

Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple

# MADURAI

The vibrant and dynamic city - Madurai is situated on the banks of the river Vaigai, gets its name from an earlier name Madhurapuri. It is believed that the King Kulasekara Pandia built Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple and the city around it. Madurai was the capital of the Pandya kingdom which ruled until the early 10<sup>th</sup> century. Thereafter, the Cholas ruled for the next three centuries before Pandya rule was re-established.

Shortly thereafter, Madurai became a part of the Mughal empire. When the Vijayanagar empire took over, they appointed the Nayaks as their representatives to rule Madurai.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Area	: 3741.73 Sq.kms.
Population	: 3,038,252 (2011 Census)
Altitude	: 101 mts. above sea level
Temperature	: Summer 37° C - 25° C Winter 29° C - 20° C
Rainfall	: 85 cms. Average
Season	: Throughout the year
Clothing	: Tropical
Languages	: Tamil, Sourashtra, Hindi and English
STD Code	: 0452

## Cultural Capital

Madurai is famous as a centre of literary achievement and learning. In the pre-Christian era, Madurai was home

to the Tamil Sangam which attracted literary personages who flourished under royal patronage. Many literary masterpieces were composed which survive to this day.

There is a charming legend told about the third and last Tamil Sangam (Academy of Tamil scholars) which met at Madurai. When the quality of a literary work was to be judged, it was tossed into the Meenakshi Temple tank. If it floated to the top, it was deemed to be worthy!

Numerous references have been made to the city in literary, religious and other texts. The Ramayana refers to it, as does Kautilya's Artha Sastra. Megasthenes wrote about 'Madura' in 302 BC. Pliny in 7 AD and Ptolemy in 140 AD.

## ATTRACTIONS

### Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple

Synonymous with Madurai is the magnificent temple dedicated to Goddess Meenakshi. This is one of the famous Shakthi shrines in India, drawing thousands of devotees every day. It has also been one of the center of Tamil culture, sponsoring literature, art, music, dance over the centuries. Legend has it that when the third and last Tamil Sangam (Academy of Tamil Literature) met at Madurai, literatures were thrown into the temple tank, where a divine force caused works of merit to float and inferior literatures to sink. The original temple was probably a modest structure built as per agama guidelines, However it has grown with the grateful



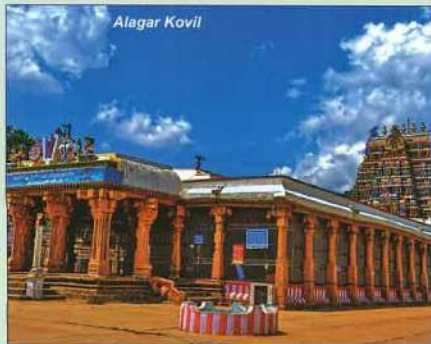
Temple tank - Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple

additions of pursuant dynasties and victorious monarchs into an enormous complex extending over an area of 65,000 sq.km./15 acres Rectangular in shape, the temple buildings are of lofty dimensions 847 feet in length and 793 feet in breath. The central shrines are those of Meenakshi and her spouse Lord Sundareswara. On the massive outer walls stand four majestic gopurams (Towers) these rise gracefully, dominating the sky lines and are visible from quite some distance.

Madurai district lies in the South of Tamil Nadu state, bordered by the districts of Dindigul, Tiruchirapalli on the north and by Sivagangai on the East and by Theni on the West and by Virudhunagar on the South. It is geographically located at 9.9252° North Latitude and at 78.1198° East Longitude. It covers an area of 3741.73 Sq.km. with the total population of 3,038,252 (2011 census). The economy of Madurai district is chiefly agrarian. The two other sectors that contribute significantly to the local economy are textiles and tourism.

#### Alagar Kovil

About 21 kms. north east of Madurai stands the celebrated Vishnu temple dedicated to Kallalagar (Brother of the Goddess Meenakshi) consort with Sridevi and Boomadevi. The temple is situated on a foot hill amidst panoramic surroundings. It's a small excursion centre also. Dharshan Timings : 5.45 am to 12.30 a.m. & 4.30 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. Phone : 0452 - 2470375.



