

Orissa



Orissa is a captivating state with diverse, vibrant living cultures and an unrivalled architectural legacy. It's where mighty temple chariots carrying powerful deities are pulled through city streets by a heaving throng of devotees, where serene stone carvings of exceptional beauty continue to be excavated from early Buddhist sites and where Adivasis (tribal people) maintain remarkable traditions that predate many of the great empires of the subcontinent.

Orissa is also celebrated for its natural heritage: elephants and tigers crash and prow through the Eastern Ghats at Similipal National Park, a key tiger reserve. Chilika Lake, Asia's largest lagoon, hosts the rare Irrawaddy dolphin as well as millions of migratory birds, including pink flamingos. Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary has dolphins, a surfeit of birdlife and monster crocodiles. In January masses of olive ridley turtles pull themselves up onto Orissa's long beaches to lay their eggs; two months later, thousands of tiny hatchlings crawl to the sea.

Ancient civilisations and tradition resonate through contemporary Orissa. Witness the grand Sun Temple of Konark, a dream of genius adorned with a storyboard of Orissan life. Modern artistry is no less adept with stone carving, painting, silverwork and textiles in abundance.

Many of Orissa's attractions are clustered along the coast where weary travellers can also find inexpensive seaside retreats. Inland there's a different India, where tribes live precariously on the edge of mainstream society, yet manage to retain their colourful, fascinating traditions.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Exercise the eyes viewing exquisite carvings of the everyday, the exotic and the erotic at the renowned **Sun Temple** (p649) in Konark
- Mind your mandirs as you explore the myriad **carved stone temples** (p628) in old Bhubaneswar
- Follow Lord Jagannath's mighty car through Puri in the **Rath Yatra** (p645), one of India's most spectacular festivals
- Spy on wild elephants and just maybe an elusive tiger in the jungles of **Similipal National Park** (p656)
- Spot rare Irrawaddy dolphins, crocodiles, lizards, flashy kingfishers and herons as your boat chugs through the mangroves of **Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary** (p658)
- Rest your weary limbs and indulge in a surplus of seafood in laid-back **Puri** (p643)
- Explore Orissa's **tribal areas** (p654) to witness the distinctive Adivasi culture and barter for hand-beaten metal jewellery and tribal cloth



History

Despite having been a formidable maritime empire, with trading routes down into Indonesia, the history of Orissa (formerly Kalinga) is hazy until the demise of the Kalinga dynasty in 260 BC at the hands of the great emperor Ashoka. Appalled at the carnage he had caused, Ashoka forswore violence and converted to Buddhism.

Around the 1st century BC Buddhism declined and Jainism was restored as the faith of the people. During this period the monastery caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri (p637) were excavated as important Jain centres.

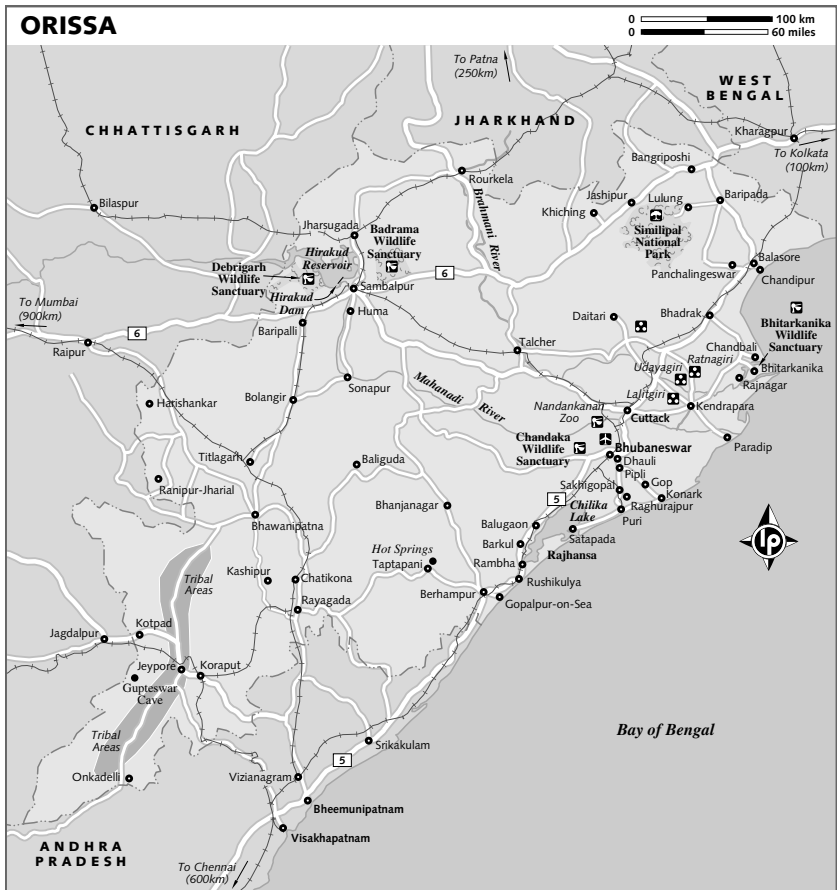
By the 7th century AD, Hinduism had supplanted Jainism. Under the Kesari and Ganga kings, trade and commerce increased and

FAST FACTS

- Population: 36.7 million
- Area: 155,707 sq km
- Capital: Bhubaneswar
- Main language: Oriya
- When to go: November to March

Orissan culture flourished – countless temples from that classical period still stand. The Orissans defied the Muslim rulers in Delhi until finally falling to the Mughals during the 16th century, when many of Bhubaneswar's temples were destroyed.

ORISSA



Until Independence, Orissa was ruled by Afghans, Marathas and the British.

At the end of the 1990s a Hindu fundamentalist group, Bajrang Dal, undertook a violent campaign against Christians in Orissa in response to missionary activity. Squeezed in the middle are the tribal people, targeted because they are 'easy souls', without power, and illiterate.

The creation of the neighbouring states of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh has prompted calls for the formation of a separate, tribal-oriented state, Koshal, in the northwest of Orissa, with Sambalpur as the capital.

Climate

Monsoon time is July to October, when cyclones are likely. Cyclones and severe monsoonal rains can have substantial impacts on road and rail transport. A particularly devastating cyclone struck Orissa in 1999 causing significant damage and the loss of thousands of lives.

National Parks

In 2005 the admission fee for Orissa's wonderful national parks and wildlife sanctuaries was dramatically raised for foreigners to Rs 1000 per day. Because this fee increase is discouraging visits, it is being actively protested by Orissa's private tour companies and may change in the near future.

Information

Orissa Tourism (www.orissatourism.gov.in) has a presence in cities and most towns, with its office being a one-stop shop for information and tour/hotel booking. It also maintains a list of approved guides for tribal-area visits. **Orissa Tourism Development Corporation** (OTDC; www.panthanivas.com), the commercial arm of Orissa Tourism, runs tours and hotels throughout the state.

Dangers & Annoyances

Mosquitoes here have a record of being dengue and malaria carriers. Load yourself up with pills (see p1185), repellents and bring a mosquito net in case your hotel doesn't provide one.

Getting There & Away

Air routes connect Bhubaneswar with Delhi, Mumbai (Bombay), Chennai (Madras) and Kolkata (Calcutta). Major road and rail routes between Kolkata and Chennai pass through coastal Orissa and Bhubaneswar with spur connections to Puri. Road and rail connect Sambalpur with Kolkata, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.

Getting Around

Public transport in the coastal region is good with ample long-distance buses and trains. For touring around the interior hiring a car is the best option.

FESTIVALS IN ORISSA

Makar Mela (2nd week of Jan; Kalijai Island, Chilika Lake, p650) Celebrates the sun entering the orbit of Capricorn. Surya, the sun god, is the attention of worship.

Adivasi Mela (26-31 Jan; Bhubaneswar, p628) Features art, dance and handicrafts of Orissa's tribal groups.

Magha Mela (Jan/Feb; Konark, p648) Sun festival, with pilgrims bathing en masse at the beach before sunrise then worshipping at the temple.

Maha Shivaratri (Feb/Mar; Bhubaneswar, p628) Devotees fast and perform *pujas* (prayers or offerings) throughout the night ready to witness the priest placing a sacred lamp on the top of Lingaraj Mandir.

Ashokastami (Apr/May; Bhubaneswar, p628) The idol of Lord Lingaraj is taken by chariot to Bindu Sagar for ritual bathing and then to Rameswaram Temple for a four-day stay.

Rath Yatra (Jun/Jul; Puri, p643) Immense chariots containing Lord Jagannath, brother Balbhadra and sister Subhadra are hauled from Jagannath Temple to Gundicha Mandir.

Beach Festival (Nov; Puri, p643) Song, dance, food and cultural activities, including sand artists, on the beach.

Tribal Festival (16-18 Nov; location varies) An exposition of Orissan tribal dances and music. Contact Orissa Tourism as the location changes yearly.

Baliyatra (Nov/Dec; Cuttack, p657) Four days commemorating past trading links with Indonesia. A huge fair is held on the river bank.

Konark Festival (1-5 Dec; Konark, p648) Features traditional music and dance and a seductive temple ritual. Festivities are in the open-air auditorium with the Sun Temple as the backdrop.

BHUBANESWAR

☎ 0674 / pop 647,310

Bhubaneswar's rapid expansion has been tempered by the construction of wide avenues and the green belts; nevertheless a typically hectic, noisy, congested city centre greets the traveller. The old city's spiritual centre is around Bindu Sagar where, from the thousands that once stood here, 50-odd stone temples remain, survivors from the heyday of Orissan medieval temple architecture.

The city is also a base for day trips to Dhauli (p642), Konark (p648), Nandankanan Zoological Park (p642) and Cuttack (p657).

Orientation

Most lodgings, restaurants, banks and transport are within an area bounded by Cuttack Rd, Rajpath, Sachivajaya Marg and the train station.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Modern Book Depot (☎ 2502373; Station Sq; ☎ 9.30am-2pm & 4.30-9pm) Maps, English-language novels, coffee-table books and books on Orissa.

EMERGENCY

Police (☎ 2533732; Capitol Police Station, Rajpath)

INTERNET ACCESS

9inetinn (Lewis Rd; per hr Rs 15; ☎ 9am-11pm)

Cyber World (cnr Janpath & Rajpath; per hr Rs 15; ☎ 7am-11.30pm)

Info Matrix (74-P Ashok Nagar, Janpath; per hr Rs 15; ☎ 9am-11pm)

Sify Iway (74-P cnr Janpath & Rajpath; per hr Rs 20; ☎ 9am-10pm)

LEFT LUGGAGE

Train station (per piece per day Rs 10; ☎ 24hr)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Capital Hospital (☎ 2401983, ambulance 2400688; Sachivajaya Marg) Pharmacy (24hr) onsite.

MONEY

Centurion Bank (Janpath) MasterCard and Visa ATM.

State Bank of India (☎ 2533671; Rajpath; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat, closed 2nd Sat in month) Cashes travellers cheques and exchanges foreign currency on the 1st floor.

Thomas Cook (☎ 2535222; 130 Ashok Nagar, Janpath; ☎ 10am-2pm Sat, closed 2nd Sat in month) Cashes travellers cheques, including Amex, and exchanges foreign currency.

POST

Post office main office (☎ 2402132; cnr Mahatma Gandhi & Sachivajaya Marg; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat); Market Bldg (Rajpath; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Government of India tourist office (☎ /fax 2432203; BJB Nagar; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) India-wide information.

Orissa Tourism main office (☎ 2431299; www.orissatourism.gov.in; behind Panthanivas Bhubaneswar, Lewis Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, closed 2nd Sat in month); airport (☎ 2534006); train station (☎ 2530715; ☎ 24hr) Tourist information, maps and lists of recommended guides.

Orissa Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC; ☎ 2432382; behind Panthanivas Bhubaneswar, Lewis Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat) Commercial arm of Orissa Tourism. Books sightseeing tours, hotels and airline tickets.

Sights

BINDU SAGAR

Also known as Ocean Drop Tank, **Bindu Sagar** reputedly contains water from every holy stream, pool and tank in India – obviously a good place to wash away sin. During the Ashokastami festival (p627), the Lingaraj Mandir's deity is brought here for ritual bathing.

TEMPLES

Lingaraj Mandir and the other temples scattered around Bindu Sagar may suffice for many temple watchers, but for more, amble along to the cluster of temples by Lewis Rd. To see all the major temples, charter an autorickshaw for two to three hours (about Rs 300).

Lingaraj Mandir excludes non-Hindus and Raja Rani charges an entrance fee. Priests expect a donation; Rs 10 is reasonable. Consider it a guiding fee as undoubtedly the priest will reveal something about his temple.

