

The big fat biryani trip

Though the basic ingredients remain the same, the varieties in rice make biryani unique in every region. The team at ScoutmyTrip has undertaken a South Indian biryani trail to uncover such facts



Will travel for food The group of writers on a biryani trail ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

∴ **SRAVASTI DATTA**

What is authentic biryani? There seems to be no single answer to that as there are so many regional varieties of it. Deepak Ananth, CEO of Mumbai-based ScoutmyTrip, has plenty to say on this as he, along with a team of travel writers, have set out on a biryani trail throughout South India for the next 15 days as part of The Great Indian Food Trip. "Biryani is the universal go-to food across the country. There is hardly anyone who hasn't tasted it. While researching we found there are about a 100 varieties of which three or four are famous. In South India there are the Bhatkali, Dindigul, Chettinad, Kalyani, among others. The basic ingredients are common to all varieties, which is rice, spices and meat cooked over a slow flame. But what differs are the rice varieties and variations in spices. There are small nuances such as vermicelli biryani," says Deepak, who started ScoutmyTrip with Vineet Rajan.

Their journey began in Hyderabad, where the Shadab biryani was the clear winner. Their visit to Bangalore involved a trip to Alibaba Cafe in Frazer Town. Saumya Rai from Lucknow who blogs at Road to Taste says: "The Bhatkali biryani was just wow! We also loved the kunafa and Moroccan tea."

Himanshu Sehgal of MyYellowPlate, a food and travel blog, which

is so named because he eats out of a yellow plate, adds: "We tried biryani from four different places. Bangalore biryani was the first-of-its-kind on MyYellowPlate."

For Bangalore they involved Chitra M, who writes at Masala Box Travel and Sakshi Rajat. "I am from Chennai but I am staying in Bangalore." Sakshi says: "I am a travel blogger. My blog is My Travel Recycles. Chitra and I have joined them in Bangalore." The team also tried the biryani at Chichaba's Taj.

While the team raves about non-veg biryani, Srikanth Bhamidi from Hyderabad who writes of his travel journeys at Srikanth Travel Diaries says that he is vegetarian and that vegetarian biryani too is delightfully tasty. Though Deepak adds, laughing: "For me, vegetarian biryani is an oxymoron!"

Recalling some funny incidents during their travels, the team says how they tucked into 16 plates of biryani in one go! The Great Indian Food Trip is being held in association with Milton. "We identify the best biryani from every place, load it into casseroles and travel to the next city to give an idea to the next city of what biryani from the previous city tastes like."

In the second edition they will be touring North India for biryanis. Their other Indian food items include: "A chai trail" concludes Deepak.

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