

THE CORE OF INDIA - SOUTH INDIA

10 NIGHTS / 11 DAYS

**New Delhi – Chennai – Mahabalipuram - Pondicherry – Tanjore – Madurai – Kanyakumari –
Kovalam – Trivandrum**



This 10-night/11-day tour, "The Core of India - South India," is a comprehensive journey primarily through the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, offering a blend of rich cultural heritage, ancient temple architecture, colonial history, and coastal beauty.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

New Delhi: The tour usually begins with your arrival in New Delhi, serving as the starting point for your international travel, before connecting to South India.

Chennai: The gateway to South India, the itinerary here often includes a half-day sightseeing tour, visiting landmarks like the Gandhi Memorial, Kala Kshetra, Mylapore temple, and the scenic Marina Beach.

Mahabalipuram (Mamallapuram): A UNESCO World Heritage site known for its stunning coastal temples and 8th-century rock-cut monuments. Key visits include:

Pondicherry: A former French enclave with a unique blend of French and Tamil culture.

Tanjore (Thanjavur): Famous as the cultural heart of the Chola dynasty, it is renowned for its grand architecture. The main attraction is the magnificent Brihadisvara Temple, a Chola-era architectural marvel and UNESCO World Heritage site.

Madurai: One of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in India, known for its vibrant atmosphere and magnificent temples. Here we visit the iconic Meenakshi Amman Temple, an architectural masterpiece with towering gopurams (gates).

Kanyakumari: The southernmost tip of mainland India, where the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean, and the Arabian Sea meet. Here we witness the unique sunrise and sunset over the three seas.

Kovalam: A renowned beach destination in Kerala, offering scenic beaches and a relaxed atmosphere. The itinerary usually allows for time to relax and enjoy the tropical scenery.

Trivandrum (Thiruvananthapuram): The capital of Kerala, where the tour typically concludes. Activities might include local sightseeing or serving as the departure point for flights home.

This journey is ideal for travelers interested in a deep dive into the history, art, architecture, and diverse coastal landscapes of Southern India.

ITINERARY DAY BY DAY

Day 01 – Delhi - Arrive Chennai – Mahabalipuram

Upon arrival, connect your next flight Cochin. (Flight from Delhi - Cochin will be booked as per the arrival timing of the guests). Arrive at Chennai Airport. Upon arrival, you will be met and transferred to your hotel in Mahabalipuram. Rest of the day at leisure. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 02 – Mahabalipuram - UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Full day sightseeing tour of Mahabalipuram. Overnight at the hotel.

Mahabalipuram (or Mamallapuram) is a historic Indian coastal town in Tamil Nadu, famous for its 7th and 8th-century rock-cut temples, monolithic structures, and intricate sculptures built by the Pallava dynasty.



Day 03 – Mahabalipuram – Pondicherry

Morning drive to Pondicherry. Afternoon tour of the former French colony including Aurobindo Ashram, Eglise de Notre Dame de la Conception Immaculee and Auroville. Overnight at the hotel.



Day 04 – Pondicherry – Tanjore

This Pondicherry to Tanjore drive (200 km / approx. 4 hours) offers a deep spiritual journey through South India's Chola dynasty heritage, connecting you with ancient, UNESCO-recognized Shiva temples (Chidambaram, Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Darasuram) famed for their immense scale, intricate sculptures, and spiritual power, fostering connection with divine energy, history, and enduring artistry as you travel through Tamil Nadu's sacred landscape.

Day 05 – Tanjore

Sightseeing tour of Tanjore. Overnight at the hotel.

Thanjavur (Tanjore) is highly important for spirituality, primarily due to the magnificent Brihadeeswarar Temple, a UNESCO site built by Cholas, and its world-renowned Tanjore paintings depicting Hindu deities, both serving as conduits for divine connection and positive energy, attracting pilgrims and art lovers seeking spiritual experiences for centuries.



Day 06 – Tanjore – Trichy – Madurai

Drive to Madurai (200 km / approx. 5 hours) a city famous for its ancient temples, especially the Meenakshi Amman Temple. En route visit Trichy Temple. Later visit Meenakshi Temple to witness the evening ceremony. This is the highlight! You'll witness the Pooja (worship) or Aarthi ceremony where deities are moved between shrines, often involving music, lights, and chanting, creating a truly magical atmosphere. The Meenakshi Temple is dedicated to Goddess Meenakshi (Parvati) and Lord Sundareswarar (Shiva).

Be prepared with appropriate attire (shoulders and knees covered) as it's a sacred place.

Overnight in Madurai.