Lingaraj Mandir

The 54m-high **Lingaraj Mandir** is dedicated to Tribhuvaneshwar (Lord of Three Worlds). The temple dates from 1090 to 1104, although parts are over 1400 years old, and is surrounded by more than 50 smaller temples and shrines. The granite block, representing Tribhuvaneshwar, is bathed daily with water, milk and bhang (marijuana). In the northeastern corner, there's an attractive temple to Parvati and a chamber

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where 51 beggars and 51 priests eat the daily food offerings that are purportedly consumed by Parvati. The main gate, guarded by two moustachioed yellow lions, is a spectacle in itself as lines of pilgrims approach, *prasad* (temple-blessed food offering) in hand.

Because the temple is surrounded by a wall, and closed to non-Hindus (Indira Gandhi wasn't allowed in, as her husband was a Parsi), foreigners can see it only from a viewing platform. Face the main entrance, walk around to the right and find the viewing platform down a short laneway to the left. You might be asked for a 'donation'; again, Rs 10 is enough. On the way you should see a couple of gigantic wheels used in the Ashokastami festival.

Vaital Mandir

This 8th-century **temple**, with a double-storey 'wagon roof' influenced by Buddhist cave architecture, was a centre of Tantric worship, eroticism and bloody sacrifice. Look closely and you'll see some very early erotic carvings on the walls. The grotesque Chamunda (Durga), representing old age and death, can be seen in the dingy interior, although her necklace of skulls and her bed of corpses are usually hidden beneath her temple robes.

Parsurameswar Mandir

Just west of Lewis Rd lies a cluster of about 20 smaller but important temples. Best preserved is **Parsurameswar Mandir**, an ornate Shiva temple built around AD 650. It has lively bas-reliefs of elephant and horse processions, and Shiva images.

Mukteswar, Siddheswar & Kedargauri Mandirs

Not far from Parsurameswar is the small, 10th-century **Mukteswar Mandir**, one of the most ornate temples in Bhubaneswar. Intricate carvings show a mixture of Buddhist, Jain and Hindu styles. The ceiling carvings and stone arch are particularly striking, as is the beautiful arched *torana* (architrave) in front, clearly showing Buddhist influence.

Siddheswar Mandir, in the same compound, is a later but plainer temple with a fine red-painted Ganesha.

Over the road is **Kedargauri Mandir**, one of the oldest temples in Bhubaneswar, although it has been substantially rebuilt.

Raja Rani Mandir

This **temple** (Indian/foreigner Rs 5/100, video Rs 25; ☞ dawn-dusk) is an Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) monument, hence the admission fee. Built around 1100 and surrounded by manicured gardens, it's famous for its ornate *deul* (temple sanctuary) and tower. Around the compass points are pairs of statues representing eight *dikpalas* (guardians) who protect the temple. Between them, nymphs, embracing couples, elephants and lions peer from niches and decorate the pillars.

Brahmeswar Mandir

Standing in well-kept gardens, flanked on its plinth by four smaller structures, this 9th-century **temple** is a smaller version of Lingaraj Mandir. It's notable for its finely detailed sculptures with erotic elements.

STATE MUSEUM

This **museum** (☎ 2431797; Lewis Rd; Indian/foreigner Rs 5/50; ☞ 10am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) boasts Orissa's best collection of rare palm-leaf manuscripts, traditional and folk musical instruments, Bronze Age tools, an armoury and a fascinating display of Orissan tribal anthropology.

The magnificent collection of Buddhist and Jain sculptures, which is displayed in chronological order, constitutes the most important antiquities in the museum.

MUSEUM OF TRIBAL ARTS & ARTEFACTS

For anyone considering a visit to the tribal areas, this **museum** (☎ 2563649; admission free; ☞ 10am-5pm, closed 2nd Sat in month), off National Hwy (NH) 5, is recommended. Dress, ornaments, weapons, household implements and musical instruments are displayed in well-lit and captioned galleries. Behind the galleries are five representative village houses furnished to illustrate traditional life.

ORISSA MODERN ART GALLERY

Housing a high standard of contemporary art by local artists, this small **gallery** (☎ 2595765; 132 Forest Park; admission free; ☞ 11am-1.30pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat, 4-8pm Sun) also has prints and originals for sale.

UDAYAGIRI & KHANDAGIRI CAVES

Six kilometres west of the city centre are two hills riddled with **rock-cut shelters** (admission to both sites Indian/foreigner Rs 55/100, video Rs 25, guides one side/both sides Rs 150/250; ☞ dawn-dusk). Many are ornately

BHUBANESWAR



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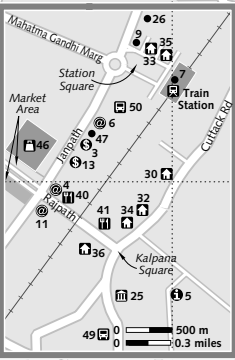
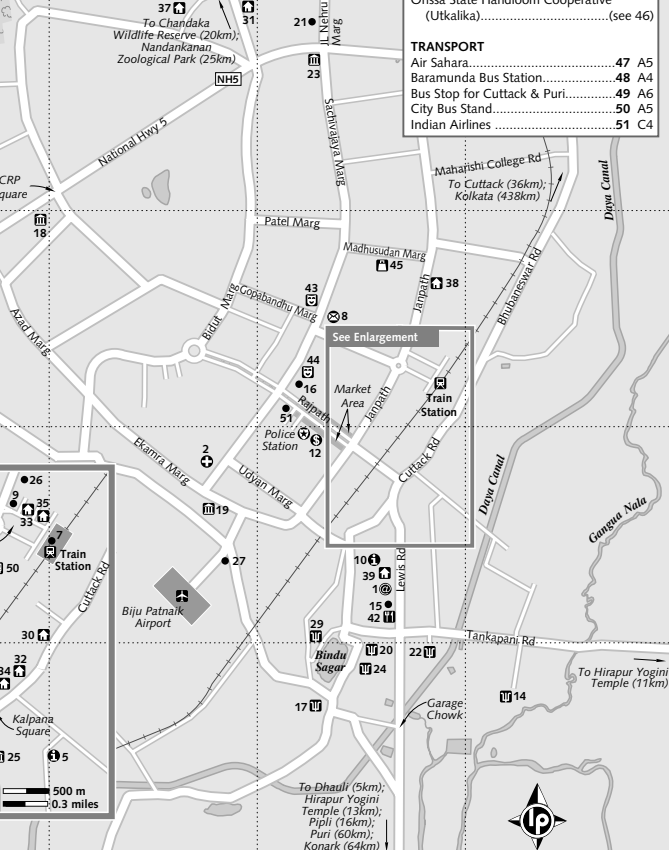
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Ekamra Kanan Botanical Gardens



carved and thought to have been chiselled out for Jain ascetics in the 1st century BC.

Udayagiri (Sunrise Hill) on the northern side has the more interesting caves. Ascend the ramp, noting **Swargapuri** (Cave 9) to the right with its devotional figures. **Hathi Gumpha** (Cave 14) at the top is plain, but a 117-line inscription relates the exploits of its builder, King Kharavela of Kalinga, who ruled from 168 to 153 BC.

Clamber up around to the left where you'll see **Bagh Gumpha** (Tiger Cave; Cave 12), with its entrance carved as a tiger mouth. Nearby are **Pavana Gumpha** (Cave of Purification) and small **Sarpa Gumpha** (Serpent Cave), where the tiny door is surmounted by a three-headed cobra. On the summit are the remains of a defensive position. As you descend around to the southeast you'll come to the single-storey elephant-guarded **Ganesh Gumpha** (Cave 10), almost directly above the two-storey **Rani ka Naur** (Queen's Palace Cave; Cave 1). This is the largest and most interesting of the caves and is carved with Jain symbols and battle scenes.

Continue back to the entrance via **Chota Hathi Gumpha** (Cave 3), with its carvings of elephants, and the double-storey **Jaya Vijaya Cave** (Cave 5) with a bodhi tree carved in the central compartment.

Across the road, Khandagiri offers fine views over Bhubaneswar from its summit. The steep path splits about one-third of the way up the hill. The right path goes to **Ananta Cave** (Cave 3), with its carved figures of athletes, women, elephants and geese carrying flowers. Further along is a series of **Jain temples**; at the top is another (18th-century) Jain temple.

Buses don't go to the caves, but plenty pass nearby on NH5, or take an autorickshaw (about Rs 60 one way).

REGIONAL SCIENCE CENTRE

Dinosaur-infatuated kiddies will love this parkland **museum** (☎ 2542795; Sachivajaya Marg; admission Rs 7; ☎ 10.30am-7pm Tue-Sun, 10am-5.30pm Mon) with its prehistoric busties. Included in the admission is a 30-minute movie screened hourly. Other treats are hands-on demonstrations of the laws of physics and displays on astronomy and insects.

PATHANI SAMANTA PLANETARIUM

This interesting **planetarium** (☎ 2581613; JL Nehru Marg; admission Rs 12; ☎ 2-6pm Tue-Sun, show in English 4pm) features hour-long 'out-of-this-world' shows.

Tours

Orissa Tourism (☎ 2431299; www.orissatourism.gov.in; behind Panthanivas Bhubaneswar, Lewis Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, closed 2nd Sat in month) offers a free guided tour of Bhubaneswar's temples at 8am on the last Sunday of the month. The tour, starting and finishing points are different each time, so contact Orissa Tourism for details.

A city tour offered by **OTDC** (☎ 2432382; www.panthanivas.com; behind Panthanivas Bhubaneswar, Lewis Rd; Rs 180; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat) covers the Nandankanan Zoo, Dhauli, the Lingaraj and Mukteswar temples, the State Museum, and Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves. Another tour goes to Pipli, Konark and Puri. Both tours require a minimum of five people and leave from the Panthanivas Bhubaneswar hotel.

The private tour operators below organise customised tours into Orissa's tribal areas; these can also include visits to handicraft villages, and Similipal National Park and Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary. Prices will depend on number of people, transport (non-AC/AC) and hotel standards, but expect to pay US\$50 to US\$100 per person per day for tours that include transport, accommodation and a professional guide. Tribal tours usually start on a Sunday or Monday to synchronise with village markets.

Discover Tours (☎ 2430477; www.orissadiscover.com; 463 Lewis Rd) A recommended agency specialising in tribal and textile village tours, as well as Bhitarkanika and Similipal.

Swosti Travels (☎ 2535773; www.swosti.com; Hotel Swosti, Janpath) Apart from hotel bookings and car rental, it runs tours to the tribal areas and national parks.

Travel Club (☎ 2341115; www.travelclubindia.com; Room 5 BDA Market Complex, Palaspalli) Operates tribal and wildlife tours.

Sleeping

Bhubaneswar has plenty of accommodation, but no great traveller dens. Rates drop substantially during the monsoon season, June to September. Many places have 24-hour check-out, which means you check out 24 hours after you check in.

BUDGET

Hotel Padma (☎ 2313330; fax 2310904; Kalpana Sq; s with shared bathroom Rs 70, d Rs 200-250) Hotel Padma is cheap and not very cheerful. Its lowest priced singles masquerade as prison cells. Slightly more comfort comes with paying

more: an extra Rs 50 brings a TV and phone. Car rental can be organised here.

Hotel Bhagwat Niwas (☎ 2313708; Kalpana Sq; s/d from Rs 160/250, d with AC Rs 750; 🏠) Hiding behind the Padma and signed down a small lane, the much friendlier Bhagwat has decent rooms with a TV around a courtyard, some boasting a balcony. Checkout is 24 hours.

Bhubaneswar Hotel (☎/fax 2313245; Cuttack Rd; s/d from Rs 175/235, with AC Rs 600/700; 🏠) The Bhubaneswar is another welcoming hotel with rooms that are nothing special. The hierarchy of room rates is determined by your TV choice. Non-TV viewers will be quite happy in cheaper rooms, which are the better option. Checkout is 24 hours.

Hotel Richi (☎ 2534619; fax 2539418; 122A Station Sq; s/d from Rs 250/400, d with AC from Rs 700; 🏠) Proximity to the train station makes this a (very) popular haven for weary travellers. Booking ahead is advised. Rates include bed, tea and breakfast, there's 24-hour checkout and a 24-hour coffee shop to while away ungodly hours.

Hotel Deepali International (☎ 5560678; 54 Budhanagar, Kalpana Sq; s/d Rs 300/350, with AC Rs 700/750; 🏠) Probably the best hotel on Cuttack Rd, and certainly the friendliest, this tidy and well-cared-for hotel is partially hidden behind a rank of small stalls. The rooms are clean and comfortable and there's a choice of toilets types; checkout is 24 hours.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Panthanivas Bhubaneswar (☎ 2432314; Lewis Rd; r Rs 490, with AC Rs 790; 🏠) The Panthanivas is well located, quiet and the closest hotel to the temples. The spacious rooms are a little tired and musty but perfectly comfortable. Checkout is at an inconvenient 8am.

Hotel Pushpak (☎ 2310185; Kalpana Sq; s/d Rs 500/550, with AC Rs 700/750; 🏠) All rooms are comfortable and have a private bathroom, and while the cheaper rooms are rather threadbare, the AC rooms are good. Checkout is 24 hours; there's a restaurant and bar.

