

mangalagiri

A mélange of colors

Offering something for everyone, Mangalagiri near Vijayawada has numerous charms in its folds. Photography enthusiast and travel lover **NEEHARIKA SATYAVADA** rediscovers the many charms of a village famous for its saris and temples on a recent visit...

At a distance of 18 kms from Vijayawada, Mangalagiri a place as famous for its temples as for the colorful bouquet of weaves it produces. You can visit the temples for a quick darshan, shop at the many stores, simply soak in the clean village air and walk around the countryside and farms.



Road trip duration: 4 hours



Things to do in Mangalagiri

PANAKALA NARASIMHASWAMY TEMPLE perched atop the Mangalagiri hills was built in 1650 AD by Raja Vasireddy Venkadi Naidu, the ruler of the town. A splendid gate leads you to the main temple and the entrance is flanked a gigantic chariot or *ratham*.

The temple got its name from *panakam* (water mixed with jaggery) served as an offering to the deity.

The region was prone to volcanic eruptions in the past due to the abundance of sulphur found in the region. The eruptions were attributed as the angry outbursts of Lord Narasimhaswamy and *panakam* was poured into the idol's mouth to placate him. To date every visitor offers jaggery water to the deity. The temple closes by 4 in the afternoon.

LAKSHMI NARASIMHASWAMY TEMPLE is located at the bottom of the hill and is the first thing you notice the minute you drive into the town with its arresting *gopuram* which towers over the town. Built in the 16th century by Krishnadevaraya, the temple is beautiful and the intricate carvings on the *gopuram* speak volumes about the quality of artisans in the past. Walking around the temple transports you to the past with its fallen pillars, stone walls and vast spaces exuding heritage from every corner.

SHOPPING FOR HANDLOOMS is a major draw. The temple town offers some of the finest cotton saris and fabric and the town is full of stores where you can shop to your heart's content.

FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN KNOWING HOW THE SARIS ARE WOVEN, a visit to the weavers' looms is a must. The weavers are friendly and share interesting anecdotes. It takes about two days to complete a sari and the commonly seen motifs are mango, leaves, flowers and geometric designs. Fab India sources its fabric from here and the most arresting features of Mangalagiri fabric is its mélange of colors -



Getting there

The first surprise you get when you hop into your car and get on the highway NH 9 to Vijayawada is that the newly built expressway is absolutely fabulous. A trip to Vijayawada (267 kms) now takes a little over three hours. Mangalagiri is 18 kms from Vijayawada on the way to Guntur. The expressway is beautifully lit up during the night and makes for a fantastic road trip with friends.

Pit Stop

You will encounter no problems in the food department on your trip. While on the way, you can stop at the 7 food court in Suryapet which offers an assortment of choice - from Subway and CCD to regular South Indian meals.

Vijayawada is dotted with numerous restaurants small and big. Do try the Achari Biryani at Serenade restaurant which will tingle your tastebuds with its spices or for an authentic Andhra *thali* try the Anjaneya Vilas in One Town or the Srinivasa Hotel famous for its Gongura Chicken. If you are directly proceeding to Mangalagiri, Sharma *dhaba* just before you enter the village serves good vegetarian food.

Stay

Just 18 km away from Vijayawada, you can stay at any of the multiple hotels there.

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reds, oranges, greens and yellow make the sari as vibrant as a rainbow. Bargaining is tough here as the storekeepers refuse to give in to any tactics employed by even the most seasoned shoppers.

Places of interest nearby

A visit to Mangalagiri can either be a day trip or a weekend trip if you club it along with any of the following places

AMARAVATI is 30 kms from Mangalagiri is famous for its Amareswara temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple is one of the famous Pancharamas. Amaravati was the site of a great Buddhist stupa built in pre-Mauryan times.

A VISIT TO THE TEMPLE TOWN OF VIJAYAWADA is a must. You can visit the Kanaka Durga temple on Indrakeeladri hills in the town or go for a boat ride on Prakasam barrage.

KONDAPALLY, famous for its toys made from wood, painted with vegetable dyes and vibrant enamel colors is a must visit. The toys here are made from special wood indigenous to this region, the Devadharu trees.



Handy tips

Do take that SLR along for the entire region is dotted with gorgeous hills and a scenic countryside.

Total cost: Accommodation & food per person: xxxxx xx xxxxx