

THE TOURISM VISTAS OF VISAKHAPATNAM

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Key Concepts: Smokeless Industry, Rock-cut Cisterns, Kurusura Submarine, Bavikonda, Thotlakonda, Bojjannakonda

Tourism is a travel for recreational or leisure purposes. The world Tourism Organization defines tourists as people who “Travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”. The United Nations Organization (U.N.O) accepted this of a tourist provided by the International union of official Travel Organization (now, it is called as W.T.O.) in their conference on International Travel and Tourism in 1963. The U.N.O. also derived different categories of Tourism as

- 1) Domestic Tourism involving residents of a country visiting their own country
- 2) Inbound Tourism involving non-residents visiting a country other than their own
- 3) Outbound tourism involving residents of a country visiting other countries.

Tourism is the second largest growing business after information technology in the global economy. It can be classified into six distinct categories according to the purpose of travel. They are (i) Recreational (ii) Cultural (iii) Sports/ Adventure (iv) Health (v) Convention Tourism (vi) Incentive Tourism. Tourism stimulates income, employment generation, eradicate poverty and eliminate regional disparity for a host country.

The pre-historic man (ancient man) wandered from one place to another place in search of food and shelter. The basic needs of the nomadic man were responsible for his travel. Gradually, that man undertook travel for pleasure i.e. to enjoy to leisure time. Later on it became tourism (Foster Douglas 1985, 1-10).

The origin of the word “Tourist” dates back to 1292 A.D. It has come from the word “Tour”, a derivation of the Latin word Tornus, meaning, a tool for describing a circle or a turner’s wheel. In the first half of the seventeenth century, the term was used for travelling from place to place, a journey on excursion, a circuitous journey touching the principal parts of a country. In the early nineteenth Century, the term tourist assumed a meaning of one who makes a tour or tours, especially one who does this for recreation or who travels for pleasure, object of interest, scenery or the like. The industrial revolution brought a significant change in the field of travel and tourism. The people started moving in large numbers to places away from their places and work with a view to seek change (Colliel 1997, 1-5).

In India, the tourism industry is substantial and vibrant, and the country is fast becoming a major global destination. The development of tourism in India is a fascinating subject. India’s glorious traditions and rich cultural heritage are closely linked with the development of tourism. Its magnificent movements attract a large number of visitors from all over the world. India’s

civilization and cultural heritage is not only one of the most ancient, but also one of the most extensive and varied. Throughout the ages, many races and people, who have either temporarily come into contact with India or have permanently settled within her borders have contributed to this richness. Tourism generates employment opportunities, earn foreign exchange without exporting anything tangible, leads to balanced regional development, helps to improve per capita income and standard of living, facilitates development of basic infrastructural facilities, promotes a hub by economic activities, generates the incomes for the government, enhances multiplier effort, promotes social mobility and helps exchange of cultural values. It is a smokeless industry (Khan 2006, 1-8).

The district of Visakhapatnam lies between 17°14'30" and 18°59' latitude and between 82°19' and 83°59' East Longitude (Ramesan 1979, 1-22). It has a coast line of 110 miles and an extreme island extension of about 180 miles. In area, it was the largest district in Madras Presidency and a large one in India, covering 18,344 square miles. It is bounded on the north by Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, on the east by Orissa and the seas on the South by the sea and the Godavari district and on the west by Madhya Pradesh.

The administrative head quarters is at the town of Visakhapatnam. It is beautiful, picturesque and hilly area, but in the greatest part, most unhealthy. A chain of the Eastern Ghats runs through the district in an oblique direction from north east to south west, dividing into two unequal portions, the larger being mountainous and the smaller flat. The higher peaks of this range are more than 5,000 feet high above mean sea level. The mountain slopes are covered with luxuriant vegetation, consisting of the valleys. The flora of Visakhapatnam varies greatly with the variations in altitude and moisture which occur within the district. Along the shore area found the salt-water plants; on the east coast; and on the hills, where the rainfall is heavier, the flora characteristic of the moist region.