Hotel Keshari (☎ 2534994; 113 Station Sq; s/d from Rs 675/775, with AC Rs 1300/1450; 🏠) Five minutes' walk from the train station, Keshari has a decent restaurant and noon checkout. Inspection is essential as some of the cheaper rooms are to be avoided but the AC rooms are OK. The hotel asks you carry US dollars but you can argue to pay in rupees.

ourpick Ginger (☎ 2303933; www.gingerhotels.com; Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli; s/d Rs 999/1199; 🏠 📺) This is

one of a chain of progressive hotels that has set new standards for midrange accommodation in India. It may look a bit corporate and sterile at first glance, but the young friendly staff and clean modern lines will win you over. The spotless rooms have LCD TVs, wi-fi access, tea and coffee, minibridge, and opening windows so you can regulate the central AC with fresh air. Meals are served buffet style in the restaurant – there's no room service (hence the sparkling clean rooms). There's a gym to use and a Rs 50 discount if you book on the net.

New Marrion (☎ 2380850; marrion@sancharnet.in; 6 Janpath; s/d from Rs 1950/2650; 🏠 📺 📺) The New Marrion is a large, conveniently located hotel with clean, spacious rooms where you can negotiate the price. A real bonus of this place is the proximity to Foodville, a court of restaurants, including Deep Down South (opposite), a Chinese restaurant, and a café with real coffee.

Hotel Sishmo (☎ 2433600; www.hotelsishmo.com; 86 Gautam Nagar; s/d Rs 2700/3500; 🏠 📺 📺) A well-appointed place with friendly staff and some pleasant rooms; the better ones have views of the pool (which non-guests can use for Rs 150) and distant temples. There's a relaxing bar and a very good restaurant. The tariff includes bed, tea and breakfast, and discounts are a possibility.

Mayfair Lagoon (☎ 2360101; www.mayfairhotels.com; Jaydev Vihar; standard/deluxe cottages Rs 5000/10,000, villas Rs 20,000; 🏠 📺 📺) This five-star hotel has the feel of an adventure movie set. In the jungle grounds you'll find static tigers, deer and herons, and even a twin-prop 1942 aircraft. The luxurious cottages are scattered around a lagoon, and facilities run to a complimentary breakfast, a British-style pub, and oriental and Indian restaurants. Of course there's a spa and gym. A discount is possible.

Eating & Drinking

ourpick Khana Khazana (Outside Hotel Padma, Kalpana Sq; mains Rs 35-70) This is an amazingly popular street stall morphing into a restaurant. Alfresco diners savour tandoori chicken or, more likely, the stall's famous and filling chicken biryani. Otherwise you are stuck with large serves of delicious chow mein featuring chicken, vegetables and prawns. Feeding starts at 5.30pm and finishes when the food runs out – which it does by about 9.30pm.

Mithai Shop & AC Restaurant (Rajpath; mains Rs 25-75) In addition to its range of North and South Indian curries, this place is Jagannath's gift to thali lovers and connoisseurs of Indian sweets and ice cream. Cyclone-force fans make it difficult to hold the menu but are most refreshing when the heat strikes.

Maurya Gardens (☎ 2534619; Hotel Richi, Station Sq; mains Rs 65-100) The Maurya restaurant is so dimly lit you may have trouble reading the menu of Indian, Chinese and continental dishes. The curries are nice and hot, though if you want a beer with your meal you have to eat (same menu) in the bar next door. Nearest to the train station, it's suitable for pre- or post-travel drinks.

Deep Down South (☎ 2380850; New Marrion, Janpath; mains Rs 30-50) Here you'll find all the South Indian culprits expertly executed. First have a lassi, and then go for a *masala dosa* (curried vegetables inside a crisp pancake) served on a plastic banana leaf, backed with an all-you-can-eat sambar. Room left over? There's a sweet shop attached.

Zaika (☎ 5539738; Lewis Rd; mains Rs 30-70) A clean, modern oasis on busy, dusty Lewis Rd. As well as excellent curries and tandoori there is an extensive Chinese menu but alas no beer. Fresh prawns and pomfret are ritually tandoored on Wednesday and Sunday.

Park Inn Bar & Restaurant (Rajpath; meals Rs 40-100; ☎ 10am-11pm) A cinema-dark bar with attentive waiters always ready to suggest another cold beer. Lots of nice cooking smells from the kitchen make you hungry for chicken, fish or prawn dishes.

Café Coffee Day (New Marrion, Janpath; drinks Rs 20-80) Yes it's a chain, but you'll appreciate the real coffee beans, the refreshing iced drinks and the chilly AC on any typically sweltering day.

Entertainment

Rabindra Mandeep (☎ 2417677; Sachivajaya Marg) and **Soochana Bhawan** (☎ 2530794; Sachivajaya Marg) are concert venues periodically used for music or dance performances. Phone the venues to find out what's coming up.

Shopping

A wide-ranging exposition of Orissan handicrafts can be found at **Ekamra Haat** (☎ 2403169; Madhusudan Marg; ☎ 10am-9pm), a permanent market in a large garden space.

Orissan textiles, including appliqué and *ikat* (a technique involving tie-dyeing the thread before it's woven) works, can be bought around **Market Building** (Rajpath) or the **Orissa State Handloom Cooperative** (Utkalika; Eastern Tower, Market Bldg; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 4.30-9pm Mon-Sat).

Both sides of Rajpath, between Janpath and Sachivajaya Marg, are given over to day and night sell-almost-anything markets. You'll be able to buy a mosquito net here (Rs 250, check the seals first) for a visit to the coast.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Indian Airlines (☎ 2530544; www.indianairlines.in; Rajpath; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat), or its subsidiary Alliance Air, flies daily to Delhi (US\$315, 2.30pm), Mumbai (US\$335, 2.25pm), Chennai (US\$250, 3.55pm) and Kolkata (US\$130, 12.55am).

Air Sahara (☎ 2535729; www.airsahara.net; airport; ☎ 10am-5.30pm) flies to Delhi, Hyderabad, Bengaluru (Bangalore) and Kolkata. Check the website for schedules and latest fares.

BUS

Baramunda bus station (☎ 2400540; NHS) has frequent buses to Cuttack (Rs 12, one hour), Puri (Rs 25, 1¼ hours) and Konark (Rs 25,

SHOPPING IN ORISSA

Ancient Orissa's diverse guilds of *shilpins* (artisans) grew rich on Puri's pilgrimage status and are still in business today. The appliqué work of Pipli (near Bhubaneswar) features brightly coloured patches of fabric, and Cuttack is known for its *tarakasi* (silver-filigree ornaments). Raghurajpur (near Puri) is famous for its *pattachitra* (paintings on specially prepared cloth) and *chitra pothi* (intricate images from the Kamasutra, painstakingly inscribed onto palm leaves).

Many Orissans work as handloom weavers, producing numerous types of unique silk and cotton fabrics. The Sambalpur region specialises in *ikat* fabrics, a technique involving tie-dyeing the thread before it's woven.

The best places to pick up these items are where they are produced, more specifically from the artists or workers themselves. Ekamra Haat (above) in Bhubaneswar is the best place to shop for all of Orissa's crafts.

two hours), and hourly buses to Berhampur (Rs 98, five hours).

Several services go to Kolkata (Rs 200 to 525, 12 hours), where price relates to comfort, Sambalpur (Rs 180, nine hours) and infrequent services to Baripada (Rs 120, seven hours).

Cuttack buses also go from the city bus stand, just off Station Sq, and the bus stop at the top end of Lewis Rd, from where buses also go to Puri.

TRAIN

The *Coromandal Express* No 2841 travels daily to Chennai (non-AC sleeper/3AC sleeper/2AC sleeper Rs 397/1061/1502, 20 hours, 9.40pm). The *Purushotlam Express* No 2801 goes to Delhi (Rs 489/1320/1876, 31 hours, 9.48pm) and the *Konark Express* No 1020 to Mumbai (Rs 493/1358/1943, 37 hours, 3.15pm). Howrah is connected to Bhubaneswar by the *Jan Shatabdi* No 2074 (2nd class/chair Rs 142/460, seven hours, 6am daily except Sunday) and the *Howrah Dhauli Express* No 2822 (Rs 130/439, seven hours, 1.15pm). To Sambalpur, the *Bhubaneswar-Sambalpur Express* No 2893 (chair Rs 356, five hours, 6.40am) is quick, comfortable and convenient.

Getting Around

No buses go to the airport; a taxi costs about Rs 100 from the centre. An autorickshaw to the airport costs about Rs 50, but you'll have to walk the last 500m from the airport entrance. Prepaid taxis from the airport to central Bhubaneswar cost Rs 100, and Puri or Konark Rs 600. There are ever-willing cycle-and autorickshaws to take you around.

AROUND BHUBANESWAR

Nandankanan Zoological Park

Famous for its blue-eyed white tigers, the zoo (☎ 246 6075; Indian/foreigner Rs 5/40, car Rs 35, optional guide Rs 45, camera/video Rs 5/500; ☞ 8am-5pm Tue-Sun) also boasts rare Asiatic lions, rhinoceroses, copious reptiles, monkeys and deer. Just inside the gate, the small Nature Interpretation Centre has some displays about Orissa's major national parks.

Undoubtedly the highlight is the **lion and tiger safari** (Rs 30), which leaves on the hour from 10am to noon and 2pm to 4pm) in an electric bus. Other attractions include a toy train and boat rides. A **cable car** (Rs 25; ☞ 8am-4pm) crosses a lake, allowing passengers to get

off halfway and walk down (300m) to the **State Botanical Garden**.

OTDC has a **café** (mains Rs 25; ☞ 8am-4.30pm) selling basic food but unfortunately it can't be counted on for having cold drinks.

OTDC tours stop here for only an (insufficient) hour or so. From Bhubaneswar, frequent public buses (Rs 6, one hour) leave from Kalpana Sq (near Padma Hotel) and outside the former Capital bus stand for Nandankanan village, about 400m from the entrance to the zoo. They may state 'Nandankanan' or 'Patia' as their destination. By taxi, a one-way trip costs about Rs 300.

Dhauli

After slaughtering members of his family to gain power, and then hundreds of thousands of people on the battlefield, Ashoka penitently converted to Buddhism. In about 260 BC one of his famous edicts was carved onto a large rock at Dhauli, 8km south of Bhubaneswar. The rock is now protected by a grill-fronted building and above, on top of a hillock, is a carved elephant. Ashoka's edicts are detailed on several noticeboards at the base.

On a nearby hill is the huge, white **Shanti Stupa** (Peace Pagoda), built by the Japanese in 1972. Older Buddhist reliefs are set into the modern structure.

The turn-off to Dhauli is along the Bhubaneswar-Puri road, accessible by any Puri or Konark bus (Rs 7). From the turn-off, it's a flat 3km walk to the rock, and then a short, steep walk to the stupa. By autorickshaw/taxi, a one-way trip costs about Rs 100/250.

Chandaka

Also known as the City Sanctuary because of its proximity, **Chandaka Wildlife Sanctuary** (Indian/foreigner Rs 10/1000, car Rs 20, guide Rs 150, camera/video Rs 25/200; ☞ 8am-5pm Tue-Sun) was declared primarily to preserve wild elephants and elephant habitat. If you are lucky, you can also see leopard, deer, mugger crocodiles and over 100 species of birds.

Chandaka's 200 sq km represents a remnant of the forest that once covered the northeastern Ghats. Facilities include five watchtowers, two of which contain rest houses for overnight stays. Before you visit you must pay for and collect an entry permit, gain permission for photography and reserve a rest house, all at the office of the **Divisional Forest Officer** (☎ 2472040; Chandaka Wildlife Division, SFTRI campus,

Ghatika). Chandaka is about 20km by road from Bhubaneswar, and visits and transport are best organised through a travel agent in Bhubaneswar.

Hirapur

Among iridescent-green paddies, 15km from Bhubaneswar, is a small village with an important **Yogini Temple**, one of only four in India. The low, circular structure, open to the sky, has 64 niches within, each with a black chlorite goddess. Getting here requires hired transport or coming on OTDC's tours.

Pipli

This town, 16km southeast of Bhubaneswar, is notable for its brilliant appliqué craft, which incorporates primary colours and small mirrors and is used for door and wall hangings, and the more traditional canopies hang over Lord Jagannath and family during festival time. Lampshades and parasols are the main tourist item, and hung outside the shops they turn the main road into an avenue of rainbow colours. Pipli is easily accessible by any bus between Bhubaneswar and Puri or Konark.

SOUTHEASTERN ORISSA

PURI

☎ 06752 / pop 157,610

Attracted by spiritual or earthly pleasures, three types of visitors come to Puri: Hindu pilgrims, Indian holidaymakers and foreign travellers, and each group sets up camp in different parts of town. For Hindus, Puri is one of the holiest pilgrimage places in India, with religious life revolving around the great Jagannath Mandir and its famous Rath Yatra (Car Festival).

Puri's other attraction is its long, sandy beach and esplanade – an Indian version of an English seaside. Backing this, in Marine Pde, is a long ribbon of old hotels, flashy resorts and company holiday homes that become instantly full when Kolkata rejoices in a holiday.

