



— INDO ASIA TOURS

EXOTIC SOUTH INDIA

Chennai – Mahabalipuram – Pondicherry – Tanjore - Trichy – Madurai – Periyar – Backwater – Cochin
09 Nights / 10 Days





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Program Details

Day 01

Arrive at Chennai

Arrive in Chennai. On arrival in Chennai, you will be greeted and escorted by Indo Asia Tour Executive to your hotel. On arrival, check in to the hotel.

IMP: Rooms will be available from 1400 Hrs.

Chennai formerly Madras, is the capital of Tamil Nadu state. The city traces its origin to 1639 when Francis Day a trader with the British East India Company, built a trading post Fort St. George, near the village of Madraspatnam. Today Chennai is the fourth largest city of India with a population of 9 million people. Also called as "Hollywood of India" it is the center for making South Indian films.

After some rest enjoy a tour of Chennai. Visit Kapaleshvara Temple in Mylapore, dedicated to God Shiva and offers a good example of South Indian colourful temple architecture.

The 16th century Portuguese old Cathedral of St. Thomas Church in which the remnants of St. Thomas is buried who came to India in 52 AD.

Pass by the University built in Indo sarscenic style, as well as 5 km long Marina Beach, a lovely esplanade by the sea.

Overnight in the hotel

Day 02

Chennai – Mahabalipuram (approx. 60 kms – 01 hrs) - Pondicherry (approx. - 122 kms / 03.5 hrs)

After breakfast, drive to **Mahabalipuram**.

En-route, visit the tiny sea side village of Mahabalipuram. Mahabalipuram, the second capital of the Pallava kings of Kanchipuram. This tiny sea side village of Mahabalipuram, is set in a boulder strewn landscape. The sculpture, here, is particularly interesting because it shows scenes of day to day life, in contrast with the rest of the state of Tamil Nadu, where the carvings generally depict gods and goddesses.



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On arrival visit the historical sites of Mahabalipuram:

Five Rathas

The Five Rathas, also known as Panch Rathas, is a set of rock temples. They are excellent examples of the



evolution of Dravidian style architecture. These temples are built in the same shape as pagodas, and greatly resemble Buddhist shrines and monasteries. The rathas are associated with the great epic Mahabharata. These are the architectural prototypes demonstrate the imposing gopurams and Vimanas; multi pillared halls and sculptured walls, which dominate the landscape of Tamil Nadu.

Shore Temple

This beautiful and romantic temple, ravaged by wind and sea, represents the final phase of Pallavas art and it was built in the late 7th century during the reign of Rajasimha. It is believed that at one point in time there were seven such temples, six of them were victims to the natural elements of erosion. This temple has three shrines; one dedicated to Lord Vishnu and the other two to Lord Shiva. The frothy waves form a striking backdrop to the temple, protected by rows of rock-carved bulls. The most unique feature of the temple is that it houses shrines to both Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu



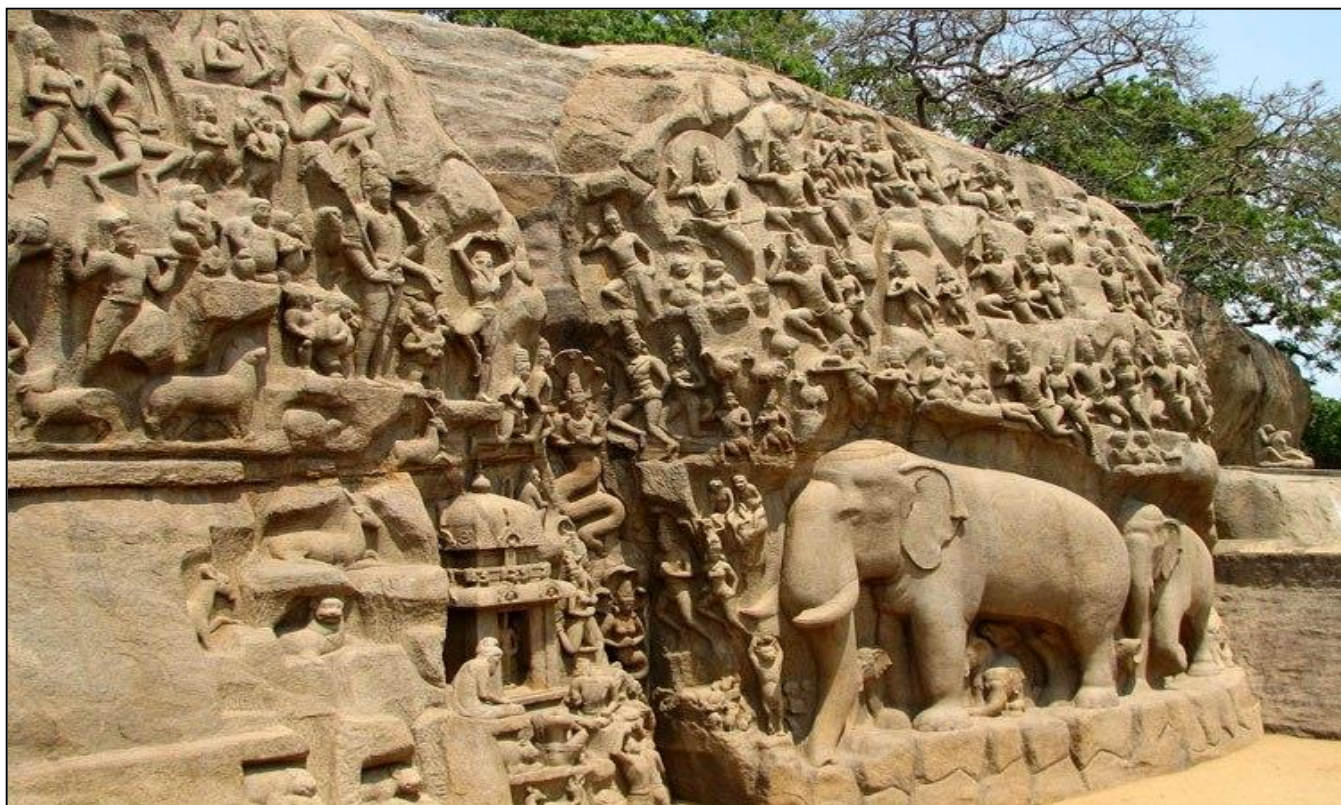
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Mandapams

In Mahabalipuram, there are eight mandapams (shallow, rock-cut halls) scattered over the main hill, two of which have been left unfinished. They are mainly of interest for their internal figure sculptures. One of the earliest rock-cut temples is the Krishna Mandapam. It features carvings of a pastoral scene showing Krishna lifting up the Govardhana Mountain to protect his kinsfolk from the wrath of Indra. On the hill rests a dangerously balanced boulder named Krishna's Butterball after his legendary affinity for fresh butter.

Arjuna's Penance

The Arjuna's penance is one of the most famous stone carvings at Mahabalipuram. It is an enormous relief made



on two massive boulders. One of the biggest open-air rock canvases in the world, the Arjuna's penance is 31m long and 9m high. There are many schools of thoughts over the theme of Arjuna's penance. One believes that the sculpture shows Arjuna undertaking a penance to obtain a rare weapon against his enemies; the other School believes that it portrays the legend of the River Ganges's descent to earth. Whatever the reasons, Arjuna penance remains one of the most beautifully carved structures. Arjuna's Penance has over 100 figures of gods and semi divine creatures , birds and beasts, man and saint.

Later continue your drive to **Pondicherry**, which was a former French colony, it still has Portuguese culture intact



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in the city. Pondicherry is also a sacred place where St. Agasthaya and Shri Aurobindo settled down and sought peace.

On arrival at Pondicherry, transfer to the hotel and check in.

Overnight in the hotel

Meals: Breakfast /--/--

Day 03

Pondicherry

After breakfast, enjoy the city tour which includes the visit to the following:

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM - The foundation of Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry is credited to Sri Aurobindo way back in November 1926. Initially the Ashram comprised of only 24 disciples. The Sri Aurobindo



Ashram in Pondicherry has come a long way from its initial days of inception. It now features among the major places of tourist interest in Pondicherry.



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Sri Aurobindo Ashram in its early days used to follow a specific routine. The day for the sadhaks or the spiritual aspirants began at 3 a.m. They had to finish their meditations and the daily chores before they assembled under the balcony where the Mother showered her blessings. The Ashram grew steadily and several departments sprang up. Till Mother passed away, she used to give public darshans to thousands of devotees who assembled at the place.