In the hilly area, the wild animals used in South Indian forests are abundant, especially in the more remote parts, which constitute one of the best game tracts left in Madras; but the only species calling for notice is the wild *Bos bubalus* (buffalo) which is found in some of the remote parts of the Jeypore estate and nowhere else in the presidency. The plain portion of the Visakhapatnam district comprises from 5 to 6,000 square miles. It is everywhere a fertile well cultivated tract. The principle rivers are the Nāgāvali, with two important feeders the Mukkuva and Salur branches, which disembogue at Srikakulam, the Gosthani, which disembogues at Konadah the Bhimilipatnam or Chittivalasa rivers, the Sarada river and the Varaha river which empty themselves into the sea at Wattada, about thirty five miles south of the town of Visakhapatnam. The seacoast of this district, measured in a direct line from Tuni of the Godavari District on the south, to the right bank of the Srikakulam river as it disembogues at Machilipatnam (Bandar) on the north, Patacotta, Polam, Wattada, Pudimadaka, Pigeon Island, Visakhapatnam, Bhimilipatnam and Konadah are the seaports. There is an important port on the Coromandel Coast. Its conspicuous land-mark is the "head-land or promontory called the "Dolphin's Nose". The fundamental rocks of this district are all gneisses and igneous rocks of the Archaen group. They out crop in lines running mainly north-east and south-west, which direction determines that of the chief plateaux 80 feet thick of high level pisolitic laterite lying at about 4,000 feet above the sea on parts of the watershed north of the longitude of Koraput, and spreading out in the direction of the Kalahandi state. This laterite contains much hydrated

alumina and will possibly prove of value as an older red laterite loam, as at Waltair and on the lower plateaux south of Jeypore. The District experiences different climates. It is moist and relaxing along at the coast, hotter and drier in land, and wettest and coldest in the hills. The yearly temperature of Visakhapatnam on the coast is 82°, the climate being pleasant, in the cold weather, but somewhat relaxing at other seasons. The rainfall of this district is chiefly brought by the south-west monsoon. The heaviest rainfall occurs north of the ghats in Jeypore, and the lightest along the coast. The highest yearly average (76 inches) is recorded for Jeypore and the lowest (28 inches) at Polavaram on the coast.

The Visakhapatnam city is named after the god of valor, Visakha or Kartikeya the son of Shiva and Parvathi, who is also the ruler of planet mars and the god of wars. The region is also mentioned in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata epics. The former is referred as the forest areas through which Rama travelled in search of his abducted wife, and where he met his devotee, Sabari, who directed to the mountains where Hanuman lived. He also met Jambavan, a bear man, who helped him in his battle with Ravana. It was here, too, that Bheema defeated the demon Bakasura. The Pandavas huge stone club can be seen in the village of uppalam 40 kms. away from the main city. The region formerly formed part of the great Kalinga empire that stretched up to the river Godavari. It is also mentioned in Hindu and Buddhist texts belonging to the 5th and 6th centuries B.C. as well as by Sanskrit grammarians, Panini and Katyayana of 4th Century B.C. The area was under the rule of several dynasties viz. the Kalingas during the 7th century A.D. the Chālukāyas during the 8th century A.D. Reddi kings of Rajahmundry, Chōlas, Golkōnda Nawabs etc. It is 18th Century, Visakhapatnam was part of the northern circars. A region of coastal Andhra was under the control of French first and then went under the British rule. It is one of the districts of Madras Presidency of British India. After Independence, it was the biggest district in the County which subsequently divided into three districts i.e. Srikakulam, Vijayanagaram and Visakhapatnam. Visakhapatnam is primarily an industrial city, apart from being a tourist destination. The tourist centres are Araku Valley and Borra Caves, Simhachalam temple, Kambalakōnda and ancient Buddhist sites like Bavikōnda, Bojjannakōnda, Rushikōnda and Totlakōnda. It boasts a submarine museum at Rama Krishna Beach. It has the only Natural harbour on the eastern coast of India. Visakhapatnam is also the headquarters of the Eastern Naval Command of the Indian Navy. Vizag is truly a destination for every imagination.

TOURIST SPOTS:

Anantagiri

Anantagiri is located at the highest altitude place in Andhra Pradesh, located on the way to Araku Valley. It is surrounded by Coffee plantations, giving us a pleasant feel of nature's beauty. Several water-falls, of which Tadimada waterfalls are most famous and adorn the hillocks around the village. It is also considered as a health resort. Andhra Pradesh tourism has developed a beautiful way side restaurant to cater the needs of the tourists passing through Anantagiri towards Araku.

