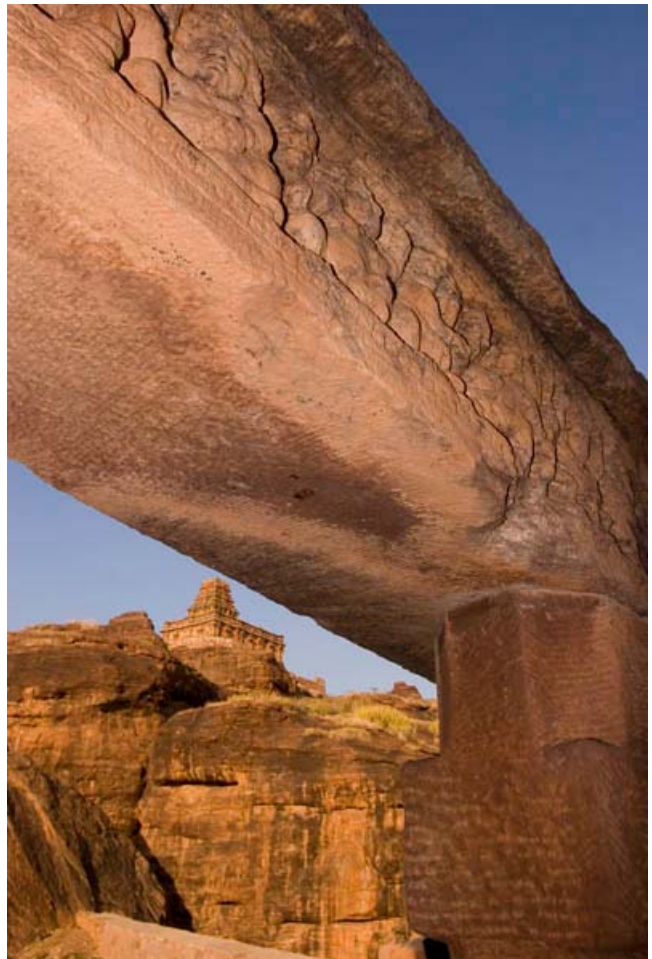


Badami to Gokarna: Via Hampi (1/30/2008 to 1/2/2008)

From Bijapur, I left Muslim ruins behind for Hindu ones in and around the village of Badami. Badami along with nearby Pattadakal and Aihole (pronounced a-hole-leh, rather than a-hole) are the sites of some well preserved Hindu temple architecture dating from 4th to 8th centuries. Although the temples were nice and the landscape around them beautiful I think I would have enjoyed the place more had I been there 5 years ago. The area has recently become more popular with tourists, both foreign and Indian, coinciding with its relatively recent designation as a UNESCO world heritage site. The hotel/guesthouse supply has not yet caught up with the surge in demand, which translates into higher prices and lower standards. Had I found a cheaper better place to stay I may have lingered for longer but as it was I saw the sites and moved on. The town had a touristy feel without the tourist infrastructure.

I had planned to move on to Hampi, the ruined capital of the Vijayanagars, a 16th century Hindu empire. The ruins are set amidst a fascinating landscape of boulders, fields, rivers, and villages. It was also the destination of my first trip as an independent traveler 14 years ago. As an 18 year old kid I navigated the overwhelming Indian rail and bus system, switching buses in small towns, and waiting in train stations in the middle of the night for the notoriously delayed Indian trains all in an effort to get from Madras, (where I was staying with my family while my father was teaching a semester aboard program in India) to the then fairly remote and little visited site of Hampi. It was a spectacular place and worthy destination for a first journey. I felt like I was walking through a set straight out of Indiana Jones, as I hiked throughout the area poking my head in dark but filled ruined temples and other monuments. Back then, the entire three days I was in Hampi I saw only two other foreigners. Things have changed in the last 14 years, and Hampi, justifiably so, has become one of the must see attractions in Southern India. I saw more foreigners in my first 5 minutes I arrived at the Hospet (the city nearest to Hampi) than I had in my entire visit on my previous trip. Nevertheless, I was looking forward to poetic symmetry of spending my 32nd birthday and one-year-on-the-road anniversary in the place where my love of travel all began. Unfortunately, I hadn't checked with the president of India to ok my travel plans, and as it turned out she too was planning a visit to Hampi. I arrived to find that all the guesthouses in Hampi were forcing all their guests to leave in preparation for the visit and for the next three days only locals were going to be permitted in the area. So after riding 8 hours on three different buses to get to Hampi on my birthday I hopped right back on a bus back to Hospet, the city 20 minutes away to attempt to find some form of lodging and formulate a new plan for the coming days. Unfortunately, with all guesthouses in Hampi throwing their guests out on the street, a large number of said guests ended up filling the hotels and guesthouses of nearby Hospet. Those guesthouses and hotels that weren't filled up by displaced tourists were filled up with the hundreds of extra Indian police who were in town to provide extra security for the presidential visit. So after



Temples around the northern fort, Badami.

walking around for an hour with my bags looking in vain for a cheap place to crash for the night, I surrendered and dropped nearly 30 dollars on a room in a hotel under constriction. The next morning I hopped on a tediously slow 10 hour bus to the costal town of Gokarna for some much needed rest and relaxation on the beach.



