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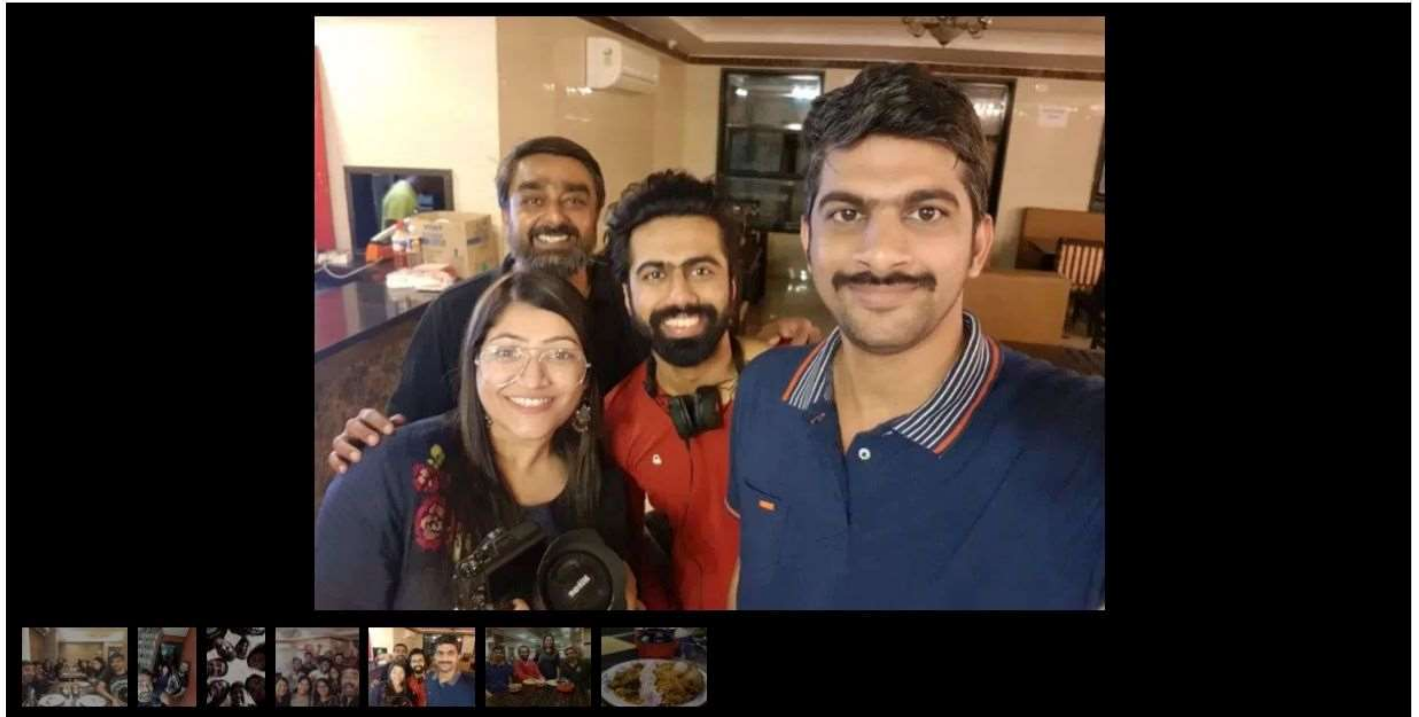
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FOOD

## Discovering India For The Love Of Biryani

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What if you were to leave the stress and packup for a trip down south exploring lip-smacking authentic 'Biryani'? Fragrant rice simmered over a slow cooking fire with aromatics and vegetables and meat? The description itself is enough to get people salivating. That's exactly what we at ScoutmyTrip, a road trip community visualised. And soon there came an innovative idea which had a Mash up of food and travel! Called the Great Indian Food Trip, this is a series of travel exploration into the hinterlands of India rediscovering some of the most iconic and even lost treasures of Indian cuisine and food. In a nutshell, ScoutMyTrip wants to rediscover Indian food – One highway at a time. The first edition of the Great Indian Food Trip was in association with Milton is the South Indian Biryani Trail.

But why Biryani? Research shows that there are over 100 varieties of the humble Biryani? Did you know that this dish was brought to India by the Persians to feed the soldiers while on the march? There are many stories that are linked to the origin of the Biryani in India. Like one that says that Mumtaz Mahal had ordered her chef to prepare this dish so that her soldiers could get a full plate of nutritious food.

Oh well! Now that we answered why Biryani, let's discuss why south Indian Biryani? Especially, when the only famous one in South India is the Hyderabadi Biryani? That's exactly the point! There was a clear need for finding out more and here was the team: Deepak Ananth, co-founder of ScoutMyTrip, 2 influential bloggers and a travel scout, all set to find the answer 'Is Hyderabadi Biryani the one-sided love for Indians? Believe you me ..its not'.

Our yearlong business engagement during travel show some interesting insights:

Who says! Authentic Indian food is passé in the modern India? Infact People like to try out new dishes, and particularly from those non-popular food joints. ScoutMyTrip team's vision with the Great Indian Trip was all about discovering these hidden flavours of India and bring back the age-old culture of travel exploration, of course with some yummy food!

The Biryani trail of south India covered all the 4 important southern states. Starting from the famous Hyderabadi Biryani ,proceeding to sample the varieties in Bengaluru, Chennai, Coimbatore and finally leading to Calicut. During the 10-day road trip the team discovered why this dish is loved universally! In each city, the team interacted with other travelers and foodies to get to know why they consider their Biryani a cut above the rest. On food walks and trails, they discovered the best places to sample the local delicacies based on online polls and recommendations from foodies in each city. The interesting touch came when the best biryani of a city was carried further to the next city for tasting and comparison in Milton casseroles. The Biryani love was spread across cities and sharing the happiness was found through a plate of well-cooked Biryani across South India!

The 10 day trial had the team exploring 6 different types of Biryanis – Dum Biryani of Hyderabad and Kalyani Biryani which is a more Andhra way of preparing the rice dish. Next up in Karnataka, the team explored Bhatkali Biryani. Following destination was Tamil Nadu which had three varieties of Biryanis to be tried out – Dindigul, Chettinad and Ambur. The final stop of Calicut in Kerala was where the team tried out the Thalasseri Biryani!!

Amongst the cities toured, here is how the team along with online polls voted the biryani in each city. The best biryani in Hyderabad was voted to be Shah Ghouse with their iconic Dum Biryani, the winner in Bengaluru was Alibaba Cafe and Restaurant with their Bhatkali Biryani.

The winner in Chennai was Hotel Kalyana Bhavan with their Chicken 65 Biryani which took everyone by surprise. The team voted HMR town hall with their Dindigul Biryani as the best they tasted. The best biryani in Calicut after scouting places came up to be Hotel Rahmath.

During the Food trails via exploration, the team realised that albeit there are so many variations of a simple rice dish, the debate of which is the best Biryani never ends. For instance Saumya Rai, a blogger who hails from Lucknow still believes that the Biryani she gets in the city of Nawabs triumphs everyone else around. In fact a simple rice dish variety teaches an amazing life lesson that although each Biryani may look the same, the taste and variety in each type is unique for each region and that deserves a bigger applause. Much like India where unity in our taste binds us despite diversity of food types.

- By Vineet Rajan, Co-Founder ScoutMyTrip

Part of this entertaining trip were also passionate travelers like Deepak Ananth CEO, ScoutMyTrip, Shrikanth Bhamidi, an avid traveler from Hyderabad, blogger Saumya Rai of RoadtoTaste and Himanshu Sehgal of MyYellowPlate.

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