Appikōnda:

Appikōnda is a small village situated on the coast of the Bay of Bengal at a distance of 30 kms. from Visakhapatnam. It is also known as Kapilkōnda. It assumed religious importance owing to the existence of a Shiva temple containing a life size Nandi carved out of black stone. The temple contains inscriptions of 12th Century A.D. This village was granted by a

commander-in-chief of the Chōlas for the maintenance of worship. There are also other small temples around the temple, but are mostly covered with sand dunes.

Araku Valley:

Araku is one of the most important tourist destinations in Andhra Pradesh. A pleasant hill station famous for its scenic gardens with lush green nature valleys, waterfalls and streams. It is situated at a distance of 112 k.m. from Visakhapatnam. The journey to the valley either on the road or by train passing through several tunnels is a pleasure. The place is over 3,200 feet high with a bracing climate.

The major attractions in Araku are a tribal habitat museum on tribal heritage, living system and culture, a tribal village and traditional folk dances including the famous tribal dance called “Dhimsa”. The Dhimsa dance, an age old folk dance normally performed during “Itikala Pongal” is now offered in tourists packages everyday.

The Botanical garden at Padmapuram, Government silk farm with Mulberry gardens is the live examples to know the socio-economic conditions of the area. There is one more picnic spot called Dumbriguda waterfalls (Chaaparai). This spot is only 15 k.m. from Araku. One of the main attractions is tree top cottages located in the middle of green surroundings of Araku valley. These tree huts (hanging cottages) are ten feet above the ground level. Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation conducts a Rail-cum-Road package tour to Araku from Visakhapatnam. Comfortable accommodation is provided by Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation with bar-cum-restaurant at its Punnami Valley Resort.



Lively Vestiges of the Valley

Bavi Kōnda:

It is an important Buddhist heritage site located on a hill about 16 k.m. north-east from Visakhapatnam. Here, the Buddhist habitation is noticed on a 40 acres flat terraced area. In Telugu, Bavikōnda means a hill of wells. A Hinayana School of Buddhism was practiced here. It flourished between 3rd century B.C. and 3rd Century A.D. A piece of bone stored in an urn recovered here is believed to belong to the mortal remains of the Buddha. It also contains large quantity of ash, charcoal and earthenware. Three abandoned water tanks were also have been found on this hillock. The villages who are residing at the foot of the Bavikōnda hillock bear the sir name Buddhala. Excavations conducted form 1982 to 1987. A Maha Chaitya, several votive stupas, apsidal chaityagrihas, stupa chaityas, congregation hall, extensive viharas, rectangular halls and a refectory. It has remains of an entire Buddhist complex, comprising 26 structures belonging to three phases (Pachauri 1993, 17-24).

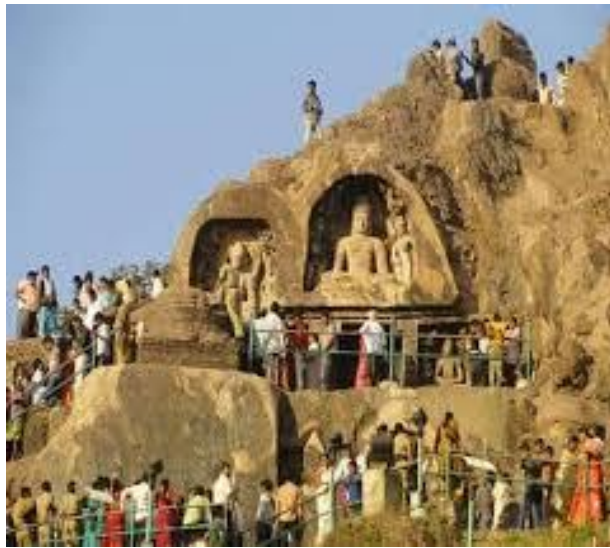
Bheemunipatnam:

About 25 K.m. from Visakhapatnam is beautiful beach of Beemunipatnam popular as Bheemili. It is located at the mouth of the river Gosthani. The beach is very safe for swimming and water sports. It is a tourist's heaven. Watching the setting sun play colourfully on the waves while the light casts a golden glow on the Dutch buildings is fully a relaxing pastime. The remains of a Dutch settlement with a ruined fort, armoury and Dutch cemetery dating back to the 17th century are preserved here. The important landmarks of Bheemili include pilgrimage centres, temples, old churches, clock tower, Light house, Port and more.