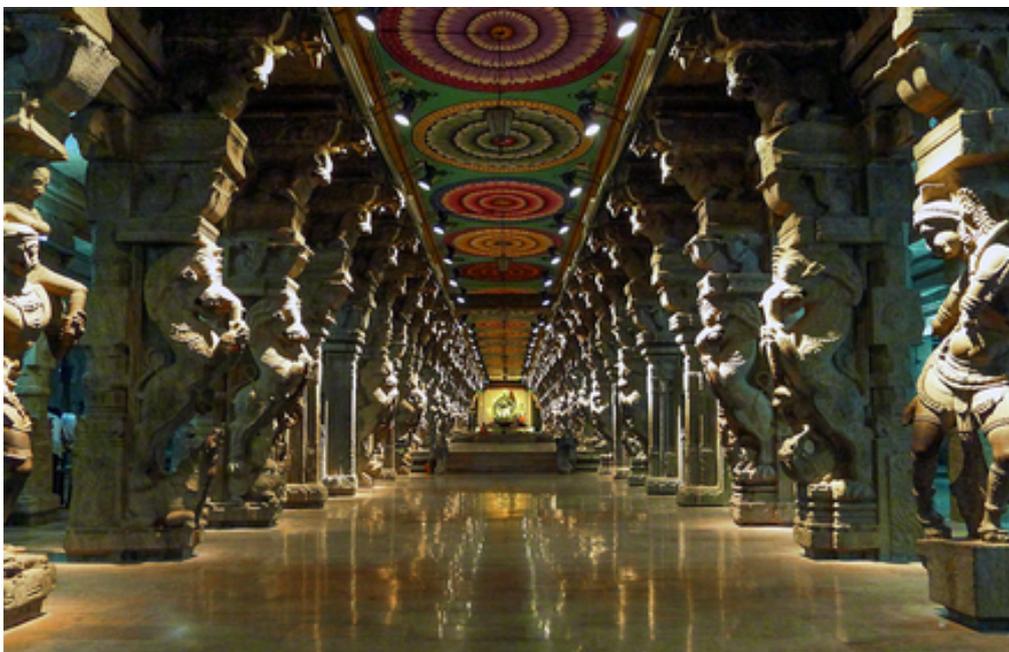


Day 07 – Madurai

Morning visit to Meenakshi Temple again and other local attractions. Overnight at the hotel.



Today, approximately 20,000 people per day visit the Meenakshi Temple's almost 700,000 square feet of space, including the two principal sanctuaries and dozens of shrines of varying sizes. Bordered by high walls and gateways, it is a bewildering collection of indoor and outdoor spaces: small, cramped shrines, vast halls, low and high ceilings, darkness, light, hustle and bustle, quiet spaces, and chaos. All told, it contains around 30,000 sculptures.



Day 08 – Madurai – Kanyakumari

Morning drive to Kanyakumari. Afternoon at leisure to enjoy the sunset. Overnight at the hotel.

Kanyakumari is important as India's southernmost tip, a unique meeting point of three seas (Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean), a major Hindu pilgrimage site for the Kumari Amman Temple, and a famous tourist spot for its breathtaking sunrises/sunsets and monuments like the Vivekananda Rock Memorial and Thiruvalluvar Statue, representing rich culture, spirituality, and natural beauty.

Key Aspects:

Triveni Sangam: The confluence of three seas is considered highly sacred; a dip in these waters is believed to wash away sins.

Devi Kanyakumari Temple: Dedicated to the virgin Goddess Bhagavathy (Parvati), who is in eternal penance to marry Lord Shiva; her nose ring is famously bright enough to be mistaken for a lighthouse.

Vivekananda Rock Memorial: A meditation spot on a rock where Swami Vivekananda meditated, symbolizing spiritual awakening and national unity.

Pitru Tarpanam: An ideal location for performing ancestral rites to appease ancestors.

Festivals: Celebrates major Hindu festivals like Navaratri, Chaitry Poornima, and Vaisakha Festival, drawing large crowds.





Day 09 – Kanyakumari – Kovalam

After breakfast drive to Kovalam. En route visit Padmanabhapuram Palace. Check in and relax at the beach resort. Overnight at the hotel.

Padmanabhapuram Palace is a highly recommended visit, especially for those interested in history, architecture, and South Indian heritage, renowned for its unique traditional Kerala wooden architecture, intricate carvings, and significant murals, serving as a well-preserved testament to the Travancore rulers' past. It's considered a masterpiece of carpentry, featuring reflective floors, detailed woodwork, and historical artifacts, offering a glimpse into ancient royal life, though some find it simpler than typical grand palaces.



KEY ASPECTS

Unique Architecture: It's famous as one of the largest and best-preserved examples of traditional wooden architecture in India, built using principles of Taccusastra (carpentry science).

Intricate Craftsmanship: Expect stunning details in rosewood carvings, decorated ceilings, and colorful windowpanes (using magnetite).

Rich History & Culture: It was the former capital of the Travancore kingdom and houses antique artifacts, showcasing the region's heritage.

