

9 DAYS TEMPLE TOUR OF SOUTH INDIA WITH THE WANDERERS



The famous temples of South India have become a shining example of the cultural heritage and diversity of India. Of all the existing ones, take a look at some of the finest architectural creations made over a period of thousands of years by historic dynasties for the creators and preservers of this beautiful planet. In India, for hundreds of years, the only form of tourism that existed was purely religious and devotional. Even to this day, millions of devotees flock to these incredible famous temples in South India every year in a quest for moksha and inner peace. Many of the famous temples in South India have often been considered by historians and architects as the finest devotional constructions ever to be made. What made these temples not lose their charm with the passage of time was the strong and dedicated devotional purpose for which they were built.



TEMPLES OF SOUTH INDIA

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Day 01: Arrive Chennai Airport, transfer to Mahabalipuram enroute visit Kanchipuram. On arrival at Chennai Airport, you shall be greeted by the Wanderers representative. Transfer to Mahabalipuram. Depending on the flight timings if time permits, visit Kanchipuram (approx.70 kms/1.5hrs). Known as the Golden City of a Thousand Temples, Kanchipuram is one of India's sacred cities and the ancient capital of the Pallavas, known for its 1000 temples, many of them are still used to this day. the Ekambareshwar Temple, Kailashnath Temple and Kamakshi Amman Temple. The most famous being the Sri Kamakshi temple. The city is also well known for the silks it produces. Have lunch at a local restaurant at own cost and then continue driving to Mahabalipuram (approx. 75 kms, 2hrs drive). On arrival at Mahabalipuram check into the hotel. Evening is at leisure. Overnight at Mahabalipuram.

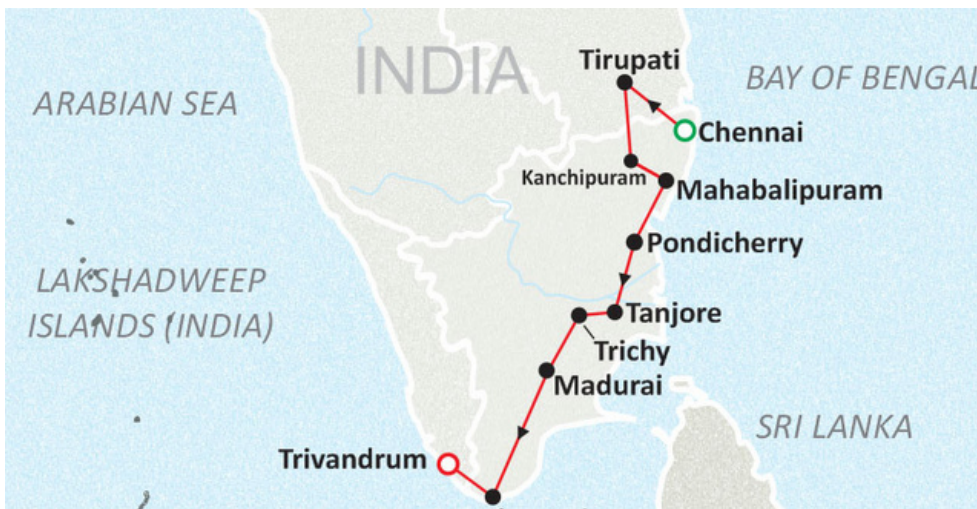
Day 02: Mahabalipuram local tour

Post breakfast, at 09.30hrs proceed for a local tour of Mahabalipuram. The temple town of Mahabalipuram – A UNESCO HERITAGE SITE has numerous spellbound stone carvings, most beautiful rock-cut art temples and miles of serene beaches with glittering sands. Visit the ancient temples mostly built during the reign of the Pallavas which dates to 7th century though frozen in time. View the Five Radhas - a group of Monolithic Monuments and Animal Figures carved out of Solid Rock; the Shore Temple, lashed by the waves of the Sea that is unique because Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu are housed in the same sanctum sanctorum; and the huge Frescoe; "The Penance of Bhagirath". Overnight at Mahabalipuram.



Highlights

Starting from the metropolis of Chennai, explore the temple cities of South India – visit the shore temple of Mahabalipuram, the French Quarters of Puducherry, the ancient temples of Thanjavur and Madurai built by the ancient dynasties that ruled India.



TEMPLES OF SOUTH INDIA



Day 03: Mahabalipuram to Puducherry (approx. 110 kms, 2.5hrs drive)

After a leisurely breakfast at 11.00hrs drive to Puducherry. This town has a strong French influence, as it was an erstwhile French colony. Check in at the hotel. The French Quarter is distinguished by the Goubert Avenue which runs along the Promenade Beach. The manicured layout of the avenue is lined with heritage villas, buildings, and statues - the most significant part of Puducherry's history. Across the canal lies the Tamil Quarter which has its own architectural heritage and bustles with activity all day long displaying the Indian side of Puducherry. The dual character of Puducherry is a standing tribute to diversity. Historic buildings jostle against charming sidewalk cafes, trendy designer wear boutiques stand next to native sari shops and other upmarket commercial addresses share humble space with roadside bangle sellers and temple pilgrims in a bustling bazaar-like environment. Day is free to explore on own.