#### Solaimalai Mandapam

The Solaimalai (Pazhamudhirsolai) Murugan Temple is situated at alagar hills and it is one of the six abodes of Lord Subramaniya about 4 kms. from the foot hills. In this temple the main God is Murugan (Subramaniyan) consort. This temple also contain some beautiful carvings, making a visit rewarding. This place is also known for the event of Lord Muruga offered Nellikani (Goosberry) to the poetess Avvaiyar. Pooja Timings: 6.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. Ph: 0452 - 2094720.



#### Alagarmalai (Jain Tourist Spot)

Alagarmalai is located 30 kms. from the Madurai towards north. Jain beds and inscriptions were created by Kaninathan, Ponkollan, Athan, Anargan, Uppuvanikan, Viyakkun, Ganathikan, Panitha Vanikan Nedumalan, Kozhu Vanikan, Illanchandhan, Ven palli, Aruvai Vanikan at 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C. - 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D.

#### Thirupparankundram

8 kms. from south of Madurai junction, this temple is one of the six abodes of the Lord Subramaniya and the first among them. The main sanctum sanctorum is curved out of a solid rock.

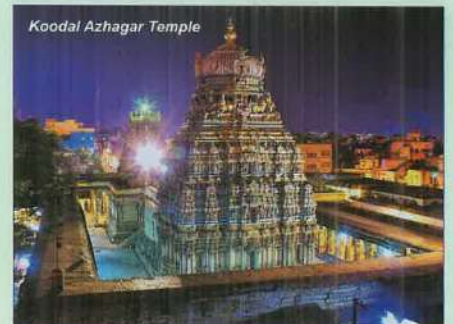


Dharshan Timings: 5.30 a.m. to 12.30 a.m. & 4.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. Ph: 0452- 2482248.

#### Koodal Azhagar Temple

To the west of the city is this ancient Vaishnavite temple with beautiful sculptures situated 0.5 km. from the Railway Junction. The main God is dedicated to Koodal Azhagar (Vishnu) and Goddess Sridevi and Boomadevi. The main God is depicted in three postures - sitting, standing, and reclining - each is consecrated one above the other inside vimana.

Pooja timings: 6.00 a.m. to 12.00 Noon & 4.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. Ph: 0452 - 2338542.



### Mariamman Teppakkulam

Mariamman Teppakkulam is a beautiful Square tank of huge size, 5 kms. east of Madurai. This tank is the scene of colorful Float Festival held in January / February to celebrate the birth anniversary of King Thirumalai Nayak who built this tank. The deities of Meenakshi and Sundareswarar are taken here and placed in a gaily decorated float. Illuminated with hundreds of lights, this fascinating float is taken round the tank with traditional music. On the northeast side of the tank is a temple dedicated to Mariamman (God of rain), a famous village Deity of Tamil Nadu.

Pooja Timings : 6.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. Ph: 0452 - 2344360 / 2349868.

Mariamman Teppakkulam



### St. Mary's Cathedral

Built in 1841, St. Mary's Cathedral is more than 150 years old. Initially this church was built as a small chapel by Fr. Garnier over a piece of land bought in 1840 by Fr. Bertrand SJ. He had settled around 30 families of sailor who were out-casted by W. Pudupatti Church. This area later show high increases in number of Catholics to accommodate whom it was expanded a few times by Fr. Hibolite sj and Br. Lemothe SJ. The present structure of this church was built in 1916. And in 1938, when Madurai Diocese was established. St. Mary's Cathedral was bestowed with the status of a pro-Cathedral and the Bishop's throne was also brought in at the church.



However, it was in 1969 when this church got the status of Cathedral. This cathedral is the seat of the Madurai Roman Catholic Arch diocese.

At present, this parish is consisted of around 15 sub-stations and about 1600 Catholic families. Some of its associations are Vincent de Paul, Family welfare team, Bible society, St.Mary's Youth, Legion of Mary, St.Mary's Altarboys, etc.

### Gandhi Museum

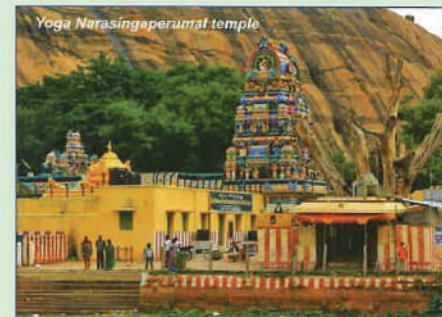
The Museum contains a picture gallery of Gandhian movement, a gallery of relics, Khadi and village industries section and South Indian Handicrafts section.