In the 1970s Puri became a scene on the hippie trail wending its way through Southeast Asia, attracted here by the sea and bhang, legal in Shiva's Puri. Travellers now come just to hang out, gorge on good food and recharge their backpacking spirit.

Orientation

The action is along a few kilometres of coast, with the backpacker village clustered around Chakra Tirtha (CT) Rd to the east, busy Marine Pde to the west and resorts in the middle. A few blocks inland is the holy quarter's chaotic jumble of streets. Buses and trains arrive in the centre of town.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Loknath Bookshop (CT Rd; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-9pm)
Sells and exchanges secondhand books.

EMERGENCY

Police (☎ 222025; CT Rd)

INTERNET ACCESS

Halla Gulla.com (CT Rd; per hr Rs 30; ☎ 8am-10pm; ☎) CD burning from digital camera costs Rs 40 to 55 per CD.
Nanako.com (CT Rd; per hr Rs 25; ☎ 7am-11pm; ☎) CD burning costs Rs 30 to 50.

LEFT LUGGAGE

Train station (per piece per day Rs 10; ☎ 24hr)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Headquarters Hospital (☎ 223742; Grand Rd)

MONEY

ICICI Bank (1 Naya Plaza, Grand Rd) MasterCard and Visa ATM.

Samikshya Forex (☎ 2225369; CT Rd; ☎ 6am-10pm)
Cashes travellers cheques and foreign currencies.

State Bank of India (☎ 223682; CT Rd; ☎ 10.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat) Cashes travellers cheques and foreign currency; also a MasterCard and Visa ATM.

POST

Post office (☎ 222051; cnr Kutchery & Temple Rds; ☎ 10.30am-5.30pm)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Orissa Tourism CT Rd (☎ 222664; CT Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat); train station (☎ 223536; ☎ 7am-9pm)
Tourist information, hotel, vehicle and tour booking.

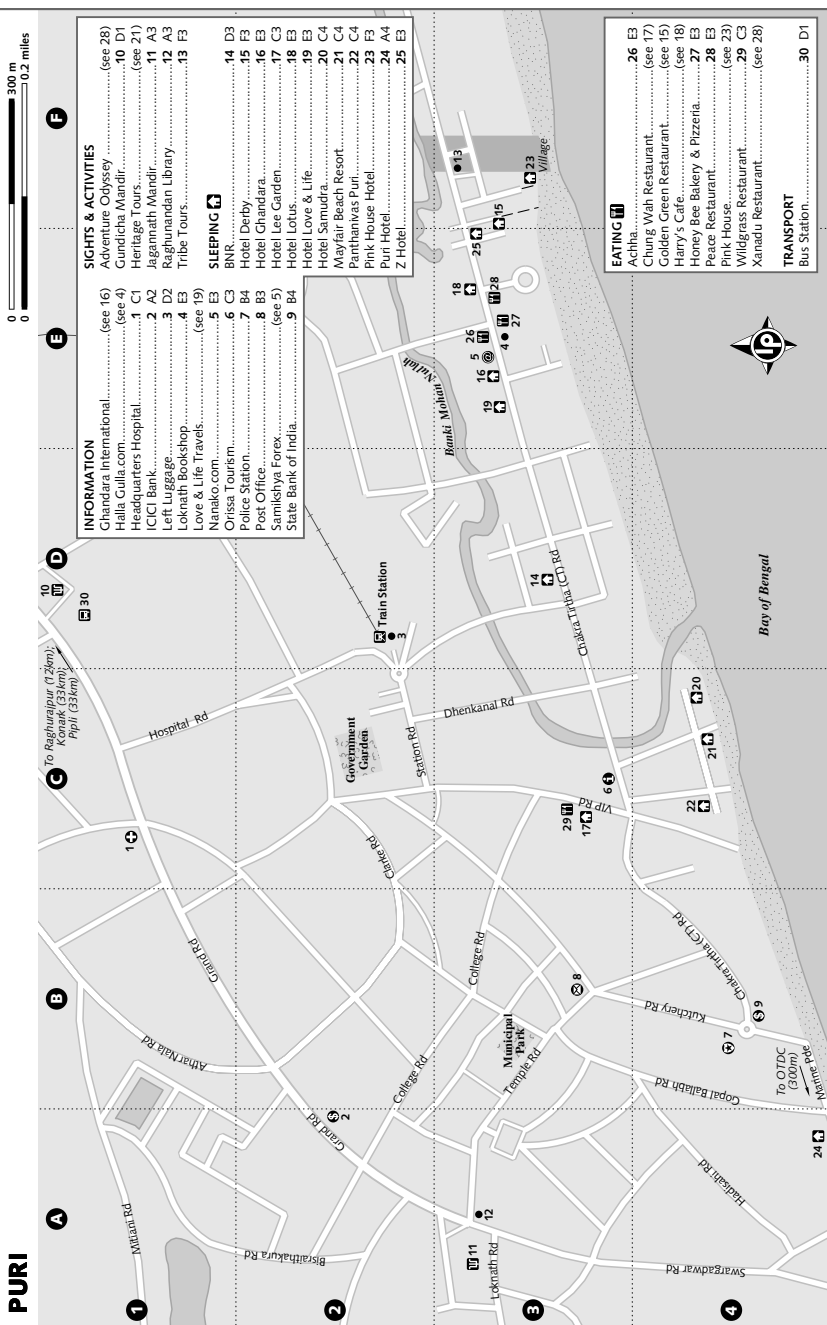
OTDC (☎ 223526; Marine Pde; ☎ 6am-10pm) Booking office and start/finish point for day tours.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

There are numerous travel agencies within and around the hotels on CT Rd that can arrange air, bus and train tickets and car hire.

Gandhara International (☎ 2224623; www.hotelgandhara.com; Hotel Gandhara, CT Rd)

PURI



RATH YATRA – THE CAR FESTIVAL

One of India's greatest annual events, **Rath Yatra**, takes place each June or July (second day of the bright half of Asadha month) in Puri (and elsewhere across Orissa), when a fantastic procession spills forth from Jagannath Mandir. Rath Yatra commemorates Krishna's journey from Gokul to Mathura. Jagannath, brother Balbhadr and sister Subhadra are dragged along Grand Rd in three huge 'cars', known as *ratha*, to Gundicha Mandir.

The main car of Jagannath (origin of 'juggernaut') stands 14m high. It rides on 16 wheels, each over 2m in diameter – in centuries past, devotees threw themselves beneath the wheels to die gloriously within the god's sight. Four-thousand professional temple employees haul the cars, which take enormous effort to pull and are virtually impossible to turn or stop. In Baripada a woman-only team pulls Subhadra. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims (and tourists) swarm to witness this stupendous scene, which can take place in temperatures over 40°C.

The gods take a week-long 'summer break' at Gundicha Mandir before being hauled back to Jagannath Mandir, in a repeat of the previous procession. After the festival, the cars are broken up and used for firewood in the temple's communal kitchens, or for funeral-pyre fuel. New cars are constructed each year.

Periodically, according to astrological dictates, the gods themselves are disposed of and new images made. The old ones are buried in a graveyard inside of the northern gate of Jagannath Mandir.

Orissa Tourism's *Puri Shree Jagannath Dham* (Rs 60) reveals the annual cycle of festivities associated with Lord Jagannath.

Love & Life Travels (☎ 224433; Hotel Love & Life, CT Rd; 🕒 7am-10pm)

Samikshya Forex (☎ 2225369; CT Rd; 🕒 6am-10pm)

Dangers & Annoyances

Ocean currents can be treacherous in Puri, so don't venture out of your depth. Watch the locals or ask one of the curiously outfitted *nolias* (fishermen/lifeguards), with their white-painted, cone-shaped wicker hats, for the best spots.

Muggings and attacks on women have been reported along isolated stretches of beach, even during the day, so take care.

Sights

JAGANNATH MANDIR

This mighty temple belongs to Jagannath, Lord of the Universe and incarnation of Vishnu. The jet-black deity with large, round, white eyes is hugely popular across Orissa. Built in its present form in 1198, the temple (closed to non-Hindus) is surrounded by two walls; its 58m-high *sikhara* (spire) is topped by the flag and wheel of Vishnu.

Guarded by two stone lions and a pillar crowned by the Garuda that once stood at the Sun Temple at Konark, the eastern entrance, or Lion Gate, is the passageway for the chariot procession of Rath Yatra. The southern, western and northern gates are guarded by statues

of men on horseback, tigers and elephants, respectively.

Jagannath, brother Balbhadr and sister Subhadra reside supreme in the central *jagamohan* (assembly hall). The brothers have arms but no hands, while smaller Subhadra, sitting in between, has neither. Priests continually garland and dress the three throughout the day for different ceremonies. Incredibly, the temple employs about 6000 men to perform the complicated rituals involved in caring for the gods. An estimated 20,000 people – divided into 36 orders and 97 classes – are dependent on Jagannath for their livelihood. The kitchen, with 400 cooks, is reportedly the largest in the world.

Non-Hindus can spy from the roof of **Raghunandan Library** (cnr Temple Rd & Swargadwar Rd; 🕒 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat) opposite. Ask permission; a 'donation' is compulsory (about Rs 10) and your amount is entered in a book. On Sunday a nearby hotel takes over the scam and demands Rs 50 – easily negotiated down to Rs 20.

BEACH

Puri is no palm-fringed paradise – the beach is wide, shelves quickly with a nasty shore break and is shadeless; but it is the seaside. To the east it's a public toilet for the fishing village. Between Pink House Hotel and Hotel Shankar International, the beach improves,

but keep away from the fetid drain oozing into the sea.

By Marine Pde the beach is healthier and often crowded with energetic holidaymakers, especially at night. Look out for artists constructing **sand sculptures**, a local art form.

It's worth getting up before sunrise to watch the fishermen head out through the surf and, for a little financial motivation, they might take you along.

Tours

OTDC (☎ 223526; Marine Pde; tour No 1 Rs 130, tour No 2 Rs 110) runs day trips. Tour No 1 skips through Konark, Dhauli, Bhubaneswar's temples, Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves plus Nandankanan Zoo. Tour No 2 goes for a boat jaunt on Chilika Lake.

Several tour operators organise tours into Orissa's tribal areas that can include visits to handicraft villages plus Similipal National Park and Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary. Tribal tours have to be approached cautiously as not all agencies have experienced guides and the necessary local contacts to conduct a suitable and responsible tour. For more recommended options in Bhubaneswar, see p639, and for more details see the boxed text, p654.

Adventure Odyssey (☎ 2226642; travelpack_orissa@hotmail.com; CT Rd) Runs a Chilika Lake tour for two people for a combined US\$100. Includes a night camp on Rajhansa beach.

Heritage Tours (☎ 2236656; www.heritagetourorissa.com; Mayfair Beach Resort Hotel, off CT Rd) Organises customised tours of tribal villages and markets for US\$60 per person (based on twin share) per day.

Tribes Tours (☎ /fax 2224323; CT Rd; ☎ 7.30am-9pm) Organises a Chilika Lake day tour for two people for Rs 650 plus Rs 550 per hour for the boat.

Festivals

A four-year calendar of festivals and events can be consulted at www.orissatourism.gov.in. Highlights of the festival-packed year include the celebrated festival of **Rath Yatra** (see p645) and the **Puri Beach Festival** (23-27 November) featuring magnificent sand art, food stalls, traditional dance and other cultural programmes.

Sleeping

For Rath Yatra, Durga Puja (Dussehra), Diwali or the end of December and New Year, book well in advance. For foreigners, Z Hotel and Hotel Ghandara (which only take foreign

tourists) may offer the best chance of finding a bed.

Prices below are for October to February. Significant discounts can be negotiated during the monsoon, while prices can triple during a festival. Annoyingly, many hotels have early checkout times owing to the early arrivals of overnight trains bringing fresh holidaymakers.

BUDGET

These places are mostly in a strip along the eastern end of CT Rd. The Z and Ghandara have dorms suitable for solo women travellers.

Hotel Love & Life (☎ 224433; fax 226093; CT Rd; dm Rs 30, s/d with shared bathroom Rs 80/100, s/d with private bathroom from Rs 125/250, cottages Rs 250, with AC Rs 750; ♿) The dorms and rooms in the three-storey building are simple but adequate, while the cottages at the rear are more comfortable. The hosts are friendly and helpful and also run a travel agency (p643).

Hotel Lotus (☎ 227033; CT Rd; r Rs 100-150) Above Harry's Cafe (opposite), the friendly Lotus has a range of inexpensive, fan-cooled rooms, some with intact flywire and some with balconies that bizarrely front on to the neighbour's brick wall only centimetres away. The front rooms may suffer a bit of street noise.

Pink House Hotel (☎ 222253; off CT Rd; r with shared bathroom Rs 150-250, with private bathroom Rs 250-350) One of the closest to the beach with sand drifting to your front door, the Pink House and its outdoor restaurant (opposite) looks the part. The basic rooms, either on the beach side with little verandas, or round at the back, are passably clean. Mosquito nets are provided and the toilets are all squat.