Visit Auroville

Located about 10 kms north of Pondicherry, Auroville is described as "the City of Tomorrow". Auroville was envisioned as a Universal Town, where people from different nationalities, faiths and beliefs could live in peace



and harmony in Auroville attractions. Auroville Region is an ideal township devoted to an experiment in human unity. The purpose of Auroville is to realize human unity in diversity. Auroville is a beautiful township where many foreigners have resided permanently to find solace and peace of mind in nature's heart in Auroville places.

(IMP: It remains closed from 1230 hrs till 1400 hrs.)

In the afternoon enjoy **Heritage walk of Pondicherry**. You will walk on the promenade and in the French



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quarters.

Later visit **Notre Dame des Anges (The Church of Our Lady of Angels)**, in **Rue Dumas**, is notable for its masonry – which uses the finest of limestone mixed with white of the egg – making for a texture identical to that of white marble. It is modeled on the Basilica at Lourdes, in southern France. The imposing façade presents paired Doric columns below and ionic above. In front of the church is a statue of Our Lady with the infant Jesus in her arms. The interior design consists of eight barrel vaults and a central dome pierced with eight circular openings.

Overnight in the hotel

Meals: Breakfast/--/--

Day 04

Pondicherry – Tanjore (approx. 177 kms / 04 hrs)

After breakfast drive to **The Chidambaram Nataraja Temple**, an excellent example of a unique amalgamation of a number of architectural styles. The innermost sanctum inside the Chidambaram Nataraja Temple has idols of



Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati. The Chitsabha inside the temple is an interesting piece of architecture. There



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are five halls in the temples including Nritha Sabha, Hall of Immortal Dance. Sivakamiamman temple, the Sivaganga Tank and the thousand pillar hall are also important features of the temple.

(It remains closed from 1200 hrs till 1600 hrs).

After the sightseeing continue drive to Tanjore. On arrival, transfer to the hotel and check in

In the late afternoon visit the **Brihadeshwara Temple** Built by great Chola king in the 10th century it is an outstanding example of Chola architecture and is listed in world heritage. On the top of the apex of 63 metres



high, a dome is said to be constructed from a single piece of granite, weighing an estimated 81 tones. The dome was hauled into place along a 6 km earthwork ramp in a manner similar to the one used by the Egyptian Pyramids. The temple has been the sense of continuous worship for over thousand years. Only Hindus are allowed inside.

(It remains closed from 1200 to 1600 hrs).

Thanjavur Palace & Museum

The palace near Brihadeshwara Temple is a vast building of masonry built by the Nayakas around 1550 and partly by the Maratha. Two of the palace towers, the Armoury and the observation tower are visible from all parts



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of the city. The palace houses an art gallery, a library and a hall of music. The art gallery occupies the Nayak Durbar Hall. It has a superb collection of Chola bronze statues from the 9th to 12th centuries. The Saraswati Mahal Library is next door to the gallery. Over 30,000 Indian and European manuscripts written on palm leaves and paper are preserved in the Saraswati Mahal Library.

(It remains closed from 1300 to 1500 hrs).

Overnight at the hotel.

Meals : Breakfast/--/--

Day 05

Tanjore – Trichy - Madurai (approx. - 163 kms / 03.5 hrs)

After breakfast drive to Trichy & visit

Rock Fort Temple

The temple tops an 83 m high outcrop. This smooth rock was first hewn by the Pallavas who cut small cave temples into the southern face, but it was the Nayakas who made use of its naturally fortified position. It's a stiff



climb up the 437 steps cut into the stone to the top but well worth it for the views. Non-Hindus are not allowed into



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the Vinayaka Temple at the summit nor the bigger Sri Thayumanaswamy Temple dedicated to Siva, halfway up. Occasionally temple priest waive this regulation.

IMP: Temples in Trichy remains closed from 1200 hrs till 1500 hrs.

Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple

This superb temple complex at Srirangam, about three km from the Rock Fort, is surrounded by seven concentric walls with 21 gopurams and is probably the largest in India. Most of it dates from the 14th to 17th centuries, and many people have had a hand in its construction, including the Cheras, Pandyas, Cholas, Hoysalas and Vijayanagars. The largest gopuram in the first wall on the southern side was completed as recently as 1987 and now measures an astounding 73m. The temple complex is very well preserved, with excellent carvings throughout and numerous shrines to various gods, though the main temple is dedicated to Vishnu. Even the muslims are said to have prayed here after the fall of Vijayanagar Empire.

IMP: Temples in Trichy remains closed from 1200 hrs till 1500 hrs.