Working Hours : 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. and 2.00 p.m. to 5.45 p.m. Friday Holiday. Ph: 0452-2531060.



### Yoga Narasingaperumal Temple

Yoga Narasingaperumal temple is situated about 12 kms. from Periyar Bus Stand and 5 kms. from MGR Nilayam (Mattuthavani Bus Stand). The main God is Yoga Narasingaperumal and his consort is Narasingavalli. The main sanctum sanctorum is curved out of a rock Yanai Malai (Elephant Hills). Pooja Timings: 6.00 am to 12.00 Noon & 4.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. Ph: 0452 - 2542344.



### Thirumarainatha Swamy Temple (Thiruvathavur)

The temple is located 16 kms. from Madurai city and Madurai Junction and 10 kms. from Melur on Madurai Tiruchirapalli road. In this temple the main God is Vathapureshvarar or Thirumarainathar and Goddess Vedanayagi or Aranavalli Thayar. Famous Saivait Poet



Manikkavasagar wrote Thiruvasagam in this temple. Pooja Timings: 6.00 a.m. to 2.00 Noon & 4.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. Ph: 0452 - 2344360.

### Goripalayam Dargah

Locally known as Hajha Syed Sultan Alaoudeen Syed Sultan Samsudeen Aolya Dhargah, Goripalayam Dhargah is Madurai's most commanding mosque. Standing on the northern banks of the Vaigai River, this holy shrine offers an arresting view with its stunning green tombs and hugely built dome, which is as high as 20 ft. and 70 ft. in diameter. The imposing dome is built of a single stone which was brought from the Alagar hills. Goripalayam in Persian means 'Gor' or 'Grave'. The holy spot houses the mortal remains of two Islamic sage brothers - Hasrat Sulthan Alaoudeen Badusha and Hasrat Sulthan Samsudeen Badusha.

Goripalayam Dargah



### Chithira Radha Vallaba Perumal Temple

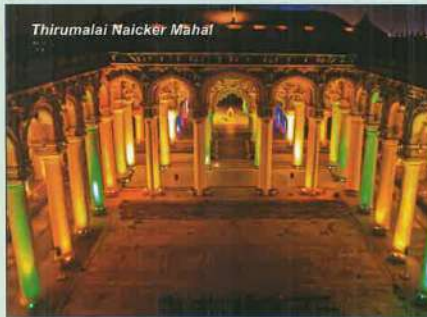
(Vishnu Temple & Guru Bhagavan Temple - Near Sholavandan)

This temple is a Vishnu temple about 38 kms. from Madurai near Sholavandan. The main God here is Chithira Radha Vallaba Perumal and Goddess Sridevi and Shenbagavalli Thayar. Another famous Guru Bhagavan temple is also located here. This temple belongs to 12<sup>th</sup> Century AD during Pandiya King Vallaba Pandiya. Dharshan Timings : 6.00 a.m. to 12.00 Noon & 4.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. Ph: 04543 - 260086.

### Thirumalai Naicker Mahal

Thirumalai Nayak palace is a graceful palace built in Indo Saracenic style. The imposing edifice is famous for the stucco work on its domes and impressive arches. The Swarga- vilasam (Celestial pavilion) constructed entirely with brick and mortar without support of a single rafter or girder is a marvel of architectural engineering. Among the other striking features of the palace are the massive white pillars, several of which line the corridor that runs along the courtyard. Connected by high decorative arches, these pillars measure 20 mts. height and have a circumference of 4 mts. (elsewhere in the palace, there polished black stone pillars of varying in heights). This palace was built in 1636. Opens daily 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Sound and Light Show timings: 6.45 p.m. English version, 8.00 p.m. Tamil version.

Thirumalai Naicker Mahal



### Meenakshipuram

Meenakshipuram (Near Mangulam) is an important Heritage village of Madurai ( 27 kms. from Madurai) which is famous for its OVAMALAI where Five Jain Caves and Six Brahmi Inscriptions which considered as the oldest Brahmi Inscriptions found in Tamil Nadu (B.C. 300 of Sangam Age).