Hotel Derby (☎ 223660; off CT Rd; r Rs 300-350) This is an older-style hotels, with 10 small, neat rooms with private bathrooms set around a cheerful garden close to the beach. Mosquito nets are provided and there's a great little restaurant, Golden Green (opposite), attached.

Hotel Ghandara (☎ 224117; www.hotelgandhara.com; CT Rd; dm Rs 40, dm women only Rs 50, s/d with shared bathroom Rs 110/150, s/d with private bathroom from Rs 350/450, with AC Rs 550/750; ♿) Ghandara has a wide range of rooms for different budgets. The rear five-storey block has some fine rooftop AC rooms catching breezes and views; other rooms are arrayed around a tree-shaded garden and have balconies. A nice touch is a daily newspaper to your room. There's a rooftop restaurant and a travel agency that does foreign exchange.

Z Hotel (☎ 222554; www.zhotelindia.com; CT Rd; dm women only Rs 60, s/d with shared bathroom Rs 200/300, with private bathroom Rs 500/600; ♿) Z is a travellers' favourite and rightly so. Formerly the home of a maharaja, it has huge, spotless, airy rooms, many of them facing the sea. There are great common areas, including a big-screen TV showing movies nightly, a roof terrace, plus a restaurant. The two doubles with an enclosed balcony are well worth the splurge.

Puri Hotel (☎ 222114; www.purihotel.in; Marine Pde; d from Rs 300, with AC from Rs 800; ♿) Saris and underwear adorn the balconies, while inside the place has the feel of crowded hospital ward, nevertheless the Puri Hotel is a Bengali holiday institution and the place to bring the whole family; room sizes go all the way to sleeping 10. Children under six stay free. Checkout is 24 hours.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

BNR (☎ 222063; CT Rd; s/d from Rs 400/650, with AC Rs 650/900; ♿) BNR stands for Bengal National Railways, which explains the steam locomotive parked out the front. This remnant of the Raj is well worn, slightly senile and rattles around in a huge heritage building set at an angle to the sea. The capacious rooms are rather threadbare, but the liveried staff, billiard room (per hour Rs 40), dusty library and lethargic restaurant have a certain charm; and it welcomes credit cards old chap. Checkout is 24 hours.

Panthanivas Puri (☎ 222740; off CT Rd; r Rs 400-690, with AC Rs 990; ♿) This government hotel is rather large and impersonal, but the non-chalant staff can be stirred into friendliness. The newer block gazes right onto the sea; best rooms and views are on the 1st floor. The cheaper rooms in the old block are worn and depressing. Checkout is 8am.

Hotel Lee Garden (☎ 223647, leegarden@rediffmail.com; VIP Rd; r Rs 500-800, with AC Rs 900-1200; ♿) This welcoming hotel has a range of spacious, spotless rooms that boast cable TV and windows with unbroken flyscreens. A bonus of staying here is the excellent Chung Wah Chinese restaurant (p648). Checkout is 7am!

Hotel Samudra (☎ 222705; www.samudrahotel.com; r Rs 550-750, with AC from Rs 900; ♿) Backing onto the beach, off CT Rd, this hotel is the best of a bunch in the area. All rooms have balconies facing the sea, though those closest to the sea are the best, and all are very comfortable. However, avoid northern rooms at the front

with the smell wafting in from the malodorous creek.

Mayfair Beach Resort (☎ 227800; www.mayfairhotels.com; r from Rs 4000; ♿ ♿) The benchmark for Puri luxury features spacious hideaway units nestled into lovely gardens dotted with carved stone statues. The swimming pool, which nonguests can use for Rs 200 when hotel occupancy is low, comes with a swim-up bar. The hotel backs onto a semiprivate beach and boasts an outstanding restaurant, gym and spa.

Eating & Drinking

Puri is a smorgasbord: there's excellent fresh seafood to be enjoyed in inexpensive beachside eateries or plush hotel restaurants. In CT Rd there's muesli, filter coffee, pancakes, pizzas and puddings for homesick travellers and, refreshingly, most places can serve a cold beer. All the following are open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Peace Restaurant (CT Rd; mains Rs 20-130) 'Peace Restaurant world famous in Puri but never heard of anywhere else.' So reads the menu, which features curries, macaroni and tasty fish dishes. This restaurant, a simple row of tables with thatch canopies, is deservedly popular.

Xanadu Restaurant (☎ 227897; CT Rd; mains Rs 20-150) Another garden setting with a sandy floor, Xanadu is for the early riser – enjoy a breakfast fry-up or muesli from under the shade of coconut and banana palms. In the evening, over a cold beer and some crunchy pappadam, you can choose between prawns or fish curry or try one of numerous continental dishes.

Honey Bee Bakery & Pizzeria (☎ 320479; CT Rd; mains Rs 60-125) The pizzas aren't bad and the pastas and burgers are acceptable, while the lassis are excellent. Choose between filtered or espresso coffee to wash down the small range of bakery items.

Achha (☎ 9437304761; CT Rd; mains Rs 30-150) Another sand-floor garden restaurant, with lilting background sounds of Indian music. Sit under a thatched pavilion and choose seafood and veg dishes from the extensive Indian menu.

Pink House (☎ 222523; off CT Rd; mains Rs 60-100) Right on the beach the Pink House is an open-air restaurant that does all the things travellers seem to demand: muesli or pancakes for breakfast; and lots of fish and prawns for dinner.

Chung Wah Restaurant (☎ 223647; VIP Rd; mains Rs 55-135). The Chung Wah is a first-rate Chinese restaurant serving the real thing. There's lot's of favourites on the menu, including sweet and sour and a commendable Sichuan chicken.

Wildgrass Restaurant (☎ 9437023656; VIP Rd; mains Rs 50-100) Wildgrass is a secret garden gone wild with trees and shrubs, surrounding a small restaurant and a scattering of thatched canopies for alfresco dining. The Indian and continental menu is enlivened with excellent seafood dishes.

Also recommended:

Harry's Cafe (☎ 227033; CT Rd; mains Rs 20-60) Harry's serves tasty *Marwadi basa*, strictly vegetarian food without onions or garlic.

Golden Green Restaurant (☎ 223660; off CT Rd; mains Rs 15-100) A cosy little restaurant where the best, freshest seafood is not on the printed menu.

Shopping

Shops along Marine Pde sell fabric, beads, shells and bamboo work. Stalls at the eastern end of town, nearer the village, sell Kashmiri and Tibetan souvenirs.

Near Jagannath Mandir, many places sell palm-leaf paintings, handicrafts and Orissan hand-woven *ikat*, which you can buy in lengths or as ready-made garments. Popular souvenirs include cheap, silk-screen-printed postcards and Jagannath images – carved, sculpted or painted.

Getting There & Away

BUS

From the sprawling **bus station** (☎ 224461) near Gundicha Mandir, frequent buses serve Konark (Rs 20, 30 minutes), Satapada (Rs 39, three hours) and Bhubaneswar (Rs 25, two hours). For Pipli and Raghurajpur, take the Bhubaneswar bus. For other destinations change at Bhubaneswar.

TRAIN

Book well ahead if travelling during holiday and festival times. The booking counter at the train station can become incredibly crowded, but CT Rd agencies will book tickets for a small fee.

The *Purushottam Express* No 2801 travels to Delhi (non-AC sleeper/3AC sleeper/2AC sleeper Rs 501/1354/1924, 32 hours, 8.15pm), while Howrah can be reached on the *Puri-Howrah Express* No 2838 (Rs 247/641/895, nine hours, 7.35pm) and the *Sri Jagannath Ex-*

press (Rs 227/611/865, 10 hours, 10.15pm). The *Neelachal Express* No 2875 goes to Varanasi (Rs 377/1005/1421, 21 hours, 10.40am), continuing to Delhi on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday. To Sambalpur, the *Puri-Sambalpur Express* No 8304 (2nd class/chair Rs 105/356, six hours, 4.30pm) is best.

Getting Around

Several places along CT Rd rent bicycles for Rs 20 per day and both mopeds and motorcycles for Rs 250.

RAGHURAJPUR

The artists' village of **Raghurajpur**, 14km north of Puri, is two streets and 120 thatched brick houses adorned with mural paintings of geometric patterns and mythological scenes – a traditional art form that has almost died out in Orissa.

Everyone in the village is apparently an artist and there are nine classical arts and crafts practised here. The village is famous for its *pattachitra* – work made using a cotton cloth coated with a mixture of gum and chalk and then polished. With eye-aching attention and a very fine brush, artists mark out animals, flowers, gods and demons, which are then illuminated with bright colours.

In *chitra pothi* images are etched onto dried palm-leaf sections with a fine stylus, after which the incisions are dyed with a wash of colour.

Take the Bhubaneswar bus and look for the 'Raghurajpur The Craft Village' signpost 11km north of Puri, then walk or take an a-torickshaw for the last 1km.

KONARK

☎ 06758 / pop 15,020

The majestic Sun Temple at Konark – a Unesco World Heritage site – is, like the Taj Mahal, one of India's signature buildings and Konark exists purely for it. Most visitors are day-trippers from Bhubaneswar or Puri, but it's not a bad place to kick back in overnight.

Originally nearer the coast (the sea has receded 3km), Konark was visible from far out at sea and known as the 'Black Pagoda' by sailors, in contrast to the whitewashed Jagannath of Puri.

Orientation & Information

The road from Bhubaneswar swings around the temple and past a couple of hotels and a

splash of eateries before continuing to meet Marine Dr, which follows the coast to Puri. To the north and east of the temple is the **post office** (☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat) and bus stand and numerous souvenir stands. There is also a **tourist office** (☎ 236821; Yatri Nivas hotel; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat).

Sights

SUN TEMPLE

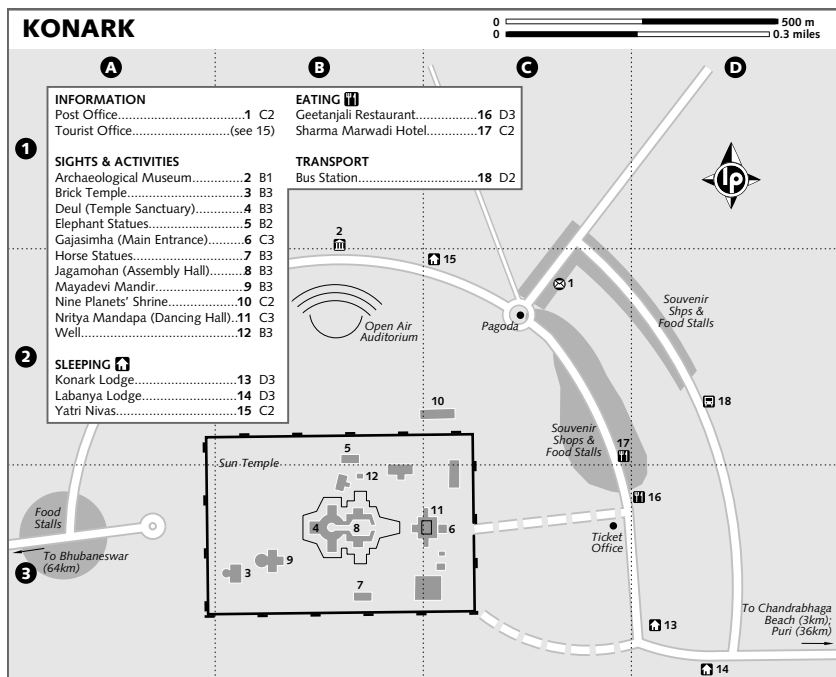
The massive **Sun Temple** (Indian/foreigner Rs 10/250, video Rs 25, guides per hr Rs 100; ☎ dawn-dusk) was constructed in mid-13th century, probably by Orissan king Narashimhadev I to celebrate his military victory over the Muslims. In use for maybe only three centuries, the first blow occurred in the late 16th century when marauding Mughals removed the copper over the cupola. This vandalism may have dislodged the loadstone leading to the partial collapse of the 40m-high *sikhara*; subsequent cyclones probably compounded the damage.

As late as 1837 one half of the *sikhara* was still standing but collapsed completely in 1869. (An illustration in the Yatri Nivas foyer shows the Sun Temple with still half a *sikhara*

and gives an idea of its splendour.) Gradually, shifting sands covered the site, with only the *deul* and *jagamohan* rising proud of its burial mound. Excavation and restoration began in 1901; the *jagamohan* was closed off and filled with rocks and sand to prevent it from collapsing inwards.

The entire temple was conceived as the cosmic chariot of the sun god, Surya. Seven mighty prancing horses (representing the days of the week) rear at the strain of moving this leviathan of stone on 24 stone cartwheels (representing the hours of the day) positioned around the temple base. The temple was positioned so that dawn light would illuminate the *deul* interior and the presiding deity, which may have been moved to Jagannath Mandir in Puri in the 17th century.

