



OF KINGDOMS & COLONIES

Retrace the peninsular history of India

The South Indian peninsula comprising of the Deccan Traps - one of the largest volcanic features on earth created over 60 million years ago that tapers off into the coastal plains - offers an interesting terrain for driving. From winding roads set in rugged mountains and forested slopes, to flat-topped plateaus and boulder-strewn plains - a challenging geography awaits the intrepid!

Tamil Nadu bears witness to a rich history of empires and dynasties who left their marks in stone temples - the state's major attractions. One can trace history and the evolution of architecture, dance and music by studying temple motifs, and the age-old traditions and rituals continue to this day - making for a lively, cultural experience. From Tamil Nadu's sandy beaches to its forested mountains, from the temple towns to its tea plantation hillstations, Tamil Nadu can offer a plethora of travel options for all ages! In this itinerary, delve the traditions and trades that allowed ancient kingdoms and colonial powers to vie for lands and commerce in South India.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- 🌟 **Discover** Chennai heritage of temples, colonial structures and dance
- 🌟 **Unravel** the mythology carved into Mahabalipuram's ancient temples
- 🌟 **Glimpse** Pondicherry's unique French culture and Auroville's utopian centre
- 🌟 **Learn** of Tanjore's craft traditions: from its famous veena string instruments to wooden dolls
- 🌟 **Retrace** the history of Tamil Nadu's merchants in Karaikudi - and learn their culinary traditions
- 🌟 **Witness** Madurai's centuries-old temple and its esoteric rituals

JOURNEY AT A GLANCE

DAY OF TRAVEL	DESTINATION	HOTEL	ROOM CATEGORY	DURATION OF STAY
Day 01	Chennai	Grand by GRT Hotels	Business Class	1 night
Day 02 & 03	Pondicherry	Palais De Mahe	Superior Room	2 nights
Day 04 & 05	Tanjore	Svatma	Millenium Deluxe	2 nights
Day 06 & 07	Karaikudi	The Bangala	Heritage - 2	2 nights
Day 08 & 09	Madurai	GRT Regency	Superior	2 nights
Day 10	Departure from Chennai			

MAP



PERIOD OF OPERATION

The pricing for this itinerary has been worked out on the basis of rates for the period of operation from 01 OCT'2020 Till 31 Mar'2021 with exceptions as mentioned below.

- 1: Peak Period Travel (20 Dec' 2020- 10 Jan' 2021) – Supplement given in the price document.
- 2: Palais De Mahe – Pondicherry
February period (01 Feb- 28 Feb'201) – Supplement given in the price document.
- 3: Beside that there might be mandatory festival supplement for Diwali (13/14 Nov'2020) & Holi Festival (28/29 Mar'2021) & on Dussehra (25 Oct 2020). Hotels generally finalize it closer to date. Supplement if any will be advised at the time of request

GROUND TRANSPORT

Ground transportation will be provided using a Deluxe Air-Conditioned Toyota Innova for India for 02 paying participants and an Air-Conditioned Tempo Traveller for 04 -06 Paying Participants

Our vehicles are equipped with cold water and soft drinks, wet and dry tissues, hand-sanitizers.

DAY TO DAY ITINERARY

DAY 1: ARRIVE IN CHENNAI

Meals Included: None

Namaste and Welcome to India!

On arrival at Chennai International airport you will be met by Travel Scope representative and transferred to your hotel.

Recommended/Optional activity:

Peacock Trail - An easy walk through Mylapore, exploring fascinating stories hidden away in the mundane rituals of daily life. Stories behind everyday sights, stories of Gods and demons, of ancient customs and symbolisms, and of Mylapore and Madras.

Your stay in Chennai: Grand by GRT Hotels

Centrally located in the heart of the city and offers spacious rooms, charming interiors and state-of-the-art technology.

Website: [Grand by GRT Hotels](#)

DAY 2: CHENNAI - PONDICHERRY

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Journey time:

Chennai - Mahabalipuram/2-hour drive;

Mahabalipuram - Pondicherry/ 2.5 to 3-hour drive

The port of Chennai with a thriving global trade in silks, spices and jewels, was a capital over centuries of empires and colonies, and the region around it grew rapidly from a tiny town to the bustling metropolis it is today. Formerly known as Madras, Chennai's location along the coast offered great opportunities for industries, and like other ports in India, some of the first few industries were set up for textiles. The streets of Chennai evoke a sense of history that is intermingled with its political identity today, the older structures fulfil modern-day administrative roles, and the effect of the port is evident in the industrial and urban development.