Overnight stay at Puducherry.

Day 04: Puducherry sightseeing

Post breakfast visit Auroville visitor centre. The Universal town of Auroville is located 10 kms north of Pondicherry town, where people from different nationalities, faiths, and beliefs, can live in peace and harmony. The construction of this 'universal' town was started in 1968 under the guidance of The Mother, a Paris-born painter-musician who became Sri Aurobindo's disciple and close companion from 1924 till his death in 1950. The development of the utopia is still in progress. A visit to Auroville is an experience by itself. Evening is free at leisure.

Overnight at Puducherry.

Day 05: Puducherry to Thanjavur enroute visit Chidambaram and Kumbakonam

After early breakfast at 08.30hrs, drive to Chidambaram (approx. 80 kms/2 hrs drive) to visit the famous Nataraja Temple. Here at the Thillai Nataraja Temple, Lord Shiva as Nataraja [lord of dance] is at that state of supreme bliss or Ananta [immense joy] and is dancing the true cosmic dance of life, the Ananta Natanam. The roof of the sanctum sanctorum is gold plated. If time permits, drive further for another 80 kms to the temple town of Kumbakonam, home to around 188 temples, the most prominent of which is the Kumbeswarar Temple. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, it is the oldest shrine in the area, built in the 7th century. Another attraction is the 12-storey-high Sarangapani Temple built by the Nayak kings. Raghunatha Nayak, who ruled the town in the 16th century, got scenes from Ramayana painted on the walls of the Ramaswamy Temple. Kumbakonam is also known to have a temple dedicated to Lord Brahma, the Hindu god who is responsible for the creation of the universe and of life on earth. There are very few temples of Lord Brahma in the world and Kumbakonam has one of them. After lunch at a local restaurant at own cost, drive to Thanjavur (40kms/1hr drive). On arrival at Thanjavur, check into the resort. Thanjavur - the rice bowl of Tamil Nadu was the capital of the Chola dynasty and has the famous Brihadeeshwara Temple.

Overnight at Thanjavur.

Day 06: Thanjavur sightseeing

At 09.00hrs after breakfast proceed for local tour of Thanjavur- the capital of the Chola dynasty, it is famous for the grandest temple in South India, the Brihadeeshwara Temple. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, this great monument built by Raja raja Chola is one of the Great Living Chola Temples characterised by its unique structure. Next visit the Thanjavur Palace which was the Nayaks started building in the mid-16th century, and then completed by the Marathas. The palace now functions as the Royal Museum, housing a collection of royal remains. Next visit the Art Gallery comprising of Saraswathi Mahal Library and the Sangeetha Sabha. The Saraswathi Mahal Library has a vast collection of 30,000 palm leaf and paper manuscripts written in Indian and European languages. Return to the hotel. Overnight at Thanjavur.

Day 07: Thanjavur to Tiruchirappalli to Madurai

At 08.30hrs post breakfast depart for Madurai. Enroute visit Tiruchirappalli (approx. 60kms, 1.15hrs drive) located on the banks of the river Kaveri. Tiruchirappalli is a fine blend of tradition and modernity built around the Rock Fort. The Nayaks of Madurai built the spectacular fort on an 83m high massive rock. Apart from the Rock Fort Temple, it is famous for the Ranganath temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu in reclining form. Drive further to Madurai (approx. 145 kms, 2.5 hrs drive). On arrival check into the hotel. Madurai was the capital city for the great Pandya king and is most famous for its Meenakshi Amman Temple. Dedicated to Meenakshi, the lovely consort of Lord Shiva, the original temple was built by Kulasekara Pandya who also created a lotus shaped city around the temple. Overnight at Madurai.



Mahabalipuram, situated about 60 km south of Chennai in Tamil Nadu, is an ancient port town known for its stone carvings and stone temples. It was built largely between the 7th and the 9th centuries. This port city of Pallavas is one of a kind tourist destination worth a visit. There are bass reliefs (structures protruding from the base of the rock- above) of the descent of the Ganges that are very famous.

TEMPLES OF SOUTH INDIA

Day 08: Madurai sightseeing

At 08.30hrs after breakfast, you shall visit the famous awe inspiring Meenakshi Temple – a must visit in every South Indian Temple tour itinerary. The enormous temple complex is dedicated to Lord Shiva, known here as Sundareshwara and his consort Parvati or Meenakshi. The temple complex is within a high-walled enclosure, at the core of which are the two sanctums for Meenakshi and Sundareshwara, surrounded by several smaller shrines and grand pillared halls with their highly impressive 12 gopuras. Also visit the Palace of Nayak Tirumalai. The Palace was constructed as a residence for the then King Thirumalai Nayak. Designed by an Italian architect, this palace is a blend of Dravidian and Islamic architectural styles. The interior of this palace mesmerizes everyone with its intricate paintings and sculpting. Paintings on the roof of the palace are worth noticing. Overnight at Madurai.

Day 09: Transfer to Madurai Airport

Post breakfast transfer to Madurai Airport to board flight to onward destination.

Note: Most of the temples in the itinerary are shut from 1200hrs to 1600hrs.

*****END TOUR*****