Later continue your drive to Madurai, **MADURAI** – Legend says that once Lord Shiva appeared in the dream of King Kulasekhara Pandya. The King was amazed to see drops of nectar or madhu falling down on the Earth from Lord Shiva's matted hair. The "madhu" was so sweet that the place where it fell came to be known as Madhurapuri, which in course of time became "Madurai."

Madurai is also called the Athens of the East. It is a place of great historical and cultural importance. It is the oldest city in Tamil Nadu and lies on the banks of the River Vaigai. Madurai is famous for its temples, monuments and ancient cultural wonders. The city is widely known as the Temple City, and is often also referred to as The City of Four Junctions (Koodal Maanagar), The Cultural Capital of Tamil Nadu (Kalaachaara Thalainagar), The City of Jasmine (Malligai Maanagar), The City That Never Sleeps (Thoonga Nagaram), and The City of Festivals.

On arrival Madurai, transfer to the hotel and check in

Overnight at the hotel.

Meals: Breakfast/--/--



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Day 06

Madurai

After breakfast, enjoy the city tour of Madurai.

Meenakshi Temple

This temple is nearly 2000 years old placed in the heart of the old town—a splendid example of Dravidian architecture. The present temple was designed in 1560 by Vishwanatha Nayak and subsequently built during the



reign of Tirumalai Nayak. There are four entrances to the temple with an area of six hectares. Each of its 12 towers has the height of 45 to 50 meters. The Potrama Raikulam or the Golden Lotus Tank is the place where the Tamil literacy society, called Sangam used to meet to decide the merits of the work presented to them. The temple museum has 985 richly carved pillars and each one surpasses the other in beauty.

(It remains closed from 1200 hrs till 1530 hrs)



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Tirumalai Nayak Mahal

The palace (or Mahal) was built by Thirumalai Naicker, the greatest of Nayakkar kings of Madurai. The Nayaks ruled Madurai from 1545 till 1740, after the Pandya kings. The palace is the place where Thirumalai Naicker lived and held his court. The palace complex area was originally four times bigger than it is now, consisting of two



portions – Swarga vilasa and Ranga vilasa. There were also other portions like the palace shrine, harem, theater, royal band stand, armory and other structures which were used to accommodate palanquins, royal chariots, relatives, servants, guests and other regal paraphernalia.

Vaniyur Mariamman Teppakulam

Vandiyur Mariamman Teppakulam is the pond located near to Vandiyur Mariamman Temple and situated at a distance of about 2 km from the Meenakshi Amman Temple. Literally, Teppakulam means temple pond mainly used for devotional festivals. The tank is connected to Vaigai River through an ingenious system of underground Channels. It has total of 12 long stairs (steps) made of granite on all four sides. The temple as well as the stairs was built by the King Thirumalai Nayak. In the centre of the tank there is a Mandapam called Maiya Mandapam (Central Mandapam) with Vinayakar temple and garden.



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In the evening again visit the Meenakshi Temple to attend the evening ceremony known as '**Bedtime of the God**'. A colourful procession, in which the image of Shiva is carried accompanied by musicians, temple singers



and priests from his shrine. Enroute Shiva visits the other deities before entering Parvati's (Meenakshi) temple to sleep with her for the night. This ceremony is worth witnessing.

Overnight in the hotel.

Meals: Breakfast/--/--

Day 07

Madurai – Periyar (approx. - 142 kms / 03 hrs

After breakfast drive to Periyar. **Periyar National Park** is a unique wildlife sanctuary and is about 780 sq. km centered around an artificial lake fed by the Periyar River. On arrival, check in at the hotel.

Later visit a **Spice Plantation**. You will walk through the aromatic spice gardens where the air is laden with the fragrance of nature's bounty. Spices can be defined as "aromatic substances of vegetable origin, used for flavoring food or as a preservative." Many spices are also known to have medicinal value, for instance turmeric is a known anti-oxidant and curry leaf can control and prevent diabetes. The spice plantations of Kerala are



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fascinating farms to wander in, for different sections of each plantation are dedicated to different spices. Apart from spices traditionally grown in India such as pepper, cinnamon, ginger and cardamom farmers in Kerala have taken to growing spices that are used worldwide. Some of the spices cultivated in spice plantations are vanilla, oregano, rosemary, thyme, basil, mint, bay leaf and sage.

OPTIONAL: Enjoy boat ride in Periyar Tiger Reserve. It is an example of nature's bounty, with great scenic charm, rich bio diversity and providing veritable visitor satisfaction. Sprawled over an area of 777 Sq .km., Periyar is one of the 27 tiger reserves in India.



