

Magic in Stone – Hoysala Architecture

Duration: 3 Days, 2 Nights

Departure from: Bengaluru

Interests: History & Context

Type: Small Group, Expert led

Introduction

Very few places in South India have the cultural and architectural heritage of Belur and Halebid. Belur is located on the banks of river Yagachi and is known as Dakshina Banaras or 'Banaras of the South'. Halebid is also known as Dwarasamudra or 'The Gateway to the Seas'. The cities are located in the Hassan district of Karnataka. The cities thrived for about 150 years under the Hoysala empire. Belur was once the capital of their empire but under the reign of Vishnuvardhana, the greatest of the Hoysala kings, the capital was relocated to Halebid. It can be said that even though Belur and Halebid are 16 km apart, they will always be considered as one for what remains.

You can find plenty of mythological stories from the Hindu doctrines carved onto the temples of Belur and Halebid. These temples were built by the renowned architect Jakkanna Acharya. The intricate illustrations from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas and the Upanishads can leave you enchanted. The Chennakesava temple at Belur, the Hoysaleswara temple at Halebid are being proposed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Join us at Swarajya Heritage and Wanderfirst for this journey through the Hoysala temples and elaborate on the rich history trapped in these ruins. This journey will be led by **Dr. Raghavendra Rao H. Kulkarni, Professor, Department of Art History, College of Fine Arts, Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath**. Dr Kulkarni is a well-known expert of art history and has worked extensively on Badami Chalukya and Hoysala temples. He has to his credit multiple publications/books and research papers on related topics.

Itinerary

Day 1 – First view

We begin our journey much before the sun fixes himself up above Bengaluru.

We will have breakfast enroute and then begin leg 1 of day 1 to reach our first Hoysala shrine, **Sri Lakshmi Devi Temple at Doddagadduvalli**. Built in 1113 and this temple is architecturally unique presenting 9 shrines inside a single compound.

Post lunch we will head into leg 2 of day 1 to **Belur**, an early Hoysala capital. A handsome **Keshava (Chennakeshava)** seated on the banks of river Yagachi awaits to amaze us by his temple inscriptions and history. The temple is constructed on a 3 feet high pedestal with a pradakshina patha where one can go around watching all the carvings of Vishnu avatars, Shiva, Parvathi, Ganesha along with Mandakinis or commonly known as Shilabalikes.

At the end to day 1 we will check-in into our hotel.

Meals Included - Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.

Day 2 – Experience the Glory

After an early breakfast, we leave for yet another former capital of the Hoysala Empire, **Halebeedu**.

Hoysaleshwara temple is the epicenter to amazement in leg 1 of day 2. Built on the banks of a man-made lake, it took 39 years beginning in 1121 to construct this amazing temple. We all know time machines are nonexistent, but this temple's artwork provides a pictorial window into the life and culture in the 12th century South India. Also hosting 340 large relief depict of the Hindu theology and associated legends.

After lunch we travel to **Veera Narayana temple in Belawadi** for leg 2 of day 2. While the temple is yet another Hoysala classic, the town is believed to be the place mentioned in Mahabharatha where Pandava prince Bheema killed the demon Bakasura and protected the village and its people. Time permitting, we will also visit the *Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple in Javagal*.

We will end our day with the entire group of travelers sharing inferences and perspectives throughout the trip thus far in the company of Dr Kulkarni.

Meals included - Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner.

Day 3 – Rounding off

Again, we will have an early breakfast. We will check-out of the hotel and head for **Amruthapura**. The last leg to our understanding of the Hoysala temples will be by visiting the **Amrutheshwara temple**. The *Ramayana* is sculpted on the south side wall on seventy panels, with the story proceeding quite unusually, in anti-clockwise direction. On the north side wall, all depictions are clockwise, a norm in Hoysala architectural articulation. Twenty-five panels depict the *life of Lord Krishna* and the remaining forty-five panels depict scenes from the epic *Mahabarata*.

We will have lunch and leave for Bengaluru. On our way back, time permitting, we will make a quick stop at the *Ishwara temple in Arsikere*. Constructed in 1220, though quite notably having ordinary sculpture you will be taken beyond expectations by its floor plan. The most complex and unique among all Hoysala temples.

We will reach Bengaluru late in the evening.

Meals included - Breakfast and Lunch.

Tour Highlights

- Channakeshava Temple, Belur
 - The Belur Temple complex houses Sri.Vijaya Narayana (Now known as Sri.Channakeshava). This temple is one of the most spectacular temples of Hoysala Architecture and consists of beautiful carvings present both outside as well as inside the temple.
- Hoysaleswara and Kedareshwara temples, Halebeedu
 - Halebeedu literally translates to "old capital, encampment". It used to be called Dorasamudra or Dwarasamudra and was the regal capital of the [Hoysala Empire](#) in the 12th century

- Amrutheshwara temple, Amruthapura
 - Known for the sculptures of Ramayana and Mahabharata sculpted into wall panels around the temple

Detailed Tour Logistics

Duration: 3 Days, 2 Nights

Departure from: Bengaluru

Exact Departure location: Namma Metro station, Cubbon Park Station, Bengaluru

Departure time: 0600 hrs on date of departure

Drop location on return: Namma Metro station, Cubbon Park Station, Bengaluru

Drop time: Late evening. Expected to be between around 2200 hrs on the last day of the itinerary.

Terms

Inclusion

1. Transport from and to the departure point. Seat allocation will be at the discretion of the organizers.
2. Stay at a three-star hotel or resort on twin-sharing basis. Allocation of room partners will be at the discretion of the organizers. Attempt will be made to accommodate your wants towards this.
3. Vegetarian meals as indicated in the itinerary. Breakfast would typically be at the hotel of stay and lunch/dinner at a restaurant/hotel chosen by the tour management.
4. Temple and monument entry fees (for Indian nationals only; foreign nationals will need to pay separately at some monuments)

Exclusions

1. Photography and videography charges (need to be paid separately)
2. Additional refreshments like small eats, drinks
3. Any other aspect not mentioned in inclusions

Payment and cancellation policy

1. Full payment to be made upfront
2. Full refund will be made if the tour is cancelled by the organizers.
3. 50% refund will be made if the customer cancels the booking within 20 days of departure.

Things to note

1. The tour will involve enough walking outdoors in the day. Please ensure you carry your caps and sunglasses. Keep a bottle of water ready with you always to beat the heat.
2. Given the walking we will be doing, ensure you get a good pair of walking shoes that you're comfortable with, for the tour.

3. If you need things like medication, keep it handy and ensure you bring it along with yourselves. Do not depend on being able to buy such locally.
4. If you have any allergies, be sure to check explicitly on the food that will be served to you.
5. Please ensure you have enough cash for miscellaneous expenses you may incur. Do not depend on ATMs etc. locally to provide for this.
6. The tour will start early morning and we will return late in the evening the last day at the departure point. So, if you're not from the city where the tour departs from, it is best if you plan your arrival and departure one day on either side of the tour departure date at the least.