

Youth Cravings

We are road-trippin' in the Yaris from Bengaluru to Amravati to see how contemporary and sprightly this new sedan from Toyota really is

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(Left) The Devanahalli Fort is Tipu Sultan's birthplace and the first stop on our drive



ON A SWELTERING TUESDAY MORNING, I LANDED IN BENGALURU and made my way out into the parking lot. A shiny red Toyota Yaris awaited me. Yep, it was time for a road trip.

The Yaris has earned rave reviews and positive feedback from the automotive media and customers alike, but this drive wasn't about that. This drive was about a late 20-something (yours truly) seeing how suited the Yaris was to my lifestyle.

If you've been following *Car India* for long enough, you'll know that I, like the rest of the team, love exploration drives to discover new places. In this particular trip, I'd be heading from the airport straight towards Amravati, the new capital of the state of Andhra Pradesh, and, as such, the youngest capital in the country. When it comes to new, young places to explore, you can't do much better than that. So off I went, stopping, as usual, at interesting spots along the way.

The first of which was just a little way beyond the airport on the highway leading towards Hyderabad. The

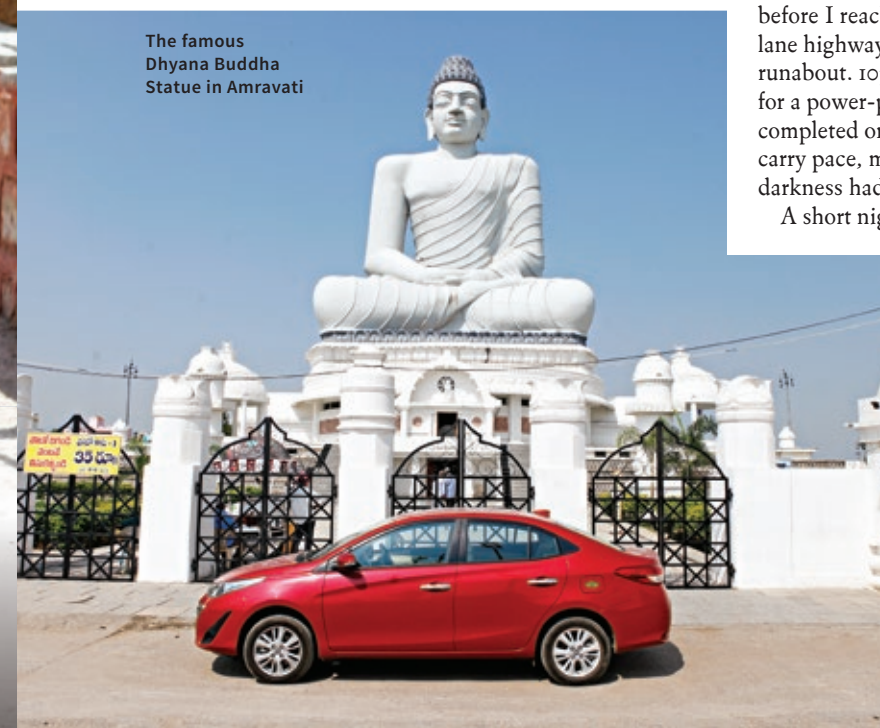
birthplace of Tipu Sultan: Devanahalli Fort. Dating back to the 15th century, this glorious Fort has a fascinating history and made for a perfect backdrop to take a closer look at the Yaris' exquisite exterior.

Just as the majestic Fort offers up a regal, imposing, and glorious aesthetic, so does the Yaris. The only difference being that Toyota's premium sedan has new-age styling cues like that sharp headlamp design which artfully integrates LED DRLs into its fold. The smooth and curving lines of the car's silhouette were brought into even sharper relief by the Fort's distinctive crescent-moon battlements.

Admiration complete, it was time to set off. I had 600+ kilometres to cover before I reached Amravati. The first half of that journey was all open, three-lane highway. This meant the 1.5-litre petrol engine could be given a proper runabout. 107 PS and 140 Nm with a CVT and cruise control: a perfect recipe for a power-packed yet relaxed highway drive. The latter half of the drive was completed on a single-lane state highway which really curtailed my ability to carry pace, meaning by the time the Yaris and I had arrived in Amravati, darkness had fallen.

A short night's sleep in the hotel later, the Amravati exploration began in >

The famous Dhyana Buddha Statue in Amravati



Bhavani Island and the ferries that take you there





(Left) The Avatar statue in Vijayawada are super cool



(Below) Chilli is a popular produce of the region

earnest. The biggest attraction (literally) in Amravati is the Dhyana Buddha statue. This 125-foot statue of the Buddha is essentially one of the most elaborate roofs to a structure you will ever see, because the base of the statue houses a museum on Buddhist culture. The sunlight bouncing off the serene, soaring white statue was perfectly balanced by the almost glowing Wildfire Red shade of the Yaris. I also checked out the mighty Krishna River gurgling nearby before heading out of Amravati and towards the other side of the River's bank and the famous town of Vijayawada.

