

The Grand Canyon of India – Gandikota

by Ami Bhat (Lonely Planet Author)

Mar 2019



Image courtesy: @Ami Bhat

The Grand Canyon has mystified many with its rich topography and stunning views – so much that a lot of you might have added it to your bucket list of travel. Here is how you can tick it off your list, without actually travelling abroad. All you have to do is visit the Grand Canyon in India, right here in Andhra Pradesh.

Gandikota is a lovely gorge located in the Kadappa district of Andhra Pradesh. It is not just replete with the natural beauty of a canyon dissected by a river but has a fascinating history too. Adventure lovers can camp out under the stars while enjoying their choice of adrenaline in the unexplored and rustic Gandikota.

History of Gandikota

Gandi means canyon and Kota refers to a fort. The place was discovered by a subordinate of a Chalukya king in 1132 CE. Owing to its strategic location, he set up a mud fort which was later won by the Khilji kings. The Vijayanagara kings took over the area after defeating the Khiljis and made the Kamma dynasty take charge of the area under their fold. Eventually, with the decline of the empires, the place was abandoned and left in ruins.

From its age-old fort to its pretty lake & river, Gandikota has tons of things for you to do. Here is a quick list that will get you planning for this offbeat destination.

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1-Explore the Gandikota Fort



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The erstwhile mud fort had been expanded over time to include a mosque, two temples, water tanks, watch towers and more. Walk along the crumbling walls to discover the lovely Jamia Masjid with its sunken fountain and intricate minarets. Find the Kattula Koneru – a water tank where the soldiers washed their swords. Explore the carved pillars of the Ranganatha Swamy temple while appreciating the artistic gateway of the Madhavaraya temple. Along the trail, look out for the abandoned tomb and the Charminar – an exquisite pigeon tower.

2-Try some adventure sports

Pull up your socks and lace up your hiking shoes for a trek along the gorge. Try some rock climbing to enjoy a different view. If water is what you enjoy, attempt some Kayaking on the Rayalacheruvu Lake behind the fort. Maybe, you can combine the land and water experience with some cliff jumping into Pennar River. For those who prefer it to be little less intensive, there is always a coracle ride or a swim in the river.

