



The writer is a technology architect at an IT services company

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Where history stands tall

Having lived in Bangalore for years, only some of my recent sojourns within the state have given me an insight into the hidden treasures here. Srirangapatna, 130 km from the city, is one such town. In its heydays, Srirangapatna was the capital of the kingdom of Mysore. Here, Tipu Sultan had courageously fought the British and chained them to the stone slabs, fixed like hooks on the walls of Colonel Bailey's Dungeon. Though a dungeon built in brick and mortar, the consecutive arches inside form interesting patterns on the floor and an intriguing frame for a lensman.

The town is shaped like an egg, surrounded by the River Cauvery, giving it the look of an island. A plethora of must-see places welcomed us here — from the glorious ninth century Ranganathaswamy temple, Darya Daulat Bagh to Tipu's Summer Palace — with its beautifully carved Gumbaz and ivory inlaid doors. There is also the Jamia Masjid built by Tipu to perform his prayers in 1787 AD. The mosque has an inscription stone carrying the ninety-nine names of Allah. Each of these monuments brings a sense of raw wonder, coupled with the blend of cultures here.

As we walked along the fort, we saw, at a distance, a long structure standing graceful and tall in the open. Not having read much about it, we walked towards it. With the looming dark skies, visibility limited to a kilometre, and only its structure discernible, it seemed as if we were walking into clouds. This monument was the obelisk that marked the place where Tipu Sultan breathed his last in 1799, while trying to stop a British soldier from pulling his legendary sword from its sheath. The commemorative structure was built by the Government of Mysore in 1907.

From this height, we could witness layers of fortification — multiple walls, broad moats, wide streams and thick foliage. Entering the fort must have been like staring death in the eye. Before departing, we silently felt the pride of one of the most dynamic kings of Mysore, who fell defending his capital. The obelisk will relate his story for generations to come; it will never fall.

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Covering 1,750 km in five days on a motorbike may sound backbreaking. But not for **Balaji Perumal** and **Arun G**, whose spirits are freshly soaked from their ride through south India

This trip was due for a while, but choosing a route was difficult. One of us wanted to ride through the hills; the other wanted to be near the sea. Finally, we settled on a plan that'd keep us both happy — we were to ride to Thrissur for Christmas, onto Kannur, and enter Karnataka through Mahe, Mangalore and Gokarna, before we turned home-

ward. We left for Mysore early on Christmas Eve. After a quick stop for breakfast, we rode on to Nanjangud. There are more potholes than roads here. But after 50 km of riding in Chamarajnagar, the border town between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the roads changed dramatically. Then on, the bike zipped like a knife cutting through butter.

Riding through Sathyamangalam forests was a surreal experience. With 27 hairpin bends and breathtaking views of dry deciduous forest and Shola trees, we managed to make up for lost time here. A lunch of mutton curry and *parotas*, with the cold mountain air for company, fired us up for the next half of our journey.

The fatigue of the ride had started kicking in, but we managed to reach Palakkad by early evening. The danger of riding through Kerala roads became more apparent; bus drivers drive without a care and pedestrians at village crossings seemingly wait for a brush with death at every turn. Carefully navigating through these obstacles, we reached Thrissur.

After giving our souls — and bodies — some rest on the lazy Christmas day in Thrissur, we mounted our bikes, waiting in top condition despite the rough and tumble of the previous day's ride. Off we started for Kannur on Boxing Day. Our aim: To bypass all major towns, effectively avoiding truck

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