Bojjannakōnda:

Sankaram village at Bojjannakōnda near Anakapalle is popular Buddhist heritage site. The name of the Village Sankaram designed from the word "Sangharama" which meant monastery. It is located at a distance of 45 kms. from Visakhapatnam. There are many monolithic stupas, rock cut caves, ruins of prayer halls, meditation halls, brick build structural edifices, resting places available on the twin hills of Bōjjannakōnda and Lingalakōnda. This place is located by the side of the river Śārada. A Britisher Alexander Rea unearthed Sankaram, a 2000-year-old Buddhist heritage site in 1907.

The three phases of Buddhism viz. Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana flourished here. There are prayer halls where places marked in elevated platforms in semi circular shape for Gurujee and in circular shapes for the followers. The rooms of the followers are still available and each room has wall for lamps. There rock cut, four pillars and another cave with are wells built by storage of water. several historic coins dating back to A gold coin of to 4th Century A.D. place. Bojjanakōnda Buddhist pilgrims countries, especially Poornima. This place the rich Buddhist and is a must see for 1973, n.k.).



Tourists multitude at Bojjannakonda

Borra Caves:

These one million year old Rock formations are in the Prima Donna of the Araku Scenario. Borra caves are located at a distance of 92 k.m. north of Visakhapatnam, discovered by William King, the British Geologist in 1807.

The river Gosthani, beautiful hills, semi ever green moist deciduous forests and wild fauna of the area are visual feast. This location is at a height of 800 to 1300 meters from MSL. The humic acid in the water reacts with calcium carbonate in the limestone and dissolves the minerals

breaking the rock gradually. The perennial water flows over a period of time results in the formation of caves. Stalagmite are formed due to water percolating from the roof containing calcium-bi-carbonate and other minerals from mounds. Same way stalactites are also formed and because of their different shapes. Tourists and locals have given different names to them. These stalactites and stalagmites as Shiva-Parvathi, Mother-Child, Rushi's Beard, Human Brain, Crocodile, Tiger and Cows. Before reaching Borra Guhalu Railway station the train passes through 42 tunnels. This is truly a worth seeing.

Dolphin's Nose:

Dolphin's nose is the most prominent and unforgettable landmark in Visakhapatnam. It is a single massive hillock of more than 350 mts. height, resembling the shape of Dolphin. It protects the Visakhapatnam Harbour as well as the Head Quarter of Eastern Naval Command. Visakhapatnam Port Trust light house is situated on the top of the hill and guides the approaching ships to Visakhapatnam. The port channel cuts in between three hills which emphasize the lonely topography of Visakhapatnam. Ross Hill, the highest mount named after Mr. Ross, local authority, who built a house on it in 1864, Dargakōnda, has a mosque and a shrine of a muslim sage Ishauque Madina, who was revered for his prophecies. Sri Venkateswarakōnda has a temple, which was built by Capt Blackmoor in 1886. Now the area where these three hills has become an important pilgrim centre.

Erramatti Dibbalu (Red Sand Hills):

The Red hills of Bheemilipatnam, popularly known as "Erramatti Dibbalu", nearer to the Bay of Bengal. These beautiful ravines and hills were formed naturally by winds and soil erosion. It is famous because of the importance, it has got as a shooting place for movie makers.

Etikoppaka:

It is a small village situated on the banks of the river Varāha. The craftsmen of this village have won fame on a national scale with toys made of soft wood called "Ankudu" and coated with lac. These toys are colourful and depict the rural life.

Gopalapatnam:

It is situated on the left bank of river Tandava. Hinayana Buddhist settlement flourished here. The excavations revealed stupas and a chatussala type of Vihara, black and red ware pottery, rouletted ware, northern black polished ware and knobbed ware pottery. An interesting discovery is a pot sherd inscribed in Brahmi characters reading "MEGHA KALA", datable to 1st century A.D. A stone carving of Lajja Gouri, i.e. a nude squatting Mother Goddess, a lady playing Gitar like stringed musical instrument and the Nāga sculptures are also very interesting (Subrahmanyam and Sivanagireddy n.d., 1-6).

