

SOUTHERN CHARM

(9 Nights/ 10 Days)

DAY 1: ARRIVAL CHENNAI

Arrive at Chennai airport. Meet and greet at the airport. Later transfer to the hotel and Check in.



Today proceed for sightseeing tour of the city visiting, Santhome, Fort St. George.

The Santhome Cathedral Church - built in 1504, then rebuilt in neo- Gothic style in 1893, this Roman Catholic Church is said to house the remains of St. Thomas the Apostle.

Fort St. George - built by the British East India Company in 1640 AD, under the supervision of Francis Day and Andrew Cogon, today houses the office of the Tamil Nadu Secretariat. It also houses a St. Mary's Church, the oldest

Anglican church in India.

Evening visit the Marina Beach- the longest beach in India extending to 13 kms.

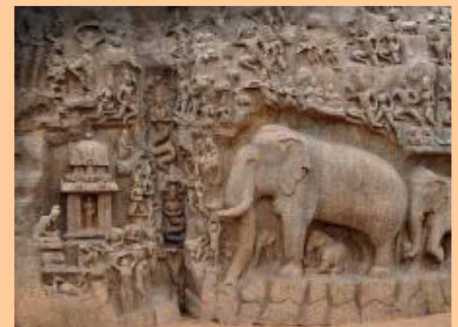
Overnight at the hotel.

DAY 2 : CHENNAI- KANCHIPURAM - MAHABALIPURAM

After Breakfast, drive to Mahabalipuram, enroute stop at Kanchipuram:

Varadarajar Perumal Temple: Varadharaja Perumal Temple or Hastagiri or Attiyuran is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu. It is one of the Divya Desams, the 108 temples of Vishnu believed to have been visited by the 12 poet saints, or Alvars. One of the greatest Hindu scholars of Vaishnava VisishtAdvaita philosophy, Ramanuja is believed to have resided in this temple.

Ekambareswarar Temple: This temple dedicated to Shiva, is the largest temple in the town of Kanchipuram and is located in the northern part of the town. The temple gopuram (gateway tower) is 59m tall, which is one of the tallest gopurams in India. It is one of the five major Shiva temples or the Pancha Bootha Sthalams, representing the 5 elements and here it represents-EARTH.



Kamatchi Amman Temple: This temple dedicated to Kamakshi, one of the forms of the goddess Parvati and is also associated with Sankaracharya, one of the greatest Hindu gurus. The Meenakshi Temple in Madurai, the Akilandeswari temple in Thiruvanaikaval near Tiruchirappalli and this Kamakshi are the important centers of worship of Parvati as the mother goddess, in the state of Tamil Nadu.

After the visit continue your drive to Mahabalipuram and check in at the hotel.

Later visit the Pancha Rathas, Arjuna's Penance and the Shore Temple

Pancha Rathas: Each of the five monuments in the Pancha Rathas complex resembles a chariot (ratha), and each is carved over a single, long stone or monolith. Though sometimes mistakenly referred to as temples, the structures were never consecrated because they were never completed following the death of Narasimhavarman.

Arujuna's Penance: Arjuna's Penance is a story from the Mahabharata of how Arjuna, one of the Pandava brothers, performed severe austerities in order to obtain Shiva's weapon.

Shore Temple: Built in 700-729 AD, this temple is so named because it overlooks the shore of the Bay of Bengal. It is a structural temple, built with blocks of granite dating back to 18th century. At the time of its creation, the village was a busy port during the reign of Narasimhavarman II of the Pallava dynasty.

Overnight at the hotel.

DAY 3: MAHABALIPURAM – TANJORE



After Breakfast, proceed to Tanjore, enroute visiting Chidambaram and Gangaikandacholapuram and Darasuram as time permits.

Chidambaram temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva is located in the heart of the temple town of Chidambaram. This temple forms another of the Pancha Bootha Shtalams and here it represents- Akasha or Sky. The temple is known as the foremost of all temples to Saivites and has influenced worship, architecture, sculpture and performance art for over two millennium.

Gangaikandacholapuram, founded in the year 1020 and taking approximately nine years to fully complete the construction work. Gangaikondacholapuram Temple of Tanjore is dedicated to Lord Shiva and the credit of erecting this temple is to be given to King Rajendra Chozhan, son of Raja Raja Chozhan

Darasuram, dedicated to Lord Shiva. Airavata, Lord Indra's elephant with four tusks and seven trunks, was cursed by Sage Durvasa for disrespecting him. As a result the spotless white elephant ended up with skin discoloration, which was cured only after Airavata took a dip in the sacred waters of this temple. The temple and the presiding deity derive its name from this incident. Continue your drive to Tanjore and check in at the hotel.