**Bhutanatha Temple,
Badami.**



**Badami is yet another Indian
city infested with monkeys.
Here a monkey mans a
cannon on the ramparts of
the northern fort.**



More monkeys, Badami.



**And one more monkeys shot
Badami.**



Sunset, Badami.



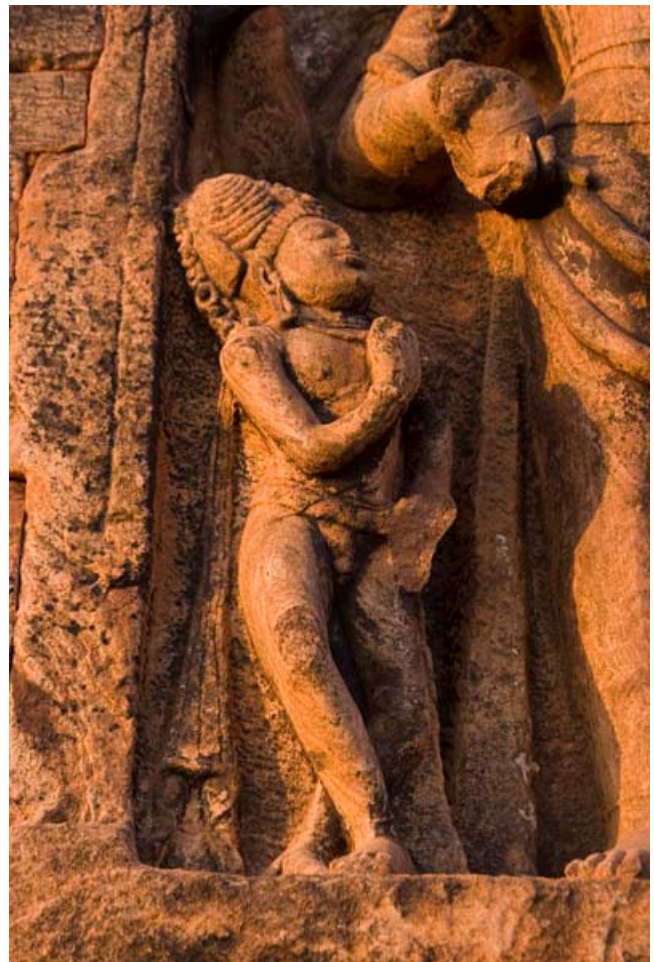
6th century Cave temple (no. 3), Badami.



6th century Cave temple (no. 1), Badami.



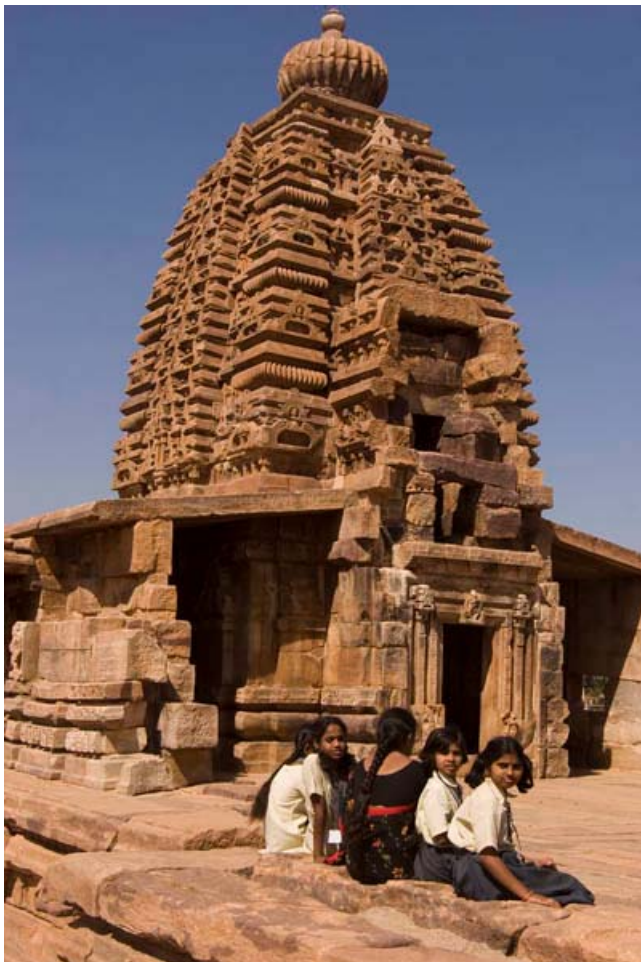
6th century Cave temple (no. 1), Badami.