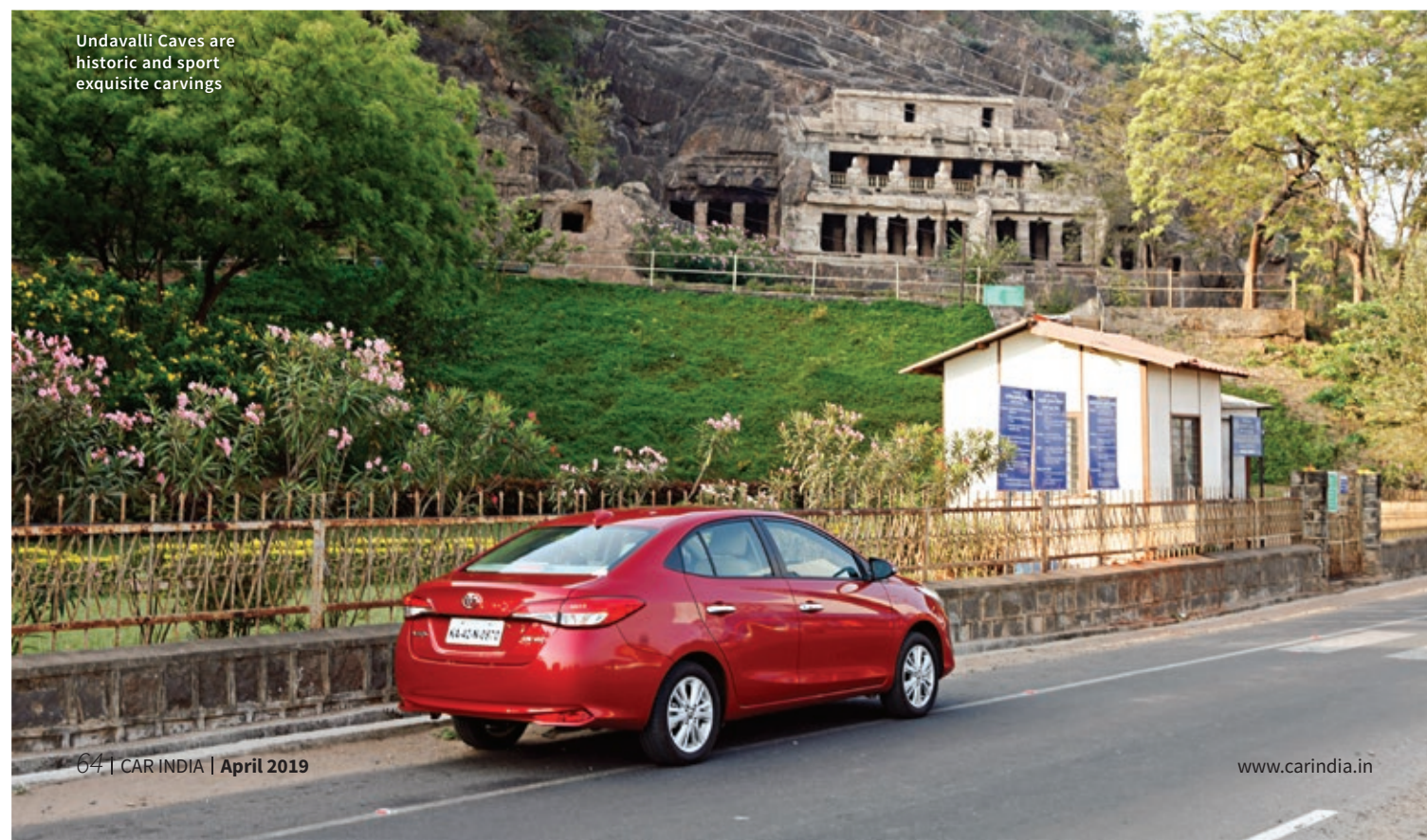
This bustling city also forms part of the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region and is accessed by the formidable Prakasam Barrage. On the other side of the bridge and just a short stint down the road is the famous Bhavani Island, my next stop on this journey. This island spans 133 acres, making it one of the largest river islands in India. The island is a haven for water sport enthusiasts

THIS DRIVE IS TESTIMONY TO THE SUITABILITY OF THE YARIS AS A FOUR-WHEELED COMPANION FOR THE YOUNG PROFESSIONAL



The State Central Library in the heart of Cubbon Park

Undavalli Caves are historic and sport exquisite carvings



and offers a whole bunch of fun activities besides. A regular ferry service takes you across and back and you can even live in the hotel built on this island if you choose. I explored the island all afternoon and even stayed back to catch a spectacular sunset before heading back to the hotel.

The next morning it was time to make our return journey to Bengaluru; only I chose a different highway this time. On the way out, a tall and decidedly blue statue caught my eye. It wasn't, as you would imagine, a statue of the Lord Shiva. No, instead it was a statue of Jake Sully in his Avatar form, from the hit James Cameron movie *Avatar*! He wasn't alone either, as alongside his statue was one of Neytiri astride a Flying Banshee right next to him! For a film nerd like me, they were the coolest statues ever! It wasn't all modern art explorations for us, though, because my next stop was the Undavalli Caves. A few of this collection of caves date back all the way to the fourth century AD and are adorned with various religious carvings.

Our 650+ kilometre drive back to Bengaluru was similar to the drive out — a combination of highways first wide, then narrow, before we arrived at the metropolis, once again after darkness had set in. Our flight back out was on the following evening, which allowed me to catch some rest and opened up a small window of opportunity for even more exploration. An opportunity I couldn't possibly turn down. So, after a hearty breakfast, I headed out into the town and my favourite part of it, Cubbon Park. This leafy green haven in the middle of the bustle was a great place to relax, unwind,



and take in the bountiful nature surrounding me. The Yaris' cabin with its plush seats, high-quality dash, air-con with automated temperature control and roof-mounted air vents in the second row, and cutting-edge infotainment and instrumentation perfectly complemented my urge to chill out for a bit.

This drive is testimony to the suitability of the Yaris as a four-wheeled companion for the young professional who has an adventurous streak within him or her. It drives great, looks gorgeous, and comes with a host of cutting-edge features that make it an absolute standout in its segment. 