After breakfast set off for a panoramic city tour of Chennai and then continue to Mahabalipuram.

After lunch continue your drive from Mahabalipuram to Pondicherry and on arrival check into your hotel.

Included activities:

Chennai City Tour:

Fort Saint George - Britain's first bastion in India which was responsible for making it south India's largest metropolitan today.

St Thomas Cathedral - dedicated to St Thomas points to the Portuguese influence over the city, a history that started in 1522 and ended with the arrival of the British.

Kapaleeswarar Temple - pre-dating the arrival of the colonizers and celebrating the mythology of Lord Shiva and his wife, Parvati.

Mahabalipuram (enroute) - A UNESCO World Heritage site, stunning stone-worked temples and boulder-hewn monuments of 7th and 8th centuries

You stay in Pondicherry:

Palais De Mahe: The rich contrasts of Pondicherry were studied, absorbed, and then blended into Palais de Mahe. Their architecture is faithful to a historic age, and like Pondicherry, the Palais de Mahe experience is laden with surprising modern twists and rich flavours.

Website: [Palais De Mahe](#)

DAY 3: PONDICHERRY

Meals Included: Breakfast, Dinner

While many cities in India read like a page out of history, Pondicherry is distinct in having captured the very essence of its colonial past, and it lives on in every street and around every corner. An outpost of the French in a country of British rule, Pondicherry's Gallic flavour is retained in the Creole cuisine, the canary-yellow architecture and the part-Indian, part-French road signs - while the cultural identity of its people is forged by Tamil ancestry and colonial assimilation. Another distinct flavour of Pondicherry is that of the Aurobindo Ashram, set up by Aurobindo Ghosh, a philosopher-poet and freedom fighter. Founded on principles of holistic lifestyle, the Ashram has drawn people from across India to live more community-centred and less material lives. Auroville, located a few kilometres away from Pondicherry, is a Utopian city based on similar ideals that has provided a refuge for like-minded people from around the world.

Included activities:

French Town – Walk through the canary-coloured town along streets bearing French names lined with structures erected by French historical personages.

Auroville – the “City of Dawn” conceived as a utopian, futuristic city by The Mother, Mirra Alfassa, where people from different religions and nations could live together in peace.

Svaram Instrument Store and Workshop – a musical instrument centre, where there are numerous different instruments with little placards explaining what they are and how they can be played.

Eat my Cake – A socially-conscious cafe, started by a young french woman who has trained widows in bakery and confectionery. Pop in for some delightful desserts, organic salads or gelato icecreams!

Optional

French Connections Trail - walk around the French Quarter of the town, telling tales of kings and commoners, poets and villains, all of whom wove their way into the fabric of Pondicherry.

DAY 4: PONDICHERRY - TANJORE

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Journey time: 4-hour drive

A drive from Pondicherry southwards, brings you to Tanjore – one of Tamil Nadu’s cultural centres. The countryside of Tamil Nadu is peppered with temples – making for interesting journeys. We will be making stops to visit on the way, to visit the temples of Chidambaram and Kumbakonam

On arrival at Tanjore, check into your hotel.

Include activities:

Chidambaram temple (enroute) - dedicated to Lord Shiva, which represents the element of ‘ether’ - among the 5 basic elements. Chidambaram is also the birthplace of the sculpture and bronze image representation of Lord Shiva as the cosmic dancer, Nataraja that has since become notable as a symbol of Hinduism.

Kumbakonam (enroute) - visit the 10th – 12th Century Darasuram temple and the Gangai Cholapuram, 2 of the three of the Great Living Chola temples – the fine architecture is testimony to a dynasty that was known for patronizing the arts.

You stay in Tanjore:

Svatma is more than a highly individualistic travel destination. Designed by and for exacting individuals with Spirit - it is the epitome of Tamil culture and art evolved into a space-time capsule of mystique and allure. It is the indescribable romance of contemporary artists flirting with curated antiques and experimenting with ancient art forms in a space resonating with the chanting of Vedas.

