

SOUTHERN ROUTES: CHETTINAD & BEYOND



Tamil Nadu is a treasure trove of stunning primary coloured, carved Hindu temples. Less exposed to the influences and invaders of the north, over the last thousand years Tamil Nadu was run by several very powerful and distinctive dynasties that helped to maintain the unique religious and political institutions. Visit Madurai and the Great Living Chola Temples of Thanjavur. Chettinad is a highlight with its multitude of unique lavish, former ancestral homes and famous spiced food of these merchants of old. On this journey, explore with us the the bastions of South Indian Pride! Discover Tamil Nadu's cultural wealth as you explore its ornate Hindu temples, sacred cities and much more.

Day 1 – 12 November - Arrival Madurai

Arrival into Madurai between 1130 – 1230 hours.

On arrival, the transfer to the hotel will be arranged for you and will be booked at **Hotel Heritage** or similar for a stay of 1 night.

Lunch at the hotel.

Post lunch, we will enjoy a heritage tour of Madurai.

The legendary temples of Madurai are some of South India's must-see sites, but navigating the sprawling city takes local knowledge. You'll get an in-depth look at ancient, world-famous Meenakshi Temple, along with a 17th-century royal palace, on this insider's tour of Madurai's top heritage sights. Top it off with a taste of the city's favourite summer drink, and visit markets for a slice of local life.



In addition to a visit to the beautiful **Meenakshi Temple**, we will visit Madurai's famed tailor market, in addition to its bustling and diverse **local market** near the temple. We will also visit Madurai's **Thirumalai Nayak Palace**, an artistic blend of Dravidian and Islamic styles.

Post sightseeing, we will have dinner at a local restaurant.

Post dinner, we will try (if possible) for a **night darshan at the Meenakshi Temple**.

Return to the hotel for our overnight stay.

Day 2 – 13 November - Madurai to Chettinad

This morning, after an early breakfast, we will depart for Karaikudi in the heart of the Chettinad region. (2 hours)

Enroute, we will stop at Madurai's vibrant flower market. It is one of the biggest markets in India and has won international recognition for the quality of its flora. The jasmine of Madurai is famous for its unique fragrance that is not found anywhere else. In Madurai, the jasmine flower is known as the Madurai malli, is exported globally.

Chettinad, the ancestral homeland of the Nattukottai Chettiars, a prosperous merchant class who ventured overseas to do business in South and Southeast Asia in the 19th and early 20th centuries, is renowned for its impressive mansions and rich and distinctive cuisine.

The Chettiar merchants built handsomely and extensively across their region, which is full of examples of huge mansions with exquisite teak and silkwood pillars, marble detailing and lime-plastered wall, and some of these houses are now open to the public.

Just before entering Karaikudi, we will first two of Chettinads well known temples - Pillaiyarpatti Kovil and Vairavanpatti Kovil.

From here, we will head to the Bangala Hotel **for lunch**, where you will experience a typical Chettinar meal.

You will be booked the **Bangala hotel** or similar for a stay of 2 nights.

Chettiar mansions are filled with antiques and curios from around the world. Post lunch, we will visit two of their beautiful houses - the MSMM House and the CVCT House

We will then return to the hotel for a **special Chettinad food cook-along**. We will make 4 dishes together and then enjoy our own home-cooked meal for dinner tonight.



Overnight at the hotel.

Day 3- 14 November - Chettinad

This morning, before breakfast, we will head out to see a few more Chettiar mansions. Makrana/Italian marble flooring, Belgian glass chandeliers, Burmese teak furniture and fittings, Czechoslovakian enamelware.

We will also visit the Chettinad Palace. Located in Kanadukathan village, outside Karaikudi city, it is a classic example of the traditional Chettinad architecture.

From here, we will visit an Aiyannar Temples and another beautiful Chettinad temple, Nemam Kovil. We will end the morning with a visit to Chettinad Mansion.

Lunch at Chettinad Mansion.



Post lunch, we will first enjoy a **tile-making workshop** of the famous Athangudi Tiles. These are cement tiles like mosaic, but unlike the machine pressed and produced mosaics, they are handmade over glass surfaces. It is the play of base colours with typical conventional flora and line-drawing designs that sets them apart from the modern versions in the market.

After an interactive session, we will meet with and interact with **weavers of the Kandangi sari**. The Kandangi sari, among the state's oldest weaves (almost 250 years), was introduced and patronised by the wealthy Nagarathar community of Chettinad.

We end our day today with a visit to the once famous **antique market street in Karaikudi** which is packed with Chettiar antique shops: Raghavendra Arts, Old Chettinad Crafters and Arasu Arts.

Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Day 4 – 15 November - Chettinad to Thanjavur.

This morning, we will drive to the temple town of Thanjavur or Tanjore. (2 hours)

Raja Rajendra Chola conquered the Pandyas and the eastern Chalukyas in about the middle of the 10th century and founded a mighty kingdom with Thanjavur as his capital. He and his successors in the dynasty enriched the places with grand temples and places.