Detail on Malagatti Shivalaya Temple, Badami.



Temple, Badami.



Temple (7th-8th century) with school girls, Pattadakal.



Virupaksha Temple, Pattadakal.



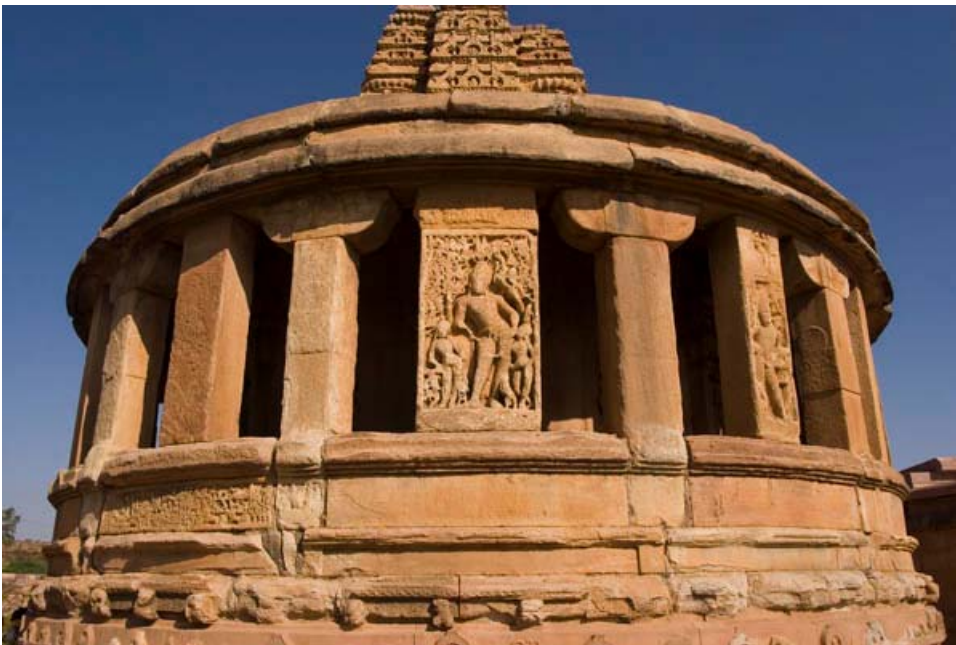
**Virupaksha Temple,
Pattadakal.**



**Virupaksha Temple,
Pattadakal.**



**Carved ceiling, temple,
Pattadakal.**



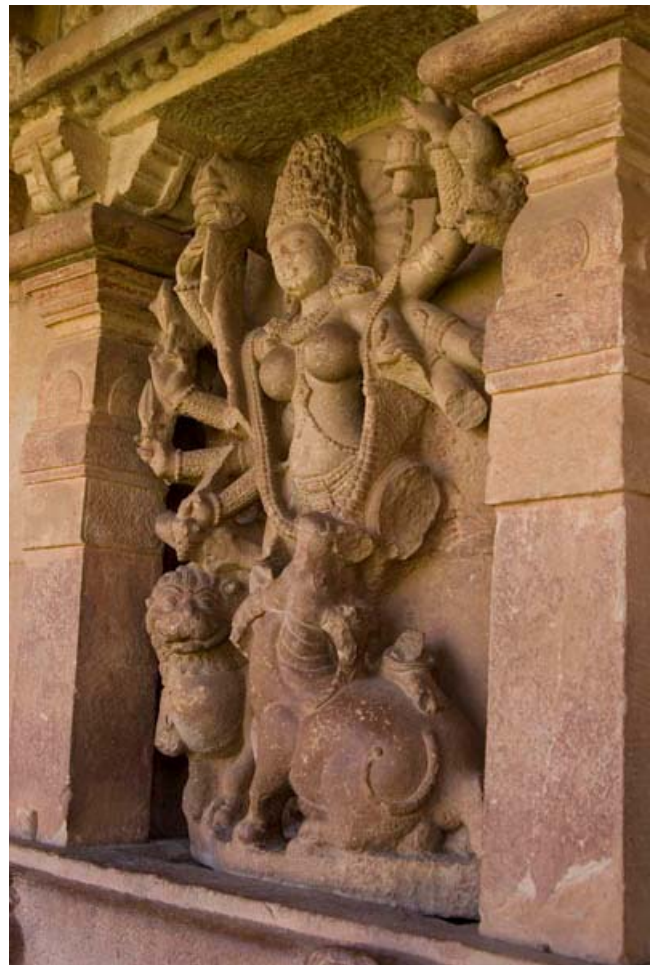
**Durga Temple (7th century),
Aihole.**



**Durga Temple (7th century),
Aihole.**



Durga Temple (7th century), Aihole.



Durga Temple (7th century), Aihole.



**Durga Temple (7th century),
Aihole.**