Boat cruises make the best option to check out the wilds of Periyar Sanctuary. Today the Periyar lake presents an excellent boating spot for tourists. Although it is unusual to see many animals from the boats, still you may spot a family of Elephants, Wild Boar, and Sambar Deer by the water's edge. The upper deck is best for wildlife viewing when taking a boat cruise, but better turn up half an hour early to get the best seat.

Overnight in the hotel

Meals: Breakfast/--/--



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Day 08

Periyar – Backwaters (approx. - 155 kms / 03 hrs)

After breakfast, drive to the jetty to board House-boat (Kettuvallom) on the World famous Backwaters of Kerala.

“Kettu” literally means to tie up and “Vallom” means “boats”. The boats played a major role in the economic development of ancient Kerala, moving cargo and men from the very nook and corner of otherwise unreachable



area, cutting across the length and breadth of the land. These backwaters are unique to Kerala, and found nowhere else in the world. You will sail past thatched houseboats with modern conveniences in the waterways and canals. Today the canals connect villages in a self-supporting ecosystem teeming with aquatic life.

Overnight on houseboat.

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch /Dinner



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Day 09

Backwater – Cochin (approx. - 53 kms / 1.5 hrs)

After breakfast on the **rice boat (Kettuvallom)** get down at jetty and drive to Cochin

COCHIN - Cochin has long been eulogized in tourist literature as the 'Queen of the Arabian Sea'. Its location between the blue waters of the Arabian Sea and Kerala's emerald backwaters, its rich medley of Indian and foreign architecture, it's truly unusual sights like the Chinese fishing nets and its quaint quiet localities like the Jewish Quarters demand the attention of all who travel to Kerala.

On arrival, transfer to the hotel and check in. Later, enjoy the city tour of Cochin which includes the visit.

Jewish Synagogue:

The synagogue, built in 1568, is magnificently decorated by Chinese tiles and Belgian chandeliers. Giant scrolls



of the Old Testament can be found here. It is located near the Dutch Palace in Mattancherry.

IMP: It remains closed on Fridays and Saturdays. Timings for the visit: 0900 hrs to 1200 hrs and from 1500 hrs to 1700 hrs.



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St. Francis Church:

It is the oldest church built by Europeans in India. On his 3rd visit to Kerala, Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese trader who reached India from Europe by sea, fell ill and died in Kochi. He was buried in the St. Francis Church. Later his remains were taken back to Portugal. In spite of that, his burial spot inside the church has been clearly marked out.

Chinese Fishing Nets

The Chinese fishing nets (Cheenavala) are distinctly unique to Cochin. It is believed that traders from the court of the Chinese ruler Kublai Khan introduced these nets here. Oddly, these nets are found only in Kochi, outside



China! Many fishermen earn their livelihood by fishing using these massive nets. A whole stretch of the coast along Fort Kochi and Vypeen are dotted with these nets.



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Dutch Palace or Mattancherry Palace:



The Dutch Palace was originally built by the Portuguese. Later, in 17th century, the Dutch modified it and presented it to the Raja of Kochi. Coronations of many Rajas of Kochi were held here. The palace has a fine collection of mural paintings depicting scenes from the Hindu epics Mahabharatha and Ramayana.

IMP: It remains closed on Fridays. Timings for the visit: 1000 hrs to 1700 hrs.

In the evening enjoy Kathakali Dance Performance at local theatre. Kathakali is a traditional dance form of Kerala and the impressive facial expressions, hand gestures and dance moves will leave one spellbound.

Overnight in the hotel.

Meals: Breakfast/--/--

Day 10

Cochin Departure

In time transfer to the Airport to board the flight for back home / onward destination.



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Imp: Rooms will be available till 1200 Hrs

Meals: Breakfast/--/--

End of Services

City	Number of Nights
Chennai	01 Night
Pondicherry	02 Nights
Tanjore	01 Night
Madurai	02 Nights
Periyar	01 Night
Backwater	01 Night
Cochin	01 Night

Dates: Summer 2023

Months	Dates
April 2023	03.04.2023-12.04.2023
May 2023	01.05.2023-10.05.2023
June 2023	05.06.2023-14.06.2023
July 2023	03.07.2023-12.07.2023
August 2023	31.07.2023-09.08.2023
September 2023	04.09.2023-13.09.2023