On arrival in Tanjore, we will go visit a **Bronze casting artisan**. Watch the mesmerizing process of Bronze Sculpting. Thanjavur is the cradle of this ancient art form and the skill has simply transcended generations of sculptors. Watch cire purdue live in action from casting to the sculpture taking its final form



Lunch at a local restaurant

Later, we will visit the city's labyrinthine **Royal Palace**, its beautiful **Bronze Museum** and the beautiful **Saraswati Mahal Library**.

The highlight of a visit to Tanjore is one of the Great Living Chola Temples, a UNESCO world Heritage Site, the **Brihadeeswara Temple**. We will discover the remarkable legacy of the Chola Kingdom that extended from Madurai to the Mekong valley in its heydays.

After spending time at the temple, we will head to our hotel.

You will be booked at the beautiful **Hotel Svatma** for a stay of 2 nights

Dinner tonight at the hotel

Day 5 – 16 November - Thanjavur: Handicrafts tour

This morning, we set out on a handicraft tour of Tanjore. We will meet artists involved in making the famous **Tanjore and Kalamkari paintings**. The painting is made by gilded and gem-set technique – where gold leaves & sparkling stones are used to highlight certain aspects of the painting like ornaments, dresses etc. We will also discover how musical instruments such as '**Tanjore Veena**', a four feet long beauty of an instrument. Plus, we stop over to understand the skills behind making of traditional 'Tanjore Dancing Dolls', purely made from papier mache, wax, and such materials.

Lunch at a restaurant.



We will return to the hotel for a late lunch.

Enjoy the afternoon at the beautiful hotel and enjoy its facilities.

Tonight, before dinner enjoy a beautiful Carnatic music concert by a small ensemble of musicians. Experience the harmony of melodies from the violin, mridangam and the tambura. Come and participate in the musical discussions & enjoy this unique music experience.

Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Day 6 – 17 November - Tanjore to Trichy airport | Departure

This morning, depending on the time of your flight, the transfer to Trichy airport will be arranged for you. (1 hour to the airport)

** Return home with wonderful memories of your trip **

Price per person on a twin-sharing basis: Rs 69,500
Single supplement: Rs. 17,900

Inclusions

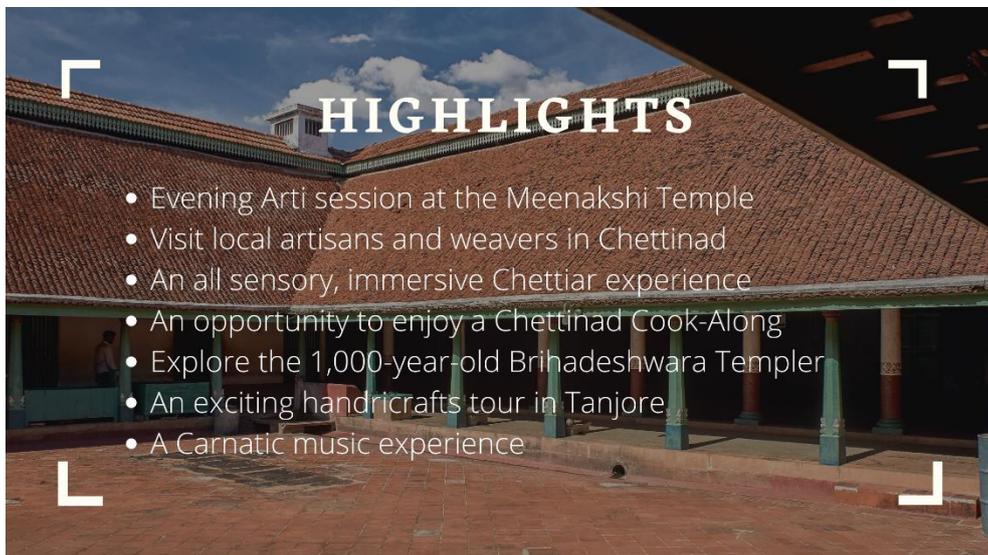
- 5 nights accommodation in the hotels mentioned
- Daily Breakfast
- All meals from Lunch on Day 2 to Breakfast on Day 6
- Services of a tour escort
- Local guides for all tours
- Sightseeing tours and all experiences as mentioned
- All entrance fees
- Chettinad Cooking Experience
- Carnatic Music night

Exclusions

- Airfare to Madurai / Trichy & back
- Tips to the driver / guide
- Drinks with meals
- Items of a personal nature
- Anything not specifically mentioned under "Inclusions"
- 5% GST

Please note:

- Due to Covid restrictions, some monuments and places may not permit us to enter and we may need to re-plan the itinerary.
- All guests will be required to get a Covid Test done 72 hours prior to the start of the journey.
- This tour will operate if we get a minimum of 8 people



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