Overnight at the hotel.

DAY 4: TANJORE- TRICHY

After an early breakfast visit **Brihadeeshwara Temple,** which is built by the King Raja Raja Chola 1 is an outstanding example of the Chola architecture and is listed in world heritage. It is one architectural exemplar, which showcases true form of Dravida kind of architecture in temples and is a representative of ideology of Chola Empire and Southern India's Tamil civilization. Brihadeeswarar Temple "testifies to Chola's brilliant achievements in architecture, painting, bronze casting and sculpture.



Continue drive to Trichy. Visit the **Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple** at Sri Rangam. This well preserved Temple, dedicated to Lord Vishnu, is surrounded by seven concentric walls with 21 gopurams and is probably the largest in India. Many people have had their hand in its construction, including the Cheras, The Pandyas, The Cholas, The Hoysalas and the Vijayanagars.

Evening visit The **Rock Fort** is a historic fort and temple complex built on an ancient rock. It is constructed on a 273-foot high rock. There are two Hindu temples inside the Rockfort, The Uchchi Pillaiyar Koil and The Siva Temple. Geologically the 83 m high rock may date to over one billion years ago.

Overnight at the hotel.

DAY 5: TRICHY – MADURAI

After breakfast drive to Madurai; Visit the **Meenakshi Temple**- which is nearly 2000 years old and is the heart of the old town, a splendid example of the Dravidian architecture. Later visit Tirumalai Nayak Mahal, an indo saracenic building, constructed in 1523. Later Check in at the hotel.



Late evening, 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 to that of Parvati's(Meenakshi). Enroute Shiva visits the other deities along the route.

Overnight at the hotel.

DAY 6: MADURAI - THEKADY

After early breakfast drive to Thekkady and check in at the hotel.

Enroute visit aromatic spice gardens where the air is laden with the fragrance of different spices from mace to Vanilla. Experience a **ride on elephant**.



Overnight at the hotel.

DAY 7: THEKADY – KUMARAKOM



Morning enjoy **game viewing on Lake Periyar**. Later drive to Kumarakom- Kumarakom is a serene, emerald green peninsula set in the backdrop of Vembanad Lake, the largest backwater in Kerala which is dotted with numerous traditional rice boats, rafts and canoes.

Check in at the hotel; Later visit **Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary** which spread across 14 acres is safe home for many migratory birds like Siberian stork, wild duck etc. They live with other birds in flocks such as darters, waterfowls and cuckoos are fascinating sight for the visitors.

Overnight at the hotel

DAY 8: KUMARAKOM – KOVALAM

After breakfast proceed to Kovalam - an internationally renowned beach with three adjacent crescent beaches. Enroute visit Trivandrum covering the Padmanabhaswamy Temple , Napier Museum, Kowdiar Palace, the Sri Chitra Art Gallery, Zoo etc

Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple- The history of this temple dates back to 8th century. It is one of the 108 sacred Vishnu temples or Divya Desams in India. Divya Desams are the holiest abodes of the Lord Vishnu that are mentioned in the works of the Tamil Azhvars (saints). The presiding deity of this temple is Lord Vishnu, reclining on Anantha, the hooded Serpent.

Kowdiar Palace- It was built in 1915 by Sree Moolam Thirunal and was gifted to Sethu Parvati Bayi. It is the official residence of the Travancore Royal Family. Kowdiar Palace's architectural work is famous and has over 150 rooms.

Return back to hotel; Evening relax at the beach or enjoy an Ayurveda massage.

Overnight at the hotel



DAY 9: KOVALAM – KANYAKUMARI – KOVALAM

After an early breakfast proceed for a day excursion to Kanyakumari - the southernmost point of the Indian.



Visit Vivekananda Rock, Thiruvalluvar Statue, Gandhi Memorial

Vivekananda Rock - a sacred monument dedicated to one of the most revered spiritual leaders - Swami Vivekananda

Thiruvalluvar Statue - A statue of Thiruvalluvar is erected near the Vivekananda rocks as a memorial to the man who gave Tamil literature the 'Word that never fails'

Gandhi Memorial – a memorial to the father of the nation was built in Kanyakumari in the year 1956. The memorial was built in the place where the ashes of Mahatha Gandhi was kept for people to pay homage before being immersed in the seas. The mandapam of the memorial is built in oriya style of architecture and designed in such a way that on his birthday, 2 October, the rays of the sun, through a hole on the roof, falls exactly on the place where the ashes was kept in 1948.

Return back to the hotel; Evening relax at the beach.

Overnight at the hotel

DAY 10: DEPT TRIVANDRUM

After breakfast, Check out from the hotel and then you will be transferred to the airport to connect your flight.

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