

## From the last berth

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Gumbaz at Srirangapatnam

MYSORE: Karnataka's own luxury tourist train the Golden Chariot took its passengers on a historical journey to the time of Hyder Ali and his son Tipu.

The tour began with a view of impressive paintings of women at Tipu's summer palace and tales of Hyder Ali. There was more on Day One of the first trip on Tuesday from the tech capital to the City of Palaces on the grand train.

The weather was glorious, with temperatures hovering around 32 deg C, ensuring tourists learnt the history with a touch of royalty in comfort.

After a royal welcome at Mysore railway station, it was a 10-hour trip that covered Chamundi Hills, Mysore Palace, St Philomena's Church and Kala Mandira.

Tourists who frequented India said without hesitation that the Golden Chariot was the right train for leisure tourists as they could see places with no strain.

It was a conscious decision of Karnataka State Tourism Department Corporation (KSTDC) to limit the number of places of visit. "A large number of tourists booking

luxury expresses are over 50 years old. They look for leisure and a relaxed journey," said a KSTDC official.

Vivien Finlason, a tourist from England said he had frequented India many a time but never had he experienced this kind of luxury. "Compared to other trips on other modes of transport, the Golden Chariot is preferable as it is relaxing and comfortable," he said.

His wife Neil and he hoped to go on the train again to enjoy the delightful experience.

Passengers amused by guides: The number of passengers included 34 Indians and 16 foreigners from Germany, Britain, USA, France, Australia, Austria and Japan.

All the 50 passengers on board were divided into two groups and handled by two trained guides L Sridhar and Pradeep Reddy. But the duo who had been in the profession for the past 20 years, seemed to have been upstaged by a local guide who handled tourists from another group, explaining the significance of each place as if he was reciting prose, much to the delight of the passengers.

Literature on train: KSTDC will provide printed literature to all passengers boarding the train from the next trip onwards.

Tourists boarding the train from March 16 will get CDs and brochures about the places.

Safety measures on train: KSTDC officials had arranged for doctors at every station. Provisions for emergency stoppage and medical facilities at every station were also made. What's on Day 2: Day 2 holds a lot of promise for nature lovers.

Passengers will be taken to Kabini backwaters to watch elephants play and bathe.