### Edaganathaswamy Temple

(Thiruvedagam - Near Sholavandan)

The Temple is a Shiva Temple about 25 kms. from Madurai near Sholavandan at river bank of Vaigai. This

Temple is dedicated to God Edaganathaswamy and Goddess Elavar Kulai Amman. Pooja Timings : 6.00 a.m. to 12.00 Noon & 4.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. Ph: 04543 - 258124/9943261487.

Edaganathaswamy Temple



### World Tamil Sangam

Ulaga Tamil Sangam or the World Tamil Sangam, established in 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016, is a centre for higher research for Tamil language, located in the city of Madurai in Tamil Nadu, India. The Ulaga Tamil Sangam building has been built over an area of 87300 sq.ft. after 35 years of its conception by the then Chief Minister Dr.M.G. Ramachandran and it was declared open by the then Chief Minister Dr.J.Jayalalitha on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

World Tamil Sangam



### Keelakuyilkudi

The name of hill itself explains its association with Jainism. This hill lies in the village Keelakuyilkudi, 15 kms. west of Madurai near Nagamalai Pudukkottai Village. In this village three important Jain vestiges are found which speak about the existence and flourishing nature of Jainism during 9-10 BC. It is a picturesque place with a lotus pond at the foot of the hill Samanamalai.



Keelakuyilkudi

### Karadipattimalai, Perumalmalai

This village is just behind the Samanamalai 2 kms. away. This hill is variously named as Karadipattimalai, Perumalmalai etc. This hill consists of three ancient Tamil Brahmi records and Jain beds. These records reveal the name of the persons who carved out these beds. Two persons one called Musiri Kodan and Nagaperur Anthai had carved one bed. Another Inscription mentions one Saiyalan from Vinudaiyur had made these beds. One more Damaged record gives the other name Thidi Kaththan who also carved these carvings. All these three records are dated to 1 CCE.

### Kongar Puliangulam (Jain Tourist Spot)

This village lies at Madurai - Theni main road at 20 kms. distance. Here on the western end of the Nagamalai range one natural cavern is found in which more than sixty rock beds are carved for the stay of Jain ascetics. Three early Tamil Brahmi inscriptions are also engraved on the base of the rock.



Kongar Puliangulam

### Tidiyan (Village Tourist Spot)

Tidiyan is a village Tourist spot located about 35 kms. from Madurai towards western side in Madurai to Theni highways. It is famous for its natural beauty with a hill, pond and the Kailasanatha Temple. During full moon day local people used go for Girivalam around the Tidiyan hill.



Tidiyan

### Kutladampatti waterfalls (Vadipatti)

It is located 36 kms. from Periyar Bus stand on the way to Kodaikanal. An amusement park lies in a hill called 'Sirumalai' with a natural beauty, 7 kms. away from Kutladampatti near Vadipatti Village. The height of the falls is 87 ft. During holidays and festivity thousands of domestic tourists take bath and enjoy the natural beauty. Near this falls 500 years old temple dedicated to Goddess Thadagai Nachiamman is there.

### Sathaiyar Dam (Picnic spot)

It takes 32 minutes travel from Madurai to Sathaiyar Dam. Driving distance between Madurai and Sathaiyar Dam is 27 kms.

### Theradi

There are two large and beautifully decorated wooden temple-cars at the centre of the East Masi Street, generally used for carrying the idols of the God and Goddess on a procession after the celestial wedding of Meenakshi-Chokkanathar during the Chithirai festival. The largest of them is meant to carry the bronze images of Lord Siva and Meenakshi and in the other one for the idol of Goddess Meenakshi is carried. These temple cars are decorated exuberantly with the benign and ferocious forms of Siva, sculptures related to Thiruvilayadal Purana, various incarnations of Vishnu, Sakti images, folk art forms and erotic sculptures. The cars were made by Thirumalai Nayak 400 years ago.

### Arittapatti (Jain tourist spot)

This small village lies at a 25 kms. distance on Madurai-Melur road. The name itself reveals its association with Jain religion. There is natural cavern in which numbers of rock beds were chiselled out for the convenient stay of Jain mendicants. On the forehead of this rock cave two early Tamil Brahmi inscriptions are engraved. On the other side of the hill Kalinja malai, an early Pandyan cave temple dedicated to Lord Siva is found. The Shrine Sivalinga located in the central shrine is scooped from the natural rock itself.