Website: [Svatma](#)

DAY 5: TANJORE

Meals Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Named after a demon in Hindu mythology slayed by an avatar of Lord Vishnu, the city of Thanjavur (or Tanjore) is situated upon the delta of the river Cauvery. Thanjavur has been a centre of art and culture for years, with distinct painting, music and dance traditions: Tanjore paintings with murals of Lord Krishna are sought-after artefacts, Carnatic music has been codified since the 16th Century, and the dance form, Bharatnatyam traces significant styles and modifications to the city.

Include activities:

Brihadeeswarar Temple - a UNESCO World Heritage monument, an exemplary architecture dating back to the 11th Century. Of its sculptures, the most distinct ones are those of over 108 dancing postures, evidence of the dance form Bharatnatyam tracing its roots to Thanjavur.

Bronze Casting Workshop - Watch the process of intricate mud sculptures dipped into molten brass, to create beautiful artefacts. It also houses a small display of interesting pieces of bronzework, largely inspired by mythology with some modern-day influences.

Tanjore Culture Walk - pass the traditional instrument makers as they carve wood into the stringed veena, visit homes of local folk to learn more about their ways of life, meet Tanjore painting artisans and discover art form of Bommai Kolu (wooden or clay dolls)

Overnight – Svatma

DAY 6: TANJORE - TRICHY - KARAIKUDI

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch,
Journey time: 3.5 hour drive

Set off from Tanjore to Karaikudi, the town of the Chettiar clan – whose legacy lives on in the architecture and food of Tamil Nadu. On the way, visit Trichy’s medieval temples that mark the Dravidian period on Tamil Nadu’s claim as the ‘temple state’ of the country.

Upon arrival in Karaikudi, check in to your hotel.

Included activities:

Tiruchirapalli (Trichy) - Listen to a story from the pages of the epic poem, Ramayana at the Ranganathaswamy temple at Srirangam, where it all took place. Continue on to the Ucchi Pillayar or the Rockfort temple, following the story of Vibhishana, a character from the Ramayana.

You stay in Tanjore:

The Bangala is a century old mansion that has been restored as a superb heritage hotel with all modern amenities and indulgences in place - a pool and spa, lounge and library, super comfortable rooms with airy verandahs, all decorated with classic ornate Chettinad furniture. The elaborate cuisine, served on banana leaves, is one of the charms of Bangala showcasing the region's signature Chettinad Cuisine - a rich, aromatic and spice filled array of curries of fish, chicken, meat and vegetables.

Website: [The Bangala](#)

DAY 7: KARAIKUDI

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

The region of Tamil Nadu encompassing the towns of Karaikudi and Devakottai is known as Chettinad. The Chettiars, the wealthy merchants of the South known for their business prowess made their fortunes in India and abroad. Though many of them have moved to larger metros, their legacy lives on in the ornate ancestral mansions with pillared hallways, marble floors, and other embellishments, that they return to for a few festivals during the year. The Chettinad region is also known for its fiery hot cuisine popularized by its famous “pepper chicken”.

Included activities:

Inside a Chettinad mansion - Visit a traditional local home to learn more about the customs and traditions that guide the design of these beautiful edifices.

Athangudi tile making centre – visit to a tile factory where you can watch the process that went into the making of the ornate floors of the Chettinad mansions.

Chettinad cuisine: Enjoy a demonstration of Chettinad’s fiery cuisine – an introduction to the spices that temper vegetables or meat to create mouth-watering, palate-scorching meals that you can taste at the end of the session.

DAY 8: KARAIKUDI - MADURAI

Meals Included: Breakfast, Dinner
Journey time: 2 hour-drive

The oldest city in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, has a history of global trade recorded by the Greek scholar and ambassador, Megasthenes. With a two-thousand-year-old tradition of literary and art gatherings, Madurai is a stronghold of culture, often referred to as the Athens of the East. Madurai, the oldest city in Tamil Nadu, both in history and mythology is most for the Meenakshi Amman Temple, dedicated to Parvati and her husband Shiva, popular for its beautiful edifice, stunning architecture and festive nightly processions

Drive from Karaikudi's plains towards the temple town of Madurai. Check into your hotel on arrival. In the evening, witness the nightly ritual at the Meenakshi Temple where a colourful procession escorts the goddess to her chambers.