3-Sunrise & sunset over Gandikota

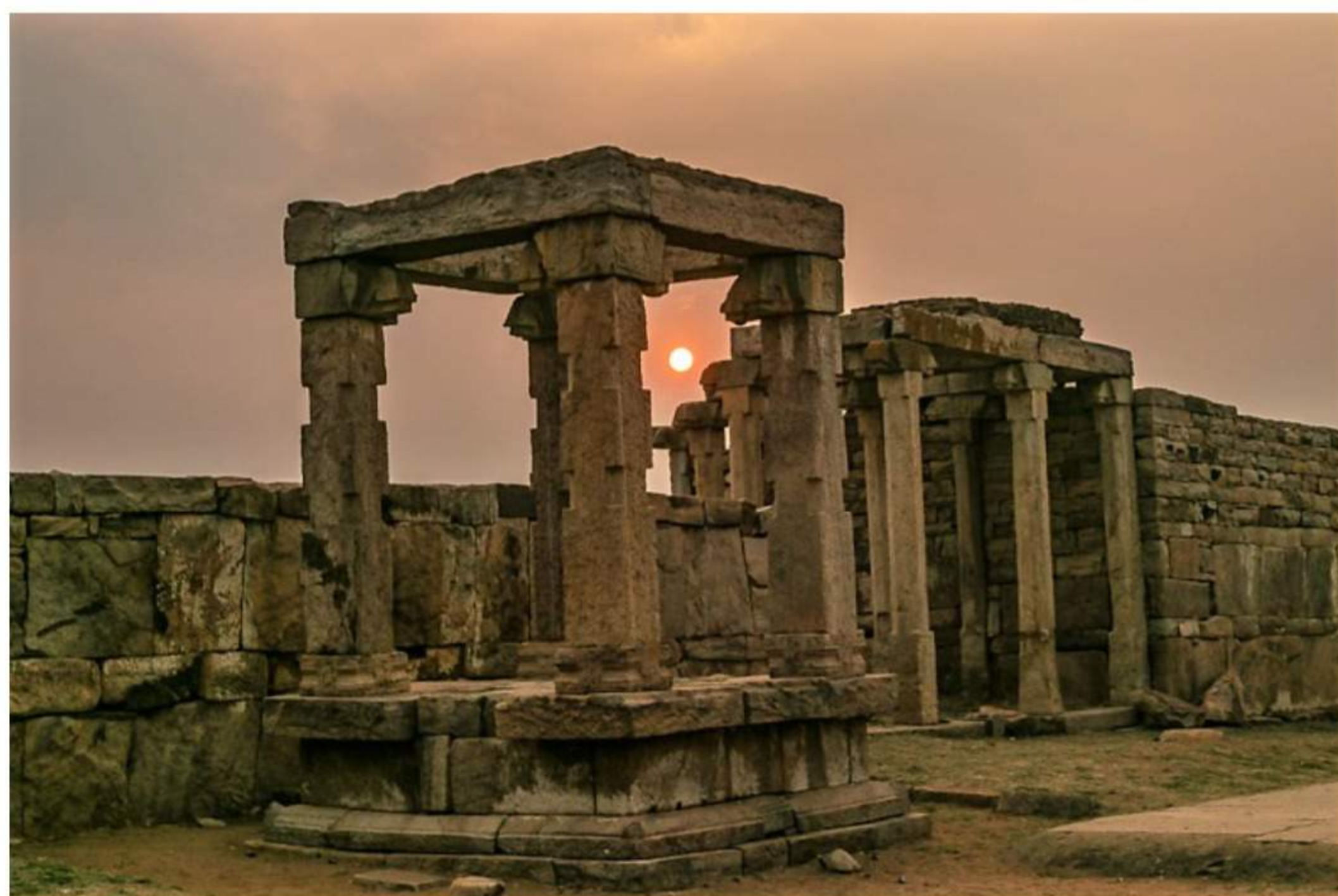


Image courtesy: @Ami Bhat

The view point from where you can see the lovely Pennar River cutting through the gorge will take your breath away. But what adds to its charm is the sunrise and sunset. It is quite poetic when you see those orange rays glisten the ridges of the gorge to create an unforgettable splash of colours. The ancient ruins of the temples and the mosque tend to add yet another dimension to this entire experience.

4-Catch some birds of Gandikota

Head over to Lake Rayalacheruvu or the Pennar River after sunrise and you will be in for a treat. From pretty purple sunbirds to blue thrush and large kites, there are plenty of birds fluttering around. If you are there between December to February, you are even likely to catch the migratory visitors. Parakeets are in abundance and you will find them making enough noise along the ruins of Gandikota fort.

5-Camp under the stars

Pitch your own camp by the fort or over the rocks or even near the lake. Set up a small bonfire and enjoy your own barbeque. Once you are done, pull your sleeping bags out on the grass and lie down to see the twinkling stars. It might be a good idea to even set up a telescope to catch the planets. Tip: Carry enough mosquito repellent if you are up for these outdoor camps.

6-Head out for a day trip to Belum Caves

Between sunrise and sunset, set out in your car towards the 2nd longest caves of India, Belum Caves, just 60 km from this canyon.

Travel Tips:

- Gandikota is around 279 km from Bangalore and 390 km from Hyderabad
- There is only one APTDC hotel here therefore it is advisable to book your stay early. Alternately you can camp in Gandikota.
- There is no entrance fee for the fort or the canyon.
- There are no big restaurants nearby. The only decent one is attached to the APTDC hotel here.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Ami Bhat is senior marketing professional who has turned into a full time travel writer and blogger. A travel enthusiast, who loves sports, photography and dancing with equal passion, Ami believes in planning a short escape for every long weekend that can come up through the year. And when she cannot travel physically, she travels virtually through words on her travel. More on: www.thrillingtravel.in



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