The **gajasimha** (main entrance) is guarded by two stone lions crushing elephants and leads to the intricately carved **nritya mandapa** (dancing hall). Steps, flanked by straining horses, rise to the still-standing **jagamohan**. Behind is the spireless **deul** with its three impressive chlorite images of Surya aligned to catch the sun at dawn, noon and sunset.



The base and walls present a chronicle in stone of Kalinga life, a storyboard of life and love in a continuous procession of carvings. Many are in the erotic style for which Konark is famous and include entwined couples as well as solitary exhibitionists. Sometimes they're minute images on the spoke of a temple wheel; at other times they're larger-than-life-sized figures higher up the walls.

Around the grounds are a small shrine called **Mayadevi Mandir**; a deep, covered **well**; and the ruins of a **brick temple**. To the north are a couple of **elephant statues**, to the south a couple of **horse statues**, both trampling soldiers.

If there's anywhere worth hiring a guide, it's here. The temple's history is a complicated amalgam of fact and legend, and the guides' explanations are thought provoking. They'll also show you features you might otherwise overlook – the woman with Japanese sandals, a giraffe (proving this area once traded with Africa) and even a man treating himself for venereal disease! Be sure your guide is registered. There are only 29 registered guides in Konark and the name board by the entrance has still to be updated. Unlicensed guides will dog your steps from arrival.

NINE PLANETS' SHRINE

This 6m-chlorite slab, once the architrave above the *jagamohan*, is now the centrepiece of a small shrine just outside the temple walls. Carved seated figures represent the Hindu nine planets – Surya (the sun), Chandra (moon), Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu and Ketu.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

This interesting **museum** (☎ 236822; admission Rs 5; ☎ 10am–5pm Sat–Thu), 200m west of Yatri Nivas, contains many impressive sculptures and carvings found during excavations of the Sun Temple. Highlights include the full-bellied Agni (the fire god) and the fulsome Bina Badini.

CHANDRABHAGA BEACH

The local beach at **Chandrabhaga** is 3km from the temple down the Puri road. Walk, cycle or take an autorickshaw (Rs 50 return), or use the Konark–Puri bus. The beach is quieter and cleaner than Puri's, but beware of strong currents. To the east is a fishing village with plenty of boating activity at sunrise. Exploration to the west can give you a relatively clean beach all to yourself.

Sleeping & Eating

Konark Lodge (☎ 236502; Sea Beach Rd; r Rs 150) One among several bare-bones cheapies where you'll share your grim room with an army of mosquitoes, There's only four rooms. Bring your own mosquito net and insecticide.

Labanya Lodge (☎ 236824; Sea Beach Rd; s Rs 75, d Rs 150–250; ☎) This laid-back option is the best budget choice, with a tropical garden and a fresh coconut drink to welcome guests. The comfortable rooms with private bathroom (squat toilets and no geyser) come in different sizes, and there's a pleasant rooftop terrace to spread out on. This is the only internet facility (per hour Rs 60) in town and there's bike hire (per day Rs 25). There's no restaurant but food can be ordered in.

Yatri Nivas (☎ 236820; r with/without AC from Rs 650/350; ☎) Set in large garden next to the museum, the Yatri Nivas is the best place to stay. The rooms are in two blocks; the rooms in the newer block have silent AC systems for a good night's sleep. The restaurant has a standard Indian menu (mains RS 30 to 75) plus a small selection of fresh seafood dishes. Staff may rent you their bike for Rs 50 per day.

Sharma Marwadi Hotel (mains Rs 30–50) Reputedly the best of the *dhabas* (snack bars), whose touts incessantly cajole worshippers and tourists into their fan-blown dining halls. Here you can select from eight generous and delicious thalis or order off the inexpensive menu.

Geetanjali Restaurant (mains Rs 30–75) Featuring the same menu as the Yatri Nivas hotel, this restaurant caters mostly to day-trippers who stagger from the temple entrance opposite desperate for refreshments.

Getting There & Away

Overcrowded minibuses regularly run along the coastal road between Puri and Konark (Rs 20, one hour). There are also regular departures to Bhubaneswar (Rs 40, two hours). Konark is included in OTDC tours from Bhubaneswar (p639) and Puri (p646). An autorickshaw will take you to Puri, with a beach stop along the way, for about Rs 200. Because the Puri–Konark road is flat, some diehards even cycle the 36km from Puri.

CHILIKA LAKE

Chilika Lake is Asia's largest brackish lagoon. Swelling from 600 sq km in April/May to 1100 sq km in the monsoon, the shallow lake is

separated from the Bay of Bengal by a 60km-long sand bar called Rajhansa. Due to silting, a new mouth was dredged in 2000.

The lake is noted for the million-plus migratory birds – including grey-legged geese, herons, cranes and pink flamingos – that flock here in winter (from November to mid-January) from as far away as Siberia and Iran. Possibly the largest congregation of aquatic birds on the subcontinent, they concentrate in a 3-sq-km area within the bird sanctuary on Nalabana Island. Changes in salinity have caused some birds to move to Mangaljodi near the northern shore. Other problems, such as silting and commercial prawn farming, are also threatening this important wetland area and the livelihood of local fisherpeople.

Other attractions are rare Irrawaddy dolphins near Satapada, the pristine beach along Rajhansa, and Kalijai Island temple where Hindu pilgrims flock for the Makar Mela festival (p627) in January.

Satapada

☎ 06752

This small village, on a headland jutting southwestwards into the lake, is the starting point for most boat trips. There's an **Orissa Tourism office** (☎ 262077; Yatri Nivas hotel) here.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Boat trips from Satapada usually cruise towards the new sea mouth for a feed of fresh prawns, a paddle in the sea, and some dolphin- and bird-spotting en route. At the time of research, some of the better dolphin-spotting areas were made off-limits to tourist boats because of a dolphin fatality.

OTDC (☎ 262077; Yatri Nivas) has boats for hire (for large groups) or a three-hour tour (per person Rs 80) at 10.30am.

Dolphin Motor Boat Association (☎ 262038; Satapada jetty; 1-8hr trips per boat Rs 400-1000), a cooperative of local boat owners, has set-price trips mixing in dolphin spotting, the Nalabana Bird Sanctuary and Kalijai Island temple.

Chilika Lake Wetland Centre (☎ 262013; admission Rs 10; ☎ 10am-5pm) is an exhibition on the lake, its wildlife and its human inhabitants. The centre has an upstairs observatory with a telescope and bird identification charts.

A regular ferry (Rs 20, four hours, departs noon, returns 6am next day) plies between Satapada and Barkul.

SLEEPING & EATING

Yatri Nivas (☎ 262077; d Rs 250, with AC 650; 🍴) A good option where the best rooms have balconies with lake views. The restaurant is OK (mains Rs 30 to 75), with a small selection of fresh seafood dishes as well as the standard Indian fare.

Several shops and food stalls line the road to the jetty. Don't forget to take water on your boat trip.

Barkul

☎ 06756

On the northern shore of Chilika, Barkul is just a scatter of houses and food stalls on a lane off NH5. From here boats go to Nalabana and Kalijai Islands. Nalabana is best visited in early morning and late afternoon, November to late February.

The OTDC (locally contact the Panthanivas hotel) runs a boat trip (per hour Rs 400, eight to nine hours) to the sea mouth with some dolphin spotting. With a minimum of 14 people OTDC runs tours to Kalijia (Rs 50), and Nalabana and Kalijia (Rs 150). Otherwise, a boat with a quiet engine (that doesn't scare birds) can be hired for Nalabana (Rs 900, two hours) or an ordinary boat for Kalijai (Rs 450, 1½ hours). Private operators (with no insurance and no safety gear) charge around Rs 350 an hour.

The **Panthanivas Barkul** (☎ 220488; r Rs 500, with AC Rs 900; 🍴) has a great aspect with its clean, comfortable and renovated rooms overlooking the garden to the lake. This was the best Panthanivas we visited. The restaurant (mains Rs 30 to 80) is also good, with seafood specials, such as crab masala, always available.

Frequent buses dash along NH5 between Bhubaneswar (Rs 40) and Berhampur (Rs 70). You can get off anywhere on route.

A ferry goes to Satapada (left).

Rambha

The small town of Rambha is the nearest place to stay for turtle watching on Rushikulya beach. Not as commercial as Barkul, Rambha is also a very pleasant little backwater. Boat hire costs Rs 500 for a three-hour trip around the lake.

Panthanivas Rambha (☎ 06810-278346; dm Rs 50, d Rs 350, with AC Rs 750; 🍴), about 200m off the main road and 1km west of Rambha centre, has reasonable rooms with balconies overlooking the lake. The restaurant (mains Rs 20 to 75) is

surprisingly good. Order the *khainga besara*: the local lake fish (*khainga*) simmered with mustard seed, garlic, chilli and curry leaves and only Rs 50!

There are regular buses to and from Bhubaneswar (Rs 70) and Berhampur (Rs 40), as well as several slow passenger trains (no express trains) stopping on the way to Bhubaneswar (2nd class Rs 25) and Berhampur (Rs 15).

Rushikulya

The nesting beach for olive ridley turtles is on the northern side of Rushikulya River, near the villages of Purunabandh and Gokharkuda. The nearest accommodation is in Rambha (p651), 20km away.

During nesting and hatching there will be conservationists on the beaches and activity takes place throughout the night. Do not use lights during hatching as they distract the turtles away from the sea.

GOPALPUR-ON-SEA

☎ 0680 / pop 6660

Gopalpur-on-Sea is a seaside town the British left to slide into history until Bengali holidaymakers discovered its attractions in the 1980s. Prior to this, it had a noble history as a seaport with connections to Southeast Asia.

It's no paradise, but its uncrowded, peaceful and relatively clean beach is great for a

stroll and a paddle, or you can just relax and watch the fishing boats come and go.

Orientation & Information

The approach road from NH5 rushes straight through town and terminates in front of the sea. Around here are most of the hotels and restaurants. There is a Public Call Office (PCO) by Krishna's restaurant; the bus stand is 500m before the beach.

Dangers & Annoyances

Foreigners, especially women, are always an attraction for the curious, particularly men hoping to see a little flesh. It can be incredibly annoying. Remember to cover up, and if you go for a walk find a fellow traveller for company or just attach yourself to an obliging Indian family and bask under their general protection.

Swimming in the nasty shore break at Gopalpur, where there are undercurrents, is an untested activity; most visitors are content with a paddle.

Sights

Peering over the town is the **lighthouse** (admission Rs 5; ☎ 3.30-5.30pm) with its immaculate gardens and petite staff cottages. It's a late-afternoon draw card and after puffing up the spiral staircase you're rewarded with views, welcome cooling breezes and mobile-phone reception.

ORISSA'S OLIVE RIDLEY TURTLES

Olive ridley turtles, one of the smallest of the sea turtles and a threatened species, swim up from deeper waters beyond Sri Lanka to mate and lay their eggs en masse on Orissa's beaches. The main nesting sites are Gahirmatha within the Bhitarkanika National Park, Devi near Konark and Rushikulya.

Turtle deaths due to fishing practices are unfortunately common. Although there are regulations, such as requiring the use of turtle exclusion devices (TEDs) on nets and banning fishing from certain areas, these laws are routinely flouted in Orissa. Another threat has been afforestation of the Devi beach-nesting site with casuarina trees. While preserving the beaches, they take up soft sand necessary for a turtle hatchery. Other potential threats include oil exploration off Gahirmatha and seaport development near Rushikulya.

Turtles mass at sea between late October and early December. Then in January they congregate near nesting beaches and, if conditions are right, they come ashore over four to five days. If conditions aren't right, they reabsorb their eggs.

Hatching takes place 50 to 55 days later. Hatchlings are guided to the sea by the luminescence of the ocean and can be easily distracted by bright lights; unfortunately, NH5 runs within 2km of Rushikulya beach, so many turtles crawl the wrong way. However, villagers in the Sea Turtle Protection Committee gather up errant turtles and take them to the sea.

The best place to see nesting and hatching is at Rushikulya (above).

Sleeping & Eating

Gopalpur can be booked out during holiday and festival time. Prices below are for the high season (November to January); discounts are available at other times.

Hotel Rosalin (☎ 2242071; r with shared or private bathroom Rs 150) A small, single-storey house, opposite Sea Shell, with tiny rooms facing a 'garden'. It's for those who are over budget and who carry a mosquito net.

Hotel Green Park (☎ 2242016; greenpark016@yahoo.com; d Rs 200-400, with AC Rs 600; 🍴) One street back from the beach, Green Park is a clean and friendly budget option, but note there is no bar or restaurant. Some rooms have front-facing balconies and there's a 24-hour checkout.

Hotel Sea Side Breeze (☎ 2242075; Main Rd; d from Rs 300) More like a guesthouse than a hotel, this friendly choice is located right on the sand with most rooms facing the beach. The rooms are bare but clean and spacious with private bathrooms. The restaurant (mains Rs 30 to 70) is also a simple affair but is good value serving one or two choices of simple, home-style curries.

