

# Krishna District's Temple Town

Round off your trip to the Krishna Pushkaralu this week with a visit to the temple town of Mangalgiri. Shop for beautiful handloom sarees or simply visit the famous Panakala Narasimha Swamy temple, and a small detour will take you to Kondapalli where you can buy the world famous hand-made wooden toys



Kondapalli toys

NEEHARIKA SATYAVADA

A half an hour drive from Vijayawada is the town of Mangalgiri, famous for its beautiful handloom textiles that go by the same name as the town. The handloom sarees and fabric from this Temple Town are distinctive with their tell tale pattern of checks interwoven into the fabric with varying layers of thread. Instead of buying these typically South Indian sarees from a branded store near you, why not walk into this town and drive around to shop directly from the weavers at their home. Not only would you be encouraging these traditional artisans but you would also be spoilt for choice as the colours and designs available here are unparalleled.

As you take the turn on the highway to get to the centre of town, you will find the majes-



Portrait of Raja Vasireddy Venkadri Naidu, who built the Panakala Narasimhaswamy Temple

tic temple of Panakala Narasimha Swamy looking over the town from a hill. The sulphur

content in the land in this region led to many volcanic eruptions in the past, which the villagers took as a sign of the god's wrath and to appease him began to offer him 'panakam' (jaggery in water). To this day devotees, who visit the temple pour the panakam down the deity's mouth. The popularity of this 366-year-old temple is widespread and draws pilgrims from far and wide.

Another temple in this town is also dedicated to Narasimha Swamy but in another form. Built by Krishnadevaraya in the 16th century, the Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Aalayam at the foothills of Mangalgiri is striking even from afar with its massive and intricately designed gopuram.

If you prefer to keep this trip to the Pushkaralu religious, you can also visit the all powerful Goddess Durga's Temple on the Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada. Or visit Amaravati, which is only a short detour along the way to see how the new capital is shaping up! Another interesting place to visit nearby is the town of Kondapalli. Who hasn't heard of the wooden toys from here? These handmade toys are made from the wood from the local devararu trees and painted in bright vegetable dyes and vibrant enamel

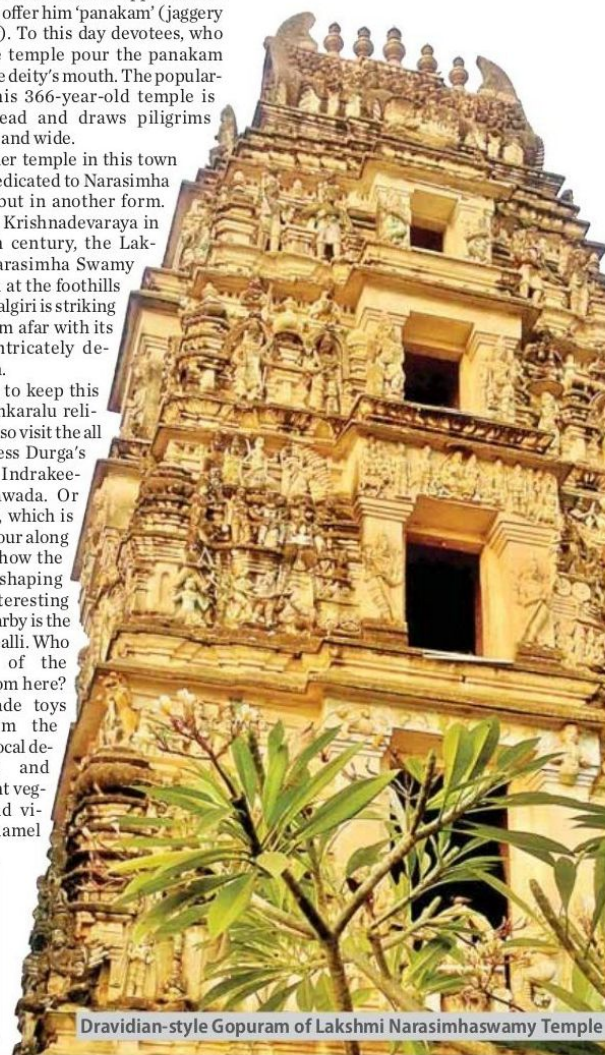
**The sulphur content in the land in this region led to many volcanic eruptions in the past, which the villagers took as a sign of the god's wrath and to appease him began to offer him 'panakam' (jaggery in water). To this day devotees take panakam there and pour it down the deity's mouth**

## Fact File

Mangalgiri is 18 kilometres from Vijayawada on the way to Guntur. A little over 250kms from Hyderabad, you can get here in under four hours. Take the National Highway 9 to drive down straight from Hyderabad.



Weaver working on a Mangalgiri Saree



Dravidian-style Gopuram of Lakshmi Narasimhaswamy Temple