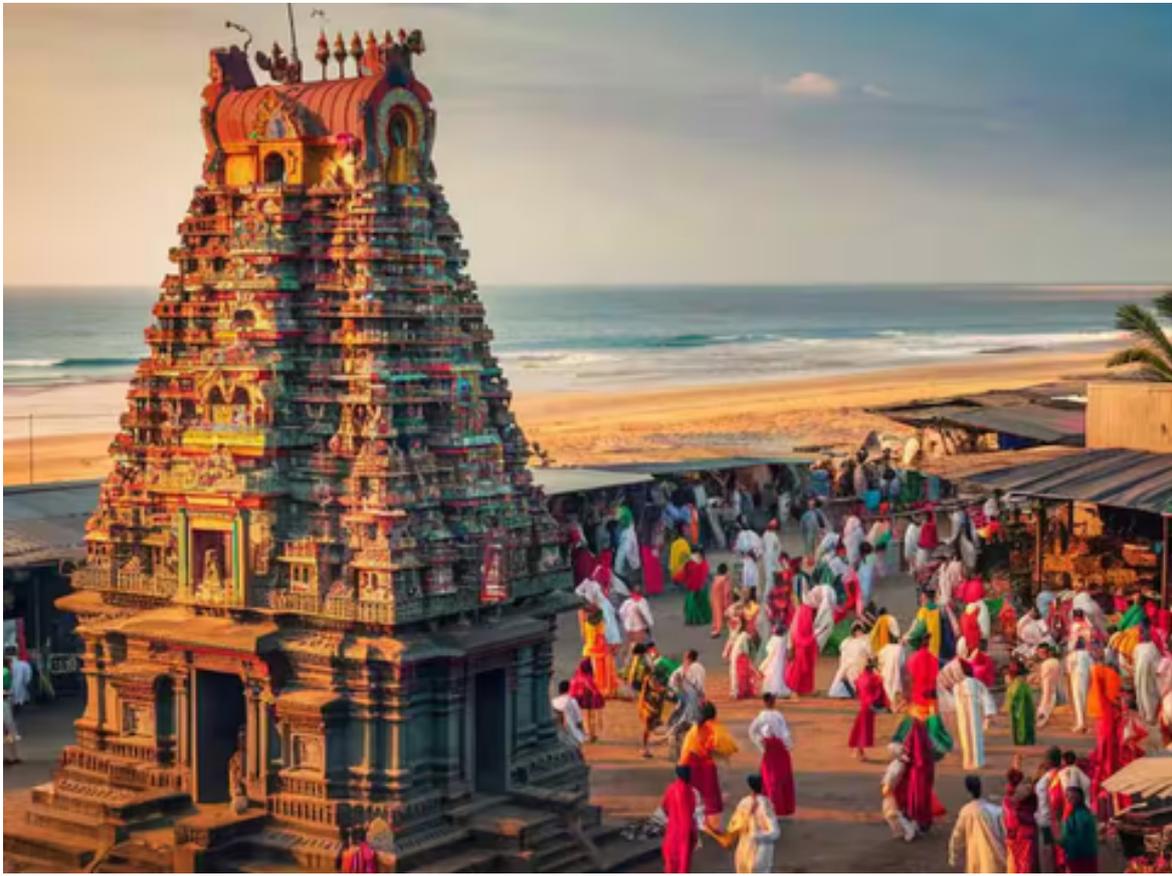
Atmosphere: The dark, polished wood and dim lighting create a distinct, serene, and historic ambiance, with guides explaining the significance of different sections.

UNESCO Tentative List: It's recognized by UNESCO for its exceptional cultural value

Day 10 – Kovalam

Full day at leisure to enjoy the beach and resort facilities. Overnight at the hotel.

Kovalam in the heart of Kerala, India, is famous for its golden sandy shores, calming azure waves, and a lively tapestry of rich cultural traditions. India's Kerala state rocks into the harbor of Kovalam with its sandy beaches, calm ocean waves and rich cultural beliefs.



Day 11 – Kovalam – Trivandrum Airport - Delhi

Transfer to Trivandrum Airport in time to connect with your onward flight to Delhi. Upon arrival at Delhi, connect to Terminal 3 for international flight.

Hotels 4 Star or Similar

Dates	City	Hotel	Nights	Meal Plan
Day 01-03	Mahabalipuram	Grand Continental / Deluxe Room	02	Breakfast
Day 03-04	Pondicherry	Hotel Shembaga / Majesty Room	01	Breakfast
Day 04-06	Tanjore	Hotel Sangam / Executive Room	02	Breakfast
Day 06-08	Madurai	Hotel Amika / Deluxe Room	02	Breakfast
Day 08-09	Kanyakumari	Annai Celestial / Standard Room	01	Breakfast
Day 09-11	Kovalam	Travancore Heritage / Standard Room	02	Breakfast

THE COST INCLUDES

- Accommodation on single/double occupancy basis
- Assistance on arrival and departure at airports
- English-speaking local guides in Mahabalipuram, Tanjore and Madurai
- Night ceremony visits at Meenakshi Temple, Madurai
- Entrance fees to monuments and museums as per itinerary
- Air-conditioned vehicle for all transfers and sightseeing

EXCLUDES COST

- International airfare, visa charges and insurance

Personal expenses such as laundry, drinks, tips, camera fees

Meals other than those mentioned in the itinerary

Any services not specifically mentioned under inclusions

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IMPORTANT NOTES

• Rates are subject to change in case of any revision in taxes or tariffs. • Dutch Palace in Cochin is closed on Fridays and the Jewish Synagogue is closed on Fridays and Saturdays.