Hotel Sea Pearl (☎ 2242556; d with side views Rs 600-700, with sea views Rs 750, with AC Rs 950-1200; 🍴) Any nearer the sea and it'd be in it; the big and popular Sea Pearl has some great rooms, especially the upper-storey, beach-facing, non-AC rooms. There are two restaurants, with standard multicuisine menus (mains Rs 40 to 120); one is on the roof.

Swosti Palm Resort (☎ 2243718; www.swosti.com; Main Rd; s/d Rs 1980/2310; 🍴) The Swosti has the best accommodation in town with luxurious and spacious, well-appointed rooms. The excellent multicuisine restaurant, Chilika, serves exquisite seafood, including authentic Odissi dishes (mains Rs 45 to 200).

Sea Shell (mains Rs 15-45) Camped on the beach, thatch roofed and with open sides for views and sea breezes, Sea Shell is an ideal place to while away the day with a good book, some snacks (Chinese, Indian) and a resuscitating ice cream or cold beer.

Krishna's (mains Rs 20-100) The folks at Krishna's have a keen eye for Western travellers and can make good pancakes, pasta and fried calamari or fish and chips in addition to their standard Indian offerings. Expect to pay Rs 100 and up for some of the seafood.

Getting There & Away

Frequent, crowded minibuses travel to Berhampur (Rs 7, one hour), where you can catch

onward transport by rail or bus. Alternatively, an autorickshaw costs Rs 150.

WESTERN ORISSA

Although permits aren't usually needed, there are tribal areas in western and central Orissa where foreigners have to register their details with the police. This is all done for you if you are on a tour but independent visitors should check their plans with the police in the nearest city.

TAPTAPANI

Apart from the small **hot springs** in this peaceful village in the Eastern Ghats, there's not much else to see. The public baths (free) next to the sacred springs are particularly popular with people with skin diseases and other disorders.

For a great winter treat (December nights plunge to zero) book one of the two rooms at **Panthanivas Taptapani** (☎ 06816-255031; s/d Rs 450/600, with hot bath Rs 800). Hot spring water is channelled directly to vast tubs in its Roman-style bathrooms. Rooms can be rented for the day at half-price.

Buses go regularly to Berhampur (Rs 25, two hours).

BALIGUDA

This tiny one-street town is the base for visits to the Belghar region, home to fascinating and friendly Desia Kondh and Kutia Kondh villages. The State Bank of India ATM accepts Visa, and you can check email at **Mahakali Communication** (Main Rd; per hr Rs 15).

The nearby village of **Padar Sahi** makes interesting small statues using the lost wax process, which the villagers are keen to sell.

The only place to stay in Baliguda is the **Hotel Santosh Bhavan** (☎ 06846-243409; s Rs 150-300, d Rs 250-500), with clean rooms with soap, towel and mosquito coil. Unfortunately the staff start working and shouting at 3.30am! All the restaurants are *dhaba* style; the **Kalyani P Hotel** (mains Rs 15-40) has great fried chicken.

RAYAGADA

☎ 06856

Bustling Rayagada is the base for visiting the weekly Wednesday market at **Chatikona** (about 40km north). Here, highly ornamented

ORISSA'S INDIGENOUS TRIBES

Sixty-two tribal groups (Adivasi) live in an area that encompasses Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. In Orissa they account for one-quarter of the state's population and mostly inhabit the jungles and hilly regions of the centre and southwest. Regardless of their economic poverty, they have highly developed social organisations and distinctive cultures expressed in music, dance and arts.

Tribal influence on Indian culture is little recognised, but it is claimed that early Buddhist sanghas were modelled on tribal equality, lack of caste and respect for all life. Many of the Hindu gods, including Shiva and Kali, have roots in tribal deities. Many Adivasis have become integrated into Hindu society as menials, while others have remained in remote hilly or forested areas.

Most Adivasis were originally animists but have been the focus of attention for soul-seeking Christian missionaries over the last 30 years. In reaction, extreme Hindu groups have been aggressively converting the Adivasis to Hinduism. Naxalites have also exploited Adivasi powerlessness by using them as foot soldiers, while claiming to defend them.

The tribes have become something of a tourist attraction. Visits are possible to some villages and *haats* (village markets) that Adivasis attend on a weekly basis. There are arguments regarding the morality of visiting Adivasi areas. Usually you need to gain permission to visit the villages, whereas at the *haats* you are free to interact with and buy directly from the villagers. However, it remains the case that tourism still brings very little income to the tribes.

Of the more populous tribes, the Kondh number about one million and are based around Koraput in the southwest and near Sambalpur in the northwest. The Santal, with a population above 500,000, live around Baripada and Khiching in the far north. The 300,000 Saura live near Bolangir in the west. The Bonda, known as the 'Naked People' for wearing minimal clothing, have a population of about 5000 and live in the hills near Koraput.

It is important to visit these areas on an organised tour for the following reasons:

- Some areas are prohibited and others require permits, which are much more easily obtained by a tour operator.
- Some tribal areas are hard to find and often not accessible by public transport.
- Adivasis often speak little Hindi or Oriya, and usually no English.
- Some tribes can get angry, even violent, if foreigners visit their villages uninvited and without official permission.
- Some people do not allow themselves to be photographed.

Most tours start from Bhubaneswar (p639) or Puri (see p646), take in the more accessible areas in the southwest and can then go on to visit Similipal National Park. Options can include jungle trekking, staying at a village (tents and cooking supplied by the tour operator) and visiting one or more of the *haats*.

Dongria Kondh and Desia Kondh villagers from the surrounding Niayamgiri Hills bring their produce and wares to sell.

Hotel Jyoti Mahal (☎ 223015; Convent Rd; s/d Rs from 150/175, with AC from Rs 550; 🍽️) has the best budget rooms in town and a restaurant (mains Rs 20 to 70) that has 73 ways to serve the humble chicken. The friendly **Hotel Rajbhavan** (☎ 223777; Main Rd; r from Rs 350, with AC Rs 650; 🍽️) has bright and airy rooms and a good multicuisine restaurant (mains Rs 40 to 80).

There's a regular local bus from Rayagada to Chatikona (Rs 35, two hours).

JEYPORE

☎ 06854 / pop 77,000

Jeypore is the base for visiting the amazingly colourful Onkadelli market (opposite). The foreboding and derelict palace here was built in 1936 and is off limits. There's a State Bank of India ATM on Main Rd.

Hotel Madhumati (☎ 241377; NKT Rd; s/d Rs 275/300, with AC Rs 400/550; 🍽️) is in a quiet neighbourhood and surrounded by lawns. The spacious rooms are a little aged but well kept and the restaurant (mains Rs 35 to 100), serving Indian, Chinese and continental dishes, is OK.

Hello Jeypore (☎ 231127; www.hoteljeypore.com; NH Rd; s/d from Rs 400/500, with AC Rs 595/695; 🏠 📺) is the best place to stay in town with clean, comfortable rooms and an excellent restaurant (mains Rs 35 to 100) serving fresh produce.

The new bus station is 2km out of town but buses still stop in town to pick up passengers. Frequent buses go to Koraput (Rs 15, one hour); others go to Berhampur (Rs 180, 12 hours), Bhubaneswar (Rs 280, 16 hours) and Rayagada (Rs 60, two hours).

Jeypore is on the scenic Jagdalpur–Visakhapatnam railway line (p714). Slow passenger trains Nos 1VK and 2VK connect Jeypore with Visakhapatnam daily. The *Bhubaneswar Koraput Hirakhand Express* No 8447/8 plies daily between Bhubaneswar and Koraput stopping at Rayagada.

AROUND JEYPORE

The following towns are best accessed by hired car and Onkadelli should only be visited with a professional guide.

Koraput

☎ 06852

The **tourist office** (☎ 250318; Raipur–Visakhapatnam road; 🕒 10am–5pm Mon–Sat, closed 2nd Sat in month) has information and can arrange car hire.

The **Tribal Museum** (admission Rs 1; 🕒 10am–5pm) has an extensive static exhibit of tribal culture, including utensils, tools and clothes, as well as some paintings for sale. The useful *Tribes of Koraput* is for sale for Rs 90, and the museum will open out of hours if you can find the friendly caretaker.

For non-Hindus unable to visit Puri's Jagannath Mandir there's the opportunity to visit a **Jagannath temple** here that comes with an exhibition of gods of the different states of India. At the back of the temple is a series of apses containing statuettes of Jagannath in his various guises and costumes.

Onkadelli

This small village, 65km from Jeypore, has a most remarkable and vibrant **haat** (🕒 Thu, best time 11am–2pm) that throngs with Bonda, Gadaba and Didai villagers. Photographs should only be taken with the consent of the subject and will often come with a request for Rs 10 or more. Bring plenty of small demonation notes and other money to purchase souvenirs. Alcohol is an important ingredient in this social event; combined with the hunting bows

and arrows, it's a further incentive to make use of a professional guide.

Gupteswar Cave

Located 64km west of Jeypore is this cave temple, dedicated to Shiva on account of a handily shaped stalagmite serving as a lingam. Take a torch, as there are a few passages and chambers to explore alongside the lingam's grotto.

Kotpad

This town, 40km north of Jeypore on the road to Sambalpur, has a thriving home-based fabric-dyeing industry. Along the lanes you'll see ropes of thread in a rich range of colours from reds and burgundies to browns laid out to dry.

SAMBALPUR

☎ 0663 / pop 154,170

Sambalpur is the centre for the textile industry spread over western Orissa. If you haven't already bought examples of *ikat* or *sambalpur* weaving, Gole Bazaar is the place to look. The town is important as a base for nearby Badrama National Park, and Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary on the edge of Hirakud Dam.

Orientation & Information

NH6 passes through Sambalpur to become VSS Marg. There are no moneychanging facilities but there are a couple of ATMs that advertise credit-card advances.

Internet Browsing Point (VSS Marg; per hr Rs 20; 🕒 9am–9pm)

Orissa Tourism (☎ 2411118; Panthanivas Sambalpur, Brooks Hill; 🕒 10am–5pm Mon–Sat, closed 2nd Sat in month) Can arrange tours to Debrigarh and Badrama.

State Bank of India (VSS Marg) MasterCard and Visa ATM next to Sheela Towers hotel.

Sleeping & Eating

Rani Lodge (☎ 2522173; VSS Marg; s/d Rs 100/140) A basic cheapie with adequately clean and well-cared-for rooms that come with a fan and mosquito nets.

Hotel Uphar Palace (☎ 2400519; fax 2522668; VSS Marg; s/d from Rs 300/350, with AC from Rs 600/650; 🏠 📺) An unexpected level of cleanliness characterises this friendly hotel, where the rooms are also spacious. The Sharda restaurant has an Indian and Chinese menu (mains Rs 45 to 130) plus daily specials.

Sheela Towers (☎ 2403111; www.sheelatowers.com; VSS Marg; s/d from Rs 795/845; 🏠 📺) This is Sambalpur's

top hotel, with a range of comfortable rooms. Checkout is 24 hours. The restaurant, Celebration (mains Rs 50 to 150), provides a buffet breakfast and there's a relaxing bar.

New Hong Kong Restaurant (☎ 2532429; VSS Marg; mains Rs 40-165; 🕒 Tue-Sun) For 15 years the Chen family has been providing authentic Chinese in Sambalpur. The menu also includes several tasty Thai dishes.

Shakti (VSS Marg; sweets per kg Rs 120-160; 🕒 7am-10.30pm) This popular sweet shop usually sells Rasmulli and other delicacies by the kilo.

Getting There & Away

The **government bus stand** (Laxmi Talkies) has buses running to Jeypore (Rs 180, 14 hours), Bhubaneswar (Rs 178, eight hours) and Barampukur (Rs 194, 12 hours). Adjacent travel agencies book (usually more comfortable) buses leaving from the private **Ainthapali Bus Stand** (☎ 2540601), 3km from the city centre (Rs 25 by autorickshaw). Several buses go to Jeypore (Rs 210), Bhubaneswar (Rs 180), Raipur (Rs 150, eight hours) and Jashipur for Similipal (Rs 168, 10 hours).

The *Tapaswini Express* No 8451 goes to Puri (non-AC sleeper/3AC sleeper/2AC sleeper Rs 178/471/666, nine hours, 10.50pm) via Bhubaneswar (Rs 160/420/592, seven hours). The *Koraput-Howrah Express* No 8006 goes to Howrah (Rs 243/654/927, 10 hours, 9.25pm).

AROUND SAMBALPUR

Access to Huma, Khiching and Baripalli is only by organised tour.

Debrigarh & Badrama Wildlife Sanctuaries

The 347-sq-km **Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary** (☎ 0663-2402741; Indian/foreigner per day Rs 20/1000; 🕒 8am-5pm 1 Oct-30 Jun), 40km from Sambalpur, is an easy day out. Mainly dry deciduous forest blankets the Barapahad Hills down to the shores of the vast Hirakud reservoir, a home for migratory birds in winter. Wildlife here includes deer, antelopes, sloth bears, langur monkeys, and the ever-elusive tigers and leopards. **Badrama Wildlife Sanctuary** (Ushakothi; Indian/foreigner per day Rs 20/1000; 🕒 1 Nov-mid-Jun), 37km from Sambalpur, shelters elephants, tigers, panthers and bears.

