

# Pattadakal, considered an auspicious place where Chalukya kings used to be crowned, was included in UNESCO's

# World Heritage Sites in 1987

ciently led to the tall trees... it was their bliss.

On my many boat rides, I also visited Kurumga, another island but notably different from Devagiri, while the latter is mostly soft sand and gentle waves, Kurumga is a rocky island and the waves breaking against the boulders can be quite fierce at times. But a trek up to the top to pray at the Narsimha temple and to visit an old lighthouse is a pleasant activity.

#### NAVIGATOR

**BY AIR:** The nearest airport is Dabolim in Goa (90 km), from where you can get public transport or hire taxi.

**BY RAIL:** Kanwar railway station is about 10 km from the city, it is an important train halt on the Kanwar railway.

**BY ROAD:** From Bangalore, which is 520 km away, there are plenty of overnight buses to Kanwar. From Panaji, which is 104 km away, it takes about two hours by bus.

**PLACES TO STAY:** Kanwar has a few regular options, including a couple of resorts. But the best option is in Devagiri, at the resort run by Jungle Lodges. Visit [www.junglelodges.com](http://www.junglelodges.com) for booking details.

-Anita Rao wazir

background. The famous wedding scene in the movie *Guru* was shot here. And local saavn to be quite proud of the fact.

Dalbatraya, star-shaped walkways/jams and Bimashankari temples, Badami fort and dargah can quench the appetite of a religious traveller. A little away is a Buddhist cave amidst lush greenery. But it can be entered only by crawling on your hands.

The second day belonged to the Badami caves - the world's first monolithic shrines. The noteworthy caves with four temples of rare sculptural excellence, offer a thrilling trek up.

Crawling through the narrow caves gave me a nervous shiver. No space in the caves is left untouched by the artist's chisel. Each shrine is decorated - murals, artistic columns with bead chain inscriptions, sculpture carvies and bracket figures adorn its interiors and ceilings. One cave has 81 poses of Lord Shiva

At the foothill of the Hindu-style caves, there is a mosque of the Ahi Suni dynasty, its impressive black gumbaz has inscriptions in Arabic and extracts from the holy Quran.

Located at 46 km from Badami, Aihola is nothing short of an architectural marvel. Within the ancient fortification there are an unparalleled 50 temples. There are more visible. They are dedicated to deities of the Hindu pantheon.

Experimentations with architecture gave a cognate shape to the temples, creating three distinct styles: Dravida, Nagara and Kaledasa. It was hard to call one as superior among the 70 odd temples. Yet, the Durga temple needs a mention for its apical plan but non-apical curvilinear shikhara.

From Aihola, I took the 10-kilometre journey to Pattadakal. The route was adorned with vast fields of swaying sunflowers

which looked splendid. Locals in small huts outside the Pattadakal complex were offering jagg-rice. My appetite saw no boundaries thereafter.

Ten temples (in a series) made in the Dravidian and Nagara styles are mesmerising for their awesome beauty. Pattadakal was included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites in 1987. While Pattadakal is considered to be the university of architecture, Badami is called a degree college and Aihola, a school.

Pattadakal was considered to be a very auspicious and holy place where the Chalukya kings used to be crowned.

**CRUISE LOGGERS:** (above) The ruins of temples in Pattadakal that was considered to be the 'university' of architecture where Badami was a 'degree college' and Aihola, a 'school'



## BAGALKOT Sweet melody

String a series of notes together one after the other, and you have a melody. String different notes of appeal-adventure-archi- tecture, site by site, and you have Badami, Aihola and Pattadakal - the less-explored Chalukyan towns in Karnataka's Bagalkot district.

Walking being my favourite way of exploring a new place, I first decided to see Badami on foot. It used to be the capital of the early Chalukyas who ruled Karnataka between the 6th and 8th centuries. Badami is now a small town situated at the mouth of a ravine between two steep hills.

Perched on the edge of a rock, Walagiri Shivalaya, a 7th-century Shiva temple, was the first of the many to unfold before my eyes. Down the hill and past a lake with green tinged water, I saw a small shrine. It was the Shrutashukra temple - the 5th-century shrine having a calm and mystic appearance with caves in the