Indira Gandhi Zoological Park:

It is located in Visakhapatnam amidst the scenic Eastern Ghats with its natural settings. The zoo is flanked by hills on either side and attracts many visitors from all over the country. It is the largest in terms of area with an encompassing 450 acres full of exotic species of animals and birds amidst rolling landscapes of natural habitat. Half of this has been allotted for a deer park. The 300 types of specimens are allowed to move freely in a natural environment and a huge enclosure forms the crocodile park.

Kailasagiri:

It is situated on a hill top of the 100 acres available on the hilltop, 50 acres on the seaside have been developed into a beautiful park. This lush green park has a panoramic sea view on the East Coast, and a serene atmosphere, making it an outstanding tourist spot. The ranges are appropriately named Kailasagiri owing to the presence of the statue of the celestial couple. (Siva-Parvathi Stature) The entire area illuminated and presents a fantastic sight when viewed in the night from any part of the city.



Nature embedded Mesmerizing Parks

The titanic view Kpoint, manicured lawns' and flower beds, food court, a jungle trail, souvenir shop, telescopic viewpoint and many more. The other major attractions are the introduction of rope way to the hill, art gallery, air conditioned conference hall and capsule lift to the highest view point. It is also favourite location among the film makers.

Kambalakōnda:

Kambalakōnda, an Eco-Tourism project is located over a area of 7146 hectares in the picturesque Eastern Ghats. Rare species of flora and fauna, Fishing, Archery, Mountaineering are the specialities of this Eco-Tourism Project. The special attractions of this area are the reservoir view of Degalagedda, Nature trains, Boating, Birds, Peacocks and Rabbit spots, Watch tower, Horse ride and sea view. The Kambala Kōnda nature park is one of the rare and unique nature's gift to Visakhapatnam city.

Kurusura Submarine:

The Indian Navy has installed decommissioned submarine INS. Kurusura on the sands of the Rama Krishna Beach in Visakhapatnam as a museum for the display to public and tourists as well. This is the first of its kind in the Asia and second in the World. It was built by Russia on 18th December, 1969 and began its journey on February 20, 1970 via the Baltic Sea and reached Visakhapatnam on 11th May, 1970. Since, then it was being used by the Indian Defense. The Navy developed it as a war memorial with a project cost of Rs.5.5. Cores. The length of submarine is 91.3 mts. While the breadth is 8 mts. The aim of setting up of this museum is to create awareness among the public to know how the submarines work during wartime and how the crew takes action etc.

Mudasarlova:

A valley framed by hills, Mudasarlova is situated 10 k.m. from Visakhapatnam. It has a lake that supplies drinking water to the city and also makes a good picnic spot, famous for its pretty parks and scenery. An excellent Golf course is also located here.

Pavurala Kōnda:

“Pavuralakōnda” or “the hills of the pigeons” is a hillock lying to the west of Bheemili, at about 24 k.m from Visakhapatnam (Fogelin, 2003, 81-97). The Buddhist settlement found here is estimated to have witnessed human habitation between 1st Century B.C. to 2nd Century A.D. Sixteen rock-cut cisterns for impounding rain water are found on the hillock, which offer a panoramic view of the coastline. Some Early Brahmi lable inscriptions datable to Mauryan period have been discovered here.

Panchadharla:

It is situated at a distance of 24 k.m. from Anakapalli. Panchadharla derived its name from the fine jets of water coming out of fine fountains from a natural perennial spring. There is a Lingam on which are carved other Lingams in 12 rows of 85 each and thus also known as the Kotilingam. There are several inscriptions found on the pillars of the mandapam in the temple.

Rama Krishna Beach:

It is one of the most prominent beaches on the East Coast. It is the most happening place in Visakhapatnam, one of the crowd pullers in the city. Rama Krishna beach presents a picturesque and beautiful scenic spot. The important landmarks in the city viz. Aquarium (Matsy Darshini) – fishes from Singapore, Malaysia and from many other parts of the world were brought and are put for display at the museum, Visakha Museum gives a vivid picture of its historic moorings through its rare collection of artifacts, inscriptions and previous historic documents. Rama Krishna Mission – A place for pleasure and relaxation. Kali temple number of road side parks with children plays equipments and lawns, war memorial, statues of eminent personalities and more are situated in this beach only.

Rāmatirtham:

The Village Rāmathirtham is 8 miles from Visakhapatnam. (Durgakōnda and Gurubhaktikōnda). The ruins of Buddhist monastery called “the hell community (Saila Sangha) and patronized by a king of the name of Siva (maka) Vijaya-rāja have been discovered. The only piece of sculpture that this site has yielded is a standing figure of the Buddha of which the head and right arm are missing (Vice Chairman 2008, 27-8).

