

# HILLOCK OF THE GODDESS

The Bananthimari Betta offers a challenging option for trekkers, discovers Kavitha

**B**ananthimari Betta, just 3 km from Kanakapura on the Kanakapura-Ramanagaram road, is one of those places which are yet to be discovered by trekkers. Situated between Konanadoddi and Kuthnahalli, it offers a unique trekking option. Surrounding the two hillocks are vast fields, between the hillocks is a lush green valley and a stream flowing down. Bananthi means mother who is nursing a newborn, and mari means a fearsome goddess. I am not sure about the origin of the name, but the base of the hill has a temple of Bananthimari that can be reached from the village of Kuthnahalli.

Many devotees visit this temple, cook near it and serve all the visitors. The highlight of this place is that the priest goes into a seance and talks to the devotees about their problems, giving solutions and blessings.

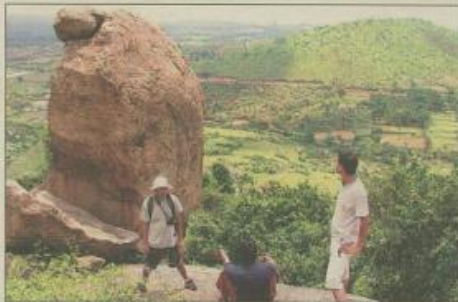
## THREE TREK ROUTES

**Route 1:** Reach the temple by vehicle, and trek to the top of the hill through the narrow trekking path and the boulders.

**Route 2:** Reach the base of the hill from Konanadoddi side, crossing the granite factory and the fields. Trek through the valley, the vegetation is very rich and the wall-like rock face on both sides offers a great view, the sound of the flowing stream and the quietness keeps you going all through the route. This is also the track accessed by the local shepherds, it finally leads to the temple and from there you have to take Route 1.

**Route 3:** This is a freaky route, basically no route, keep climbing and trekking till you feel you are reaching somewhere.

Jeetu, Subbu, William and I wanted one exhausting break; so on a Sunday morning, we drove down from the city. Breakfast at Adigas before the Khodays factory is a ritual for us whenever we travel on Kanakapura road, after spending a good Rs 170 we decided to move on. Even though most of the drive to Kanakapura has a lot of traffic, there are some good driving stretches that relax your mind.



A good view of the valley



## BANANTHIMARI BETTA

Distance from Bangalore: 75 km

Distance from Kanakapura: 3 km

Route: Bangalore-Kanakapura

Road and deviation that leads

to Ramanagaram

Cost: Rs 400-500 per person

Total duration: 12 hours

(including travel of 4-5 hours)



## SEEKING DIRECTIONS

On reaching Kanakapura, we asked for directions, and at one place, two villagers got into a verbal fight on who was giving the right direction, so we decided to take the advice of the older of the two and reached the base of the hillock.

After parking the car at Soundarya Granites, we walked around the fields that were all slushy due to rains in the last few days, still deciding which route to take and finally thought the freaks' route was the best option. We had no clue what would be ahead, but started walking up the rocky face of the smaller hill. We could see a red

flag on Bananthimari Betta and our objective was to reach there by the difficult route.

## OLDER ROCKS

The rocks seem to be much older than at Madhugiri or Ramanagaram; it looked more worn out, quite rough and did not feel slippery even on a steep stretch. Even though we only get to see the fields on all the three sides of the hill, the view of the other hillocks from there is really awesome.

Ramadevara Betta, Kabbaldurga, glimpses of Savanadurga and many more of those unnamed elevations were fodder for our cameras; we took a lot of pictures of different views along with all our other regular crazy shots.

Bouldering is also a good option; many faces also offer some rappelling routes. It is quite a long climb to the flat pitch on the top of the smaller hillock. Midway, there is a spot that has a huge rock in the middle; one side of the rock is a tra-

verse that is dangerous, and the other side is a drop zone with some two feet space to walk and is slippery due to the flowing water. Once you decide to brave it and cross over, you have a 6-foot climb up with a 75 degree elevation and a slip to your right would mean going down the drop zone.

Other than a few of the dicey spots, the climb is quite nice and mainly tests endurance levels. Once on the top of the smaller hill, the route down and up to the main hill was clearer. We met a boy named Raju who was keeping an eye on his cattle grazing in the valley below; we got talking and asked more about the routes and the local area.

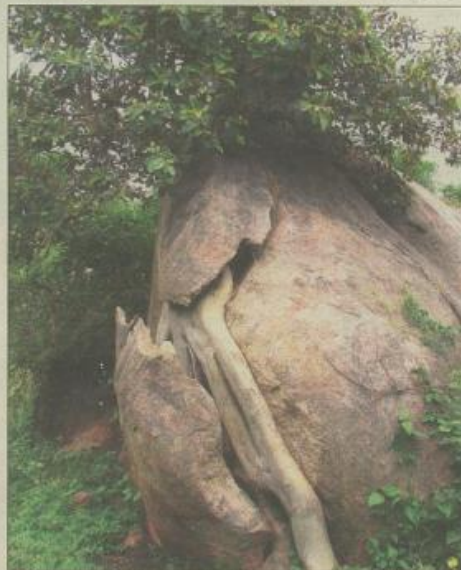
One of the interesting things about trekking is that we get to meet the local people, talk to them and get to share their knowledge about the place. Most of the time, they wonder why we are doing crazy things like coming to a forest instead of enjoying city life on a holiday. Little do they know what we really feel about our city life. Murphy's law, I guess.

As we trekked down to the lake, we saw a small temple and the devotees asked us to stay for lunch.

Given the fact that we were hungry, we immediately said yes. We lazed around for an hour, and got back to the granite factory.

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The power of life: Roots of the tree have neatly split this rock