



# TREASURES OF THE COROMANDEL

For 12 days

From ancient kingdoms to India's encounters with colonialism to the site of India's richest Hindu pilgrimage centre, how much more variety can you get? This comprehensive tour of Tamil Nadu offers an insight to the often surprisingly easy co-existence of tradition and modernity in India.



## DAY 1 | ARRIVE CHENNAI/COVELONG

Arrive in Chennai today and check-in at your seaside hotel at Covelong (40 km/1 hour).

### ACCOMMODATION

[Connoisseur : Fisherman's Cove](#)

## DAY 2 | COVELONG/MAHABALIPURAM/COVELONG

Spend the morning at Mahabalipuram (48 km roundtrip), the 7th century CE port city of the Pallava dynasty. See the Pancha Rathas, each carved from a single stone, the bas relief named Arjuna's Penance, and the sole surviving Shore Temple. In the afternoon, visit nearby Dakshinachitra (closed Tuesdays/public holidays), a superb exposition of the architectural and crafts heritage of southern India.

## DAY 3 | COVELONG/CHENNAI/COVELONG

A day in Chennai (80 km roundtrip). Formerly Madras, it was the first British settlement in India when the East India Company arrived in 1639. The military, administrative and civil architecture of that era is a high point as is the world's greatest collection of Chola dynasty bronzes at the Government Museum & Art Gallery (closed Fridays/public holidays). Despite its contemporary advances, Chennai remain distinctively Indian.

## DAY 4 | COVELONG/KANCHIPURAM/COVELONG

Travel inland to Kanchipuram (160 km roundtrip/1.5 hours each way), one of India's seven sacred cities and a cradle of evolving ancient and medieval temple architecture spanning several centuries. Later, visit the handlooms that produce Kanchipuram's quality silk saris that are prized all over India.

## DAY 5 | COVELONG/PONDICHERRY

Depart early for Pondicherry (170 km/3.5 km plus stops) in order to visit Gingee, once referred to as "India's greatest unvisited monument". Its three citadels stand atop three hills enclosed by running walls within which are palaces, temples, mosques, pavilions and granaries built during the 15th-17th centuries. Continue to Pondicherry, colonised by the French shortly after the British had reached Madras. Explore its French Quarter, now undergoing restoration, to see the buildings, churches, homes and markets.

### ACCOMMODATION

[Explorer : Palais de Mahe](#)

[La Villa](#)

## DAY 6 | PONDICHERRY/THANJAVUR

A day's journey to Thanjavur (208 km/4 hours plus stops), travelling along the coast to Chidambaram, site of the great Siva Nararaja temple that has the original image of Siva in his dancing avatar. On to Gangaikondacholapuram, an 11th century Chola dynasty capital before reaching Thanjavur late afternoon.

## DAY 7 | THANJAVUR

Touring in the vicinity of Thanjavur begins with an excursion to Thiruvavur (108 km roundtrip/ 1 hour drive each way), site of the 9th century Thyagarajaswami temple and the wonderful Mucukunda Murals within. Returning from Thiruvavur, visit the temple towns of Kumbakonam and Darasuram, both also known for their excellent local crafts and the latter for the Airavatesvara temple. Nearing Thanjavur, visit the small though exquisite temple at Pullamangi.

## ACCOMMODATION

[Explorer : Svatma](#)

### DAY 8 | THANJAVUR/KARAIKUDI

At Thanjavur, grandest of the Chola capitals, visit the Brihadishvara temple, the greatest of all their monuments, sublime in both design and execution. On view at the Thanjavur Art Gallery are a magnificent collection of Chola bronzes and carved stone panels. In the afternoon, drive to Karaikudi (90 km/2 hours), stopping en route at the Ayanar temples that represent village guardians and are set in sacred groves.

### DAY 9 | KARAIKUDI

Ancestral home to a community of financiers and traders, the town is known for its unique mansions built in varying sizes and styles, lively streets and markets, colourful temples and interesting villages on the periphery. A full day tour takes in all these attractions in a little known region of the country.

## ACCOMMODATION

[Explorer : The Bangala](#)

### DAY 10 | KARAIKUDI/MADURAI

Drive on to Madurai (90 km/2 hours) this morning. In its ancient heyday, Madurai traded with Greece and Rome and was the centre for Tamil poetry and literature. From medieval times till today, it is dominated by the iconic Meenakshi temple, which you will visit in the afternoon and evening, along with the surrounding bazaars. Other attractions are the noteworthy Tirumala Nayak Palace, and the Temple Tank which is the traditional venue for Madurai's many festivals.

## ACCOMMODATION

[Connoisseur : Heritage Madurai](#)

### DAY 11 | MADURAI/TIRUCHIRAPALLI

Drive to Tiruchirapalli (188 km/4 hours) this morning, visiting the 9th century temple of Muvarkoil at Kodubalur en route. In the afternoon, explore the great 7th century Rock Fort temple in the middle of the city with views of the Kaveri River below.

## ACCOMMODATION

[Explorer : Sangam Hotel](#)

### DAY 12 | DEPART TIRUCHIRAPALLI

Morning tour of the Srirangam temple, situated on an island in the Kaveri, its outer halls adorned with royal portraits and magnificent horse carvings. In the afternoon, depart for your onward destination.

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