Included activity -

Meenakshi Temple (closing ceremony) - where the idols of Sundareshwar (an avatar of Lord Shiva) and his consort Meenakshi (an avatar of Parvati), are carried in a riotous procession, to be confined to the bedchamber for the night.

You stay in Madurai: GRT Madurai

An abode of traditional South Indian hospitality, the GRT Madurai offers unmatched luxury in accommodation.

Website: [GRT Madurai](#)

DAY 9: MADURAI

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Included activities:

Meenakshi Temple - famed for its many carved and painted halls, this magnificent temple of goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundaram, a form of Lord Shiva, has the tallest 'gopuram' or temple gateway in the world.

A walk through the local markets - where the fresh flowers for religious offerings, fruits and vegetables for household consumption, as also the many humble economies of artisans to traders provides an interesting insight into the routine simplicity of India.

Thirumalai Nayakar Palace - The Thirumalai Nayakar Palace, a once grand palace built in 1636 showcases the power and wealth of the Nayakas. This visit could help you understand the history of the Nayakas, a powerful, wealthy clan that still holds political sway in south India.

Optional:

Potter's Trail - visit a Potter's village, and watch mud go from the mundane to the sublime. See how a whole village has hit pay dirt and listen to stories of creators - both mortal and immortal.

DAY 10: DEPARTURE FROM CHENNAI

Meal Inclusion: Breakfast

Pack your suitcases with the souvenirs you picked up along the way.

Fly from Madurai to Chennai by Air India AI 672 departing at 13.15 / arrival 14.20

Connect your international flight. The memories of the trip will keep you company on the long flight back home.

This itinerary has been put together by Travel Scope India for Blue Dot Travel. You must read Blue Dot Travel's terms and conditions before making a decision to travel. You must complete a Blue Dot Travel booking form before we can accept any booking.

TABLE OF PRICES:

Tour Cost	Price in Australian Dollars Per Person
Land Cost on Sharing Twin or Double	
02 Paying Participants	AUD 3690 Per Person
04 Paying Participants	AUD 2900 Per Person
Supplement for staying in Single Occupancy	AUD 1200 Per Person
Approx. Domestic Air (Madurai - Cochin) in Economy Class (Subject to Change)	TBA

APPROX. ADDITIONAL COSTS FOR PEAK PERIODS	
CGH Palais De Mahe (01 Feb - 28Feb'2021) on Twin share for 02 nights	AUD 100 Per Person
Single Room Supplement for 02 nights	AUD 100 Per Person
Supplement for Travel between period 22 Dec'2020 Till 05 Jan'2021 on Twin share	AUD 135 Per Person
Single Room Supplement	AUD 130 Per Person
ADDITIONAL COSTS FOR OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES	
(All Walk's duration 02 Hrs)	
Heritage Walk in Tanjore	AUD 75 Per Person
Peacock Trail in Chennai (Private Tour)	AUD 100 Per Person
French Connection Trail in Pondicherry (Private Tour)	AUD 100 Per Person
Potters Trail in Madurai (Private Tour)	AUD 100 Per Person

Inclusions to Land Cost:

1. Accommodation for a total of 09 Nights as per hotel list and room category given below.
2. On MAP plan.
3. Ground Transportation by Air Conditioned vehicle as specified.
4. Services of English Speaking Local City Guide's as per itinerary.
5. Entrance Fee to Monuments.
6. Eat my cake social enterprise
7. Cooking demo at The Bangala -Karaikudi
8. Mineral Water and Soft Drinks in the vehicles.
9. Still Camera Fee
10. Tip for baggage at hotel, Airport, Local Guide's, Driver & paid meals.

Exclusions to the Land Cost

1. International & Domestic Air Fare.
2. Personal nature like Laundry, Telephone, Internet, and Drinks etc.
3. All alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.
4. Travel and medical Insurance.
5. All expenses arising out of voluntary or involuntary re-routing of the program.
6. Video Camera fees at Monuments.

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