House** GUESTHOUSE \$\$ (www.bhitarkanika.org; d ₹1500-2500) The Forestry Department-run Forest Rest House is located just inside the sanctuary's main gate. Annoyingly, rooms have to be pre-booked through the Wildlife Warden at Rajnagar village, about an hour's drive back up the road. Cheaper rooms are available for Indian tourists.

## **i** Information

### PERMITS

The powers that be at the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary are prone to changing the rules regarding permits. At research time, advance registration of foreign visitors was required, so get in touch with **Nature Camp Bhitarkanika** (p619) or **Aul Palace** (p619) in advance if you're interested in going on a boat tour.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Wildlife Society of Odisha** (☎9437024265; www.facebook.com/wildlifesocietyoforissa; Shantikunj, Link Rd, Cuttack) Has information

on the plight of Odisha's olive ridley marine turtles.

**Wildlife Warden** (☎9437037370, 06729-242460; Rajnagar) Book the Dangmal Forest Rest House accommodation through this guy.

## **i** Getting There & Away

The easiest way to visit the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary is by an organised trip with **Nature Camp Bhitarkanika** (p619), which includes pick-up from Bhubaneswar and visits to the Pusphagiri ruins en route.

Getting here by public transport is a bit of a mission. Two or three direct buses to Dangmal leave from Cuttack between noon and 1pm. Otherwise, frequent buses go from Cuttack to Pattamundai (₹70, three hours), from where you can catch onward buses to Dangmal (₹45, 2½ hours, last bus 5pm), passing Rajnagar en route.

There are three early-morning buses from Dangmal. The 5am and 7am both go as far as Kendrapara (a small town just past Pattamundai), from where you can catch onward transport to Cuttack or Chandikhol (for the Pusphagiri ruins). The 6am bus goes all the way to Cuttack. After that, you'll have to catch an autorickshaw from Dangmal to Rajnagar (around ₹600) from where the last bus to Cuttack leaves at 2pm. You can also take one of the 10 or so trains (2¼ to three hours) to Bhadrak (the nearest railhead, 60km away from Bhitarkanika) from Bhubaneswar and request to be picked up from there by Nature Camp Bhitarkanika.

## **i** Getting Around

The only way to get around the sanctuary is by boat.