Access to the sanctuaries usually requires a 4WD, which can be arranged through Orissa Tourism, a private tour agency, or your hotel in Sambalpur for about Rs 1000 for a half-day.

Huma

The leaning **Vimaleswar temple** at Huma, 32km south of Sambalpur, is a small Shiva temple where the *deul* slants considerably in two directions. The puzzle is that the porch of the temple appears square and there are no apparent filled-in gaps between the porch and *deul*. Was it built that way?

Khiching

On the way east to Similipal (north of the highway), about 50km west of Jashipur, is the 10th-century **Maa Kichakeswari temple** (🕒 8am-noon & 3-8pm), reconstructed in 1934. Another of Shiva's avatars, Kichakeswari is resident in this single-room temple. Outside are several bands of sculptures, including Durga killing a buffalo demon.

Baripalli

The Costa Pada area in Baripalli, on the road to Jeypore, is where to discover how tie-dye *ikat* textiles are created. Skeins of threads separated into cords are wrapped around frames. Painstakingly, these cords are then tied in red cotton to mark out the dyeing pattern. Strips of rubber are then wound around to protect the undyed areas. Dyed and dried, the threads are then woven on the many looms you can see through open doorways. There's also a thriving terracotta industry here.

NORTHEASTERN ORISSA

SIMILIPAL NATIONAL PARK

☎ 06792

The 2750-sq-km **Similipal National Park** (Indian/foreigner per day Rs 40/1000; 🕒 6am-noon day visitor, entry by 2pm with accommodation reservation 1 Nov-15 Jun) is Orissa's prime wildlife sanctuary.

The scenery is remarkable: a massif of prominent hills creased by valleys and gorges, and made dramatic by plunging waterfalls, including the spectacular 400m-high **Barheipani Waterfall** and the 150m-high **Joranda Waterfall**. The jungle is an atmospheric mix of dense sal forest and rolling open savanna. The core area is only 850 sq km and much of the southern part is closed to visitors.

The wildlife list is impressive: 29 reptile species, 231 birds and 42 mammals, including chital and sambar providing food for leopards and tigers. The tigers aren't tracked; the best chance to spot them will be at the **Joranda**

salt lick. What you may well see is your first wild elephant (there are over 400 in the park), most probably at the **Chahala salt lick.** The best time to visit is early in the season before the heavy visitation of the park impacts animal behaviour.

Orientation & Information

There are two entrances, **Tulsibani**, 15km from Jashipur, on the northwestern side, and **Pithabata**, near Lulung, 25km west of Baripada. Options are a day visit or an overnight stay within the park.

Entry permits can be obtained in advance from the **assistant conservator of forests** (☎ 06797-232474; National Park, Jashipur, Mayurbhanj District, 757091), or the **field director, Similipal Tiger Reserve Project** (☎ 06792-252593; Bhanjpur, Baripada, Mayurbhanj District, 757002). Alternatively a day permit can be purchased from either gate.

Visitors either come on an organised tour or charter a vehicle (Rs 1200 to 2000 per day for 4WD); hiring a guide (around Rs 400) is advisable.

If you want to avoid the hassles of arranging permits, transport, food and accommodation, an organised tour is the answer; see p639, p646 and right for details.

Sleeping & Eating

Most accommodation is at 700m above sea level; in winter (November to February) overnight temperatures can plummet to zero.

Forest Department bungalows (d Indian/foreigner from Rs 440/880) Seven sets of bungalows with Chahala, Joranda and Newana being best for animal spotting and Barheipani for views. The very basic accommodation has to be booked well in advance (30 days) with the field director at Baripada – see above. You have to bring your own food and water.

Panthanivas Lulung (dm Rs 125, d with fan Rs 750) This comfortable lodge, 5km inside the Pithabata gate, is run by OTDC; book with Orissa Tourism in Baripada (right).

JASHIPUR

☎ 06797

This is an entry point for Similipal Park and a place to collect an entry permit and organise a guide and transport. Accommodation is very limited.

The **youth hostel** (☎ 232633; dm/d Rs 50/100) off Main Rd is bare-bones accommodation with no food available. For more comfort, **Sai Ram**

Hotel (☎ 232827; Main Rd; s Rs 70, d with/without AC Rs 500/200; ☺) has small singles, adequate non-AC rooms and bigger AC rooms. The owner can help arrange Similipal trips.

BARIPADA

☎ 06792

With the very helpful **Orissa Tourism** (☎ 252710; Baghra Rd; ☺) 10am–5pm Mon–Sat, closed 2nd Sat in month), this town is the better place to organise a Similipal visit.

Hotel Durga (☎ 253438; r Rs 180, with AC from Rs 550; ☺) has fan-cooled budget rooms, restaurant and bar. Better is **Hotel Ambika** (☎ 252557; ☺), a large rambling hotel set in pleasant gardens. The rooms are clean and comfortable, and there's a good bar and restaurant. It can organise Similipal trips.

Regular buses go to Kolkata (Rs 140, three hours) and frequently to Bhubaneswar (Rs 170, five hours) and Balasore (Rs 35, one hour).

CUTTACK

☎ 0671 / pop 535,140

Cuttack, one of Orissa's oldest cities, was the state capital until 1950; today it's a chaotic, crowded city. The **tourist office** (☎ 2612225; Link Rd; ☺) 10am–5pm Mon–Sat, closed 2nd Sat in month) is along the Bhubaneswar road. Shopping is great: saris, horn and brassware are crafted here, along with the famed, lace-like, silver filigree work (*tarakasi*). The best jewellers are on **Naya Sarak** and **Chowdary Bazaar**, while you can see pieces being crafted in **Moham-media Bazaar**.

The 14th-century **Barabati Fort**, about 3km north of the city centre, once boasted nine storeys, but only some foundations and the moat remain. The 18th-century **Qadam-i-Rasool** shrine, in the city centre, is sacred to Hindus as well as Muslims (who believe it contains footprints of the Prophet Mohammed).

Bhubaneswar with its temples and better range of accommodation is less than an hour away, and Cuttack can easily be covered in a day trip. Express buses to Bhubaneswar leave every 10 minutes (Rs 14, 30 to 45 minutes).

BALASORE

Balasore, the first major town in northern Orissa, was once an important trading centre with Dutch, Danish, English and French warehouses. Now it's a staging post for Chandipur or Similipal National Park. **Orissa Tourism** (☎ 262048; 1st fl, TP Bldg, Station Sq; ☺) 10am–5pm

Mon-Sat, closed 2nd Sat in month) is 500m from the train station.

Several buses leave from Remuna Golai at around 10pm for Kolkata (Rs 190, seven to eight hours) and more frequently for Bhubaneswar (Rs 100, five hours). Infrequent buses to Chandipur makes an autorickshaw (Rs 150) a better option.

CHANDIPUR

☎ 06782

This delightful seaside village ambles down to the ocean through a short avenue of casuarina and palm trees. The place amounts to a couple of hotels, snack places and some souvenir shops. Chandipur has a huge beach at low tide when the sea is some 5km away; it's safe to swim here when there's enough water.

A bustling fishing village, the home of refugee Bangladeshis, is 2km further up the coast at a river mouth. In the early morning, walk up and watch the boats unloading fish and prawns.

Panthanivas Chandipur (☎ 272251; dm Rs 80, d with/without AC Rs 750/390; 🏠) has a great location overlooking the beach. Of the two blocks choose the one with sea views for a dramatic sunrise. Alternatively, there's the **Hotel Chandipur** (☎ 270030; d with/without AC from Rs 700/250; 🏠), a three-storey hotel with comfortable rooms overlooking a courtyard with a fountain and fragrant frangipani trees.

Regular buses ply the NH5 between Bhubaneswar and Balasore. From Balasore, taxis and autorickshaws can take you the 15km to Chandipur.

BHITARKANIKA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Three rivers flow out to sea at Bhitarkanika forming a tidal maze of muddy creeks and mangroves. Most of this 672-sq-km delta forms **Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary** (☎ 272460; permit Indian/foreigner per day Rs 20/1000). A significant ecosystem, it contains 63 of the world's 75 mangrove varieties. Hundreds of estuarine crocodiles, some 6m-plus monsters, bask on mud flats waiting for the next meal to swim by. Dangmar Island contains a successful breeding and conservation programme for these crocodiles. Less dangerous creatures are pythons, water monitors, wild boar and timid deer. The best time to visit is from December to February.

Bird-watchers will find eight species of brilliantly coloured kingfishers, plus 190 other

bird species. A large heronry on Bagagaham Island is home for herons that arrive in early June and nest until November. Raucous open-billed storks have set up a permanent rookery here.

The sanctuary also protects the Gahirmatha nesting beach of the endangered olive ridley turtles (see the boxed text, p652). Gahirmatha is out of bounds due to a missile-testing site on one of the nearby Wheeler Islands. Rushikulya (p652) is a more accessible nesting beach.

Orientation & Information

Permits, accommodation and boat transport can all be organised in the small port of **Chandbali**. Organise a boat (per day Rs 2000, negotiable) with one of the private operators, such as the recommended **Sanjog Travels** (☎ 06786-220495; Chandbali Jetty), who can also help with obtaining the permit from the **Forest Officer** (☎ 9937254800; Chandbali Jetty; 🕒 6am-6pm).

Sights

First stop is a permit check at Khola jetty before chugging on to **Dangmar Island** for the crocodile conservation programme and an interesting **interpretive centre** (admission free; 🕒 8am-5pm) about the sanctuary. Binoculars can be useful to scan trees for birds, mud banks for crocs and lizards, and the undergrowth for monitors and deer.

The **heronry** at Bagagaham Island is reached by a wonky boardwalk leading to a watchtower, where you can spy on a solid mass of herons and storks nesting in the treetops.

Back at Khola, a 2km walk leads to Rigagada with its interesting 18th-century **Jaganath temple**, built with some passionate erotica in Kalinga style. While there, take an amble through this typical Orissan village.

Sleeping & Eating

Forest Rest Houses (dm Indian/foreigner Rs 40/80, d from Rs 150/400) These basic dorms and comfortable doubles are at Dangmal and Ekakula and have solar lights, mosquito nets and shared bathrooms. You need to bring your own drinking water and food, which staff will cook for you. The haphazard **divisional forest officer** (☎ 06729-272460; Rajnagar; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, closed 2nd Sat in month) is the only place to make bookings, which must be paid in advance. These complications make going through a travel agent preferable.

Aranya Nivas (☎ 06786-220397; Chandbali; dm/d Rs 70/250) Set in a pleasant garden within 50m of

the Chandbali jetty, the comfortable accommodation here is great value and the restaurant serves up some scrumptious food (mains Rs 30 to 75).

Hotel Orion (☎ 220397; NH 5 Bhadrak; s/d Rs 250/450, with AC Rs 350/550) The Orion is a good place to overnight on your way to Chandbali. The rooms are clean and come with TV and private bathrooms. The hotel has money-changing facilities, a multicuisine restaurant (mains Rs 40 to 90) and it can organise a car to Chandbali (Rs 450).

Getting There & Away

Chandbali is 55km southeast of Bhadrak on NH5. Buses go from Chandbali bazaar to Bhadrak (Rs 27), Bhubaneswar (Rs 72) and Kolkata (Rs 150). The *Howrah-Bhubaneswar Dhauli Express* Nos 2821/2 stops in Bhadrak at 10.27am going south to Bhubaneswar (2nd class/chair Rs 71/232, two hours); and at 3.35pm going north to Howrah (2nd class/chair Rs 104/346, five hours).

RATNAGIRI, UDAYAGIRI & LALITGIRI

These Buddhist ruins are on hilltops about 60km northeast of Cuttack. Currently there's no accommodation and inadequate transport, so the only feasible way to visit is by hired car organised in Bhubaneswar or Puri. However,

the OTDC was constructing a Panthanivas hotel opposite the museum in Ratnigiri at the time of research.

Ratnagiri

Ratnagiri has the most interesting and extensive **ruins** (Indian/foreigner Rs 5/100, video Rs 25; ☒ dawn-dusk). Two large monasteries flourished here from the 6th to 12th centuries and noteworthy are an exquisitely carved doorway and the remains of a 10m-high stupa. The excellent **museum** (admission Rs 2; ☒ 10am-5pm Sat-Thu) contains beautiful stone sculptures from the three sites.

Udayagiri

Another **monastery complex** is being excavated here. At present there's a large pyramidal brick stupa with a seated Buddha and some beautiful doorjamb carvings. Expect an entry fee soon.

Lalitgiri

Several **monastery ruins** (Indian/foreigner Rs 5/100, video Rs 25; ☒ dawn-dusk) are scattered up a hillside leading to a small museum and a hillock crowned with a shallow stupa. During excavations of the stupa in the 1970s, a casket containing gold and silver relics was found.

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