

best time to visit

Grand Canyon at Gandikota



BEAUTY AT ITS BEST:
The canyons of Gandikota



Gandikota fort, with its gorgeous view of the canyon and surrounding forests, is a delight for rock climbers



WANDERERS
The writer (right)
with his friend
after trekking

SOHAN PAVALURI

Gandikota is a small village on the right bank of the river Pennar, 15 km from Jammalamadugu in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh. The fort of Gandikota acquired its name from the 'gorge' ('gandi' in Telugu), formed between the Erramala range of hills, also known as Gandikota hills and the river Pennar flowing at its foot and reducing its width to a mere 300 ft.

Amid a beautiful landscape of wild forests, it is endowed with vast natural resources. A prominent fort for about a millennium, it had last seen action during the Mysore wars. The fort is built on a canyon overlooking the Pennar river. The canyon is stunning and magical to view from the river bed. For those interested in rock climbing with all the red granite rocks.

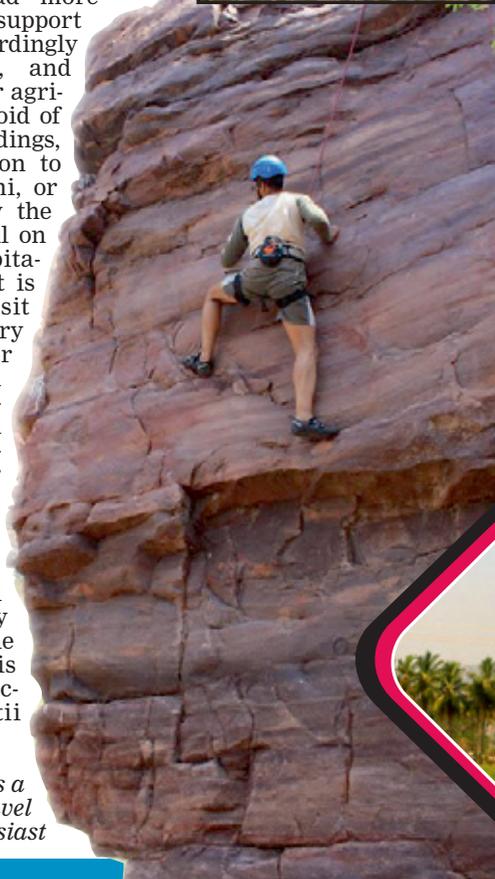
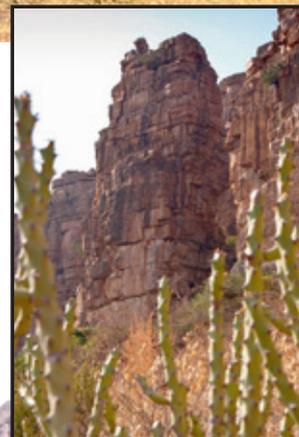
Part of the village is outside the fort, and part of it is within. You could drive all the way into the fort, to the mosque, and park there. Some of the fort walls have been broken down to create the access down to the valley. The access itself is about three-fourths of a kilometre. The valley is filled with thorns, infested with vipers and beehives and at night there are plenty of mosquitoes.

The first night, we camped at a lake between Jammalamadugu and Gandikota. The following morning, we drove back to

Gandikota and hiked down to the valley and back up again to the base of Needle rock. We largely ended up bouldering. The second night, we camped out on the river bed. The temperature was lower here, thanks to the wind tunneling through the valley. There's some possibility of bouldering in the valley, and that is how we made up for not climbing much during the day.

The ruins of Gandikota are minimal. The fort is six kilometres in circumference, so should have had more inhabitation to support the fort, and accordingly more buildings, and infrastructure for agriculture. It is devoid of many older buildings, say in comparison to Hampi or Badami, or Gingee. Probably the battles took a toll on the human habitation there. But it is still worth a visit purely for a history buff as well for what remains. A couple of temples, a mosque, a couple of granaries, or other buildings still exist. The landscape is very inspiring. The rolling hills and plateau are very arid, most of the vegetation is thorny in character and cactii abound.

— The writer is a student and travel enthusiast



Feel the winter at Gandikota fort

Best time to be here is during the winter months. From March onwards the temperature shoots up to 39 Celsius and more! The Gandikota fort comes under the Archaeological Survey of India and you need prior permission from the concerned authorities. It's a good idea to keep the police station at Jammalamadugu informed about your presence at Gandikota.

accommodation



Cool your thirst at local stops

There's an APSTDC guesthouse and it costs under ₹1,000 per person for a 24-hour stay. Camping at Gandikota along the Pennar river is also an option. The food is very basic and if you're lucky you may find some meat at one of the eateries here. The food is pretty basic, dal and rice and non-veg items are offered in some of the eateries here. The place has small stores that sell soft drinks, bottled water and other snacks.

how to reach

DESTINATION

You can take an APSRTC bus from MGBS in Hyderabad to Jammalamadugu and a bus from there to Gandikota. The 400 km long journey takes around 6 hrs. For those who prefer trains there is the Venkatadri Express, which starts at 8 pm from Kacheguda and stops at 4 am at Mudunnur. From there you can either take an auto rickshaw to Jammalamadugu or travel directly to Gandikota (40 km).