Rushikōnda:

8 k.m. from Visakhapatnam, Rushikōnda is a picture perfect setting with golden sands, surf, sea and hill cottages overlooking the grand vista. Rushikōnda makes an ideal place for swimming, water skiing and wind surfing in picturesque settings. To provide comfortable accommodation facilities to tourists, Andhra Pradesh Tourism



Rejuvenating Hill Resorts

Development Corporations Punnami Beach Resort has elegant cottages with a conference hall overlooking the beach, which is also catered by a bar and restaurant. Tourists can also avail speed boat rides.

Simhachalam Temple:

Simhachalam temple is situated 16 k.m. from Visakhapatnam among thickly wooded hills. It is one of the most important Vaishnavite shrines of South India. It has Sri Varha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy as the presiding deity. Simhachalam temple is known as the second richest temple (after Tirupati) earning a revenue of Rs.520 million. The beautifully carved 16 pillared Natya Mantapa and the 96 pillared Kalyana mantapa bear testimony to the architectural brilliance of the temple (Vice Chairman 2008, 21, 29).

The image of the presiding deity, Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy is covered by a thick layer of sandal wood paste. The local people believe that an ancient image Shivalinga was converted into Varaha Narasimha form by Ramanuja, the founder of the Visistadhvaitham. More than 252 inscriptions describing the antecedents of the temple. The Vijayanagara ruler Krishna Dēvarāya after defeating Prataparudra Gajapati visited Simhachalam twice in 1516 A.D. and 1519 A.D. and offered numerous villages for maintenance of bhogam (Worship) along with valuable jewellery, of which an emerald necklace is still in the temple.

Thotalakōnda:

The Buddhist complex on the hill-top of Mangamaripeta, locally known as Thotlakōnda lies about 16 k.m. from Visakhapatnam. The place derived its name from the Rock-out troughs, used to store water. It is picturesquely located on the hill top at about 128 mts. high above the MSL. The existence of Buddhist site at Thotlakōnda came to light during an aerial survey undertaken by the Indian Navy. After its discovery, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has declared the site measuring an area of 120 acres on the summit as protected monument during 1978. The excavations conducted from 1988 to 1992 have exposed structural remains. The complex comprises of several structural components, such as a Mahastupa, 16 votive stupas, a stone pillared congregation hall, 11 rock-cut cisterns, well paved stone path ways, an apsidal chaitya-griha, 3 circular chaitya-grihas, two votive platforms, 10 viharas consisted of 72 cells, a kitchen complex with three halls and a refectory etc. Terracotta tiles, stucco decorative pieces, sculptured panels, miniature stupa models in stone, Buddha padas depicted with asthamangal symbols, early historic pottery were discovered. A chhatra piece contains a Brahmi label inscription leading “Hasa Damam Chhata Koturi Kiri Nivasina and Poyadhi” datable to 3rd – 2nd centuries B.C. A number of Śātavahana coins have also been found in the course of excavations, representing Satakarni, Śiri Śata and Siriyana, having on the obverse a ship with two masts anchored on the shore and a tree with railing on its right. (Fogelin 2003, 78-81)

Tyda:

It is an eco-tourism project. Tyda is a small village nestling in the wooded hills of the Eastern Ghats. 75 k.m. away from Visakhapatnam enroute to Araku. This place is a natural bounty of flora and fauna. It is now home to an enchanting date with untouched nature. Andhra Pradesh Tourism Department in association with the Department of Forests has established the jungle Bells Nature camp, an Eco-tourism Resort. The camp provides great view of Eastern

Ghats, facilities for trekking, hiking and bird watching in addition to accommodation in log huts amidst serene surroundings.

There are also many parks viz. Vuda Park, Tenneti park, Shivaji park, Childern park, M.G.M. park etc. The city has many lodgings, inns and hotels. There are also fast food pizza outlets. There are number of places of tourist interest in Visakhapatnam right from temples and Buddhist sites to nature spots and beaches. Hence, Visakhapatnam is a tourist heaven and also city of destiny. Every journey has a destination, but it also has a goal. The goal is to have as much fun as possible once the destination is reached, to take in the essence of the place and to explore it with a sense of adventure.

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