### Karunkalakudi

Historic Village Karunkalakudi 32 kms. from Madurai (Madurai - Trichy Highway) before Kottampatti. The Karunkalakudi Village is historically and Archaeologically important because of its 3000 year old Rock Paintings, 2200 old Brahmi inscriptions and Jain Beds, 1000 year old Jain sculptures with rock Inscriptions and Nayak Period Mandapams and Stone Inscriptions.

### Varichiyur

This village lies at a distance of 15 kms. from Madurai on Sivaganga road. Very near to this village there is a small hillock called Uthayagiri. On the brow of this hill (Subramanya Hill) there are three Tamil Brahmi inscriptions. One record reveals the name Ianathan who carved this bed. Another two are somewhat damaged records which also reveal the same message. These three records belong to 2 BCE. In this cave more than 20 beds are carved out for Jains. Very near to this cave one early Pandya cave temple also seen which is dedicated to Siva and named as Uthayagirisvara temple. Just behind this cave another cave temple is also found with a Siva linga in the Sanctum Sanctorum and is called Asthagirisvara. These two caves are the works of early Pandyas dated to 8CCE.

### Raya Gopuram

At western corner of the Elukadal street there is an unfinished Gopura. It measures about 58 mts. in length and 39 mts. in breadth. This massive structure was constructed in 1654 AD by Thirumalai Nayak in order to enhance the beauty of Meenakshi Chokkar Temple. But it was stopped with the foundation portion alone. Known as Raya Gopura, it has the sculptural representations of Thirumalai Nayak and his younger brother Muthiyalu Nayak in its western lower storey. This Gopura exhibits the architectural excellence of the Nayak period. If the tower was built, this would have been one of the tallest Gopuras in Tamil Nadu.



Raya gopuram

### TOURIST INTEREST

#### Athisayam theme park

A Water Theme Park is situated on Madurai-Dindigul Road at Paravai matter of 15 kms. from Madurai. Timing: 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. Ph: 0452-2463848-51.

#### Government Museum

Govt. Museum is situated within the premises of the Gandhi Museum Complex. Visiting Hours: 9.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Every Friday and 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month are Holidays. Ph: 0452 - 2529298.

#### Kazimar Periya Pallivasal

Hazrat Kazi Syed Tajuddin who came from Oman during late 12th Century and got this land from the King Kulasekara Pandiyan and constructed the mosque. Located at one km. South East of the Madurai Railway Junction. Ph: 0452-2337904.

#### Muktheeswarar Temple

This temple is located near Teppakulam. Timing : 6.00 am to 11.00 am & 4.00 pm to 8.30 pm.

#### Vadipatti Arokia Annai Shrine

25 kms. on Madurai - Dindigul High Road at Vadimanagar Vadipatti Madurai. Ph:04543-2544999.

#### Kochadai Village Deity Temple

It is located 5 kms. from Periyar Bus Stand. Timing: 6.00 am to 12.00 pm & 4.00 pm to 9.00 pm. Ph:0452-6524201.

#### Ramakrishna Math

Madurai is a branch of the world renowned Ramakrishna math and Ramakrishna Mission with its Head Quarters at Belur and Howrah. Timing: 6.00 am to 12.00 pm & 4.00 pm to 9.00 pm. Ph:0452-6524201, 2621181.

#### Sri Aravindar Annai Trust

A meditation center located 9 kms. south of Madurai. It is dedicated to realise the ideal of Sri Aravindar and the mother, Mira Alfasa at No. 11-A, Kumaran Street, Thirunagar, Madurai. Phone : 0452 - 6544899, 2482559.

### Sri Thiyagi Vishwanathadas Memorial

Situated 16 kms. from the city. Born on 1886, a great Poet and Dramatic artiste he was quite famous among the young of those Days. Died on 31.12.1940. He chose drama as his vehicle to fight the British. His memorial is situated at 56, Viswanathadas Street, Thirumangalam. Timing: 5.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.. Ph: 0452-2680224.

### EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

#### Jallikattu (January)

Jallikattu is more of a sport than a festival and is held mostly in villages, It is a part of the Pongal celebrations courage and valor expressed by the means of taming bulls.

#### Pongal festival (January)

Pongal or Thai Pongal, a 3 days Harvest festival is celebrated in Tamil Nadu, starts on Magara Sankranti day (January 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>). Thanks giving ceremony to the Sun God and the cattle.

#### Chithirai festival (May)

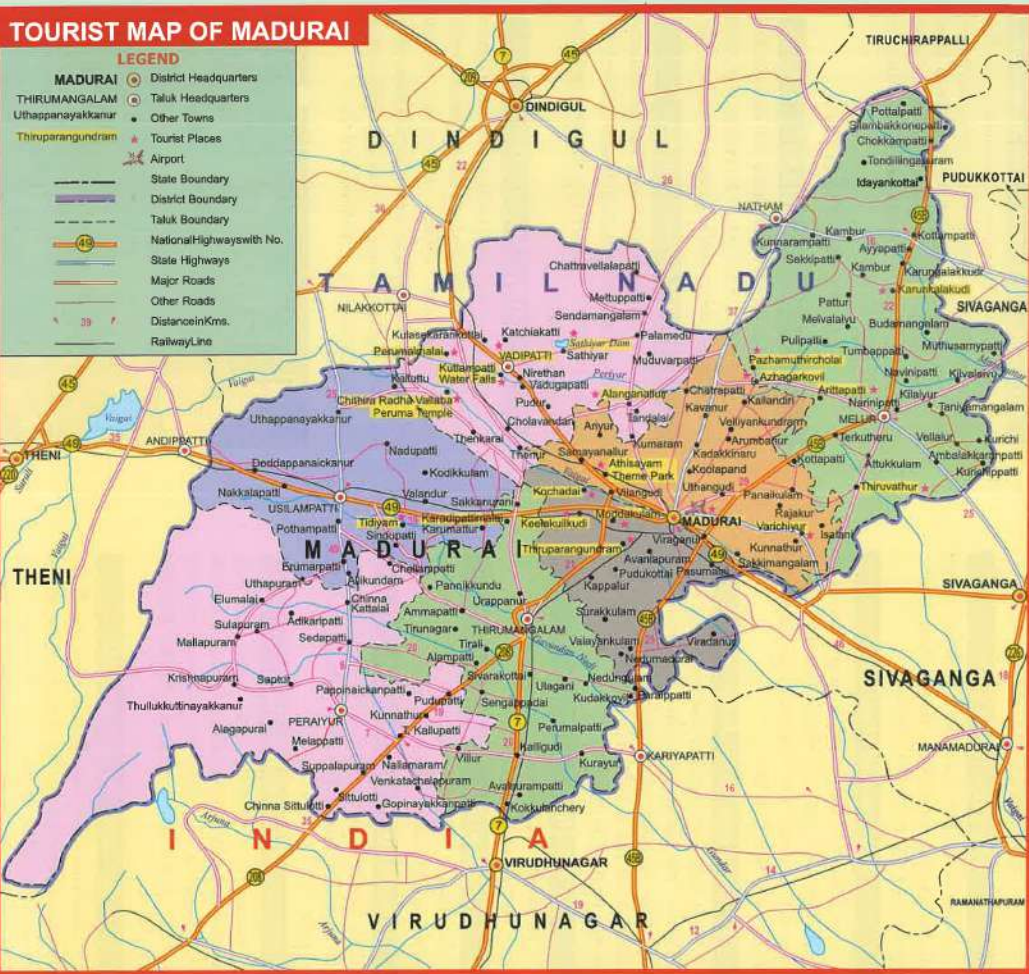
The Annual cultural extravaganza is the star attraction of Madurai. The 10-day fiesta attracts millions of people from far and wide. Goddess Meenakshi's celestial wedding with Lord Shiva and Lord Azhagar's iconic entry into River vaigai are the magnum opus of the festival, held during the Tamil month of Chithirai (April-May).



## TOURIST MAP OF MADURAI

### LEGEND

- MADURAI**
  - District Headquarters
  - Taluk Headquarters
  - Other Towns
  - ★ Tourist Places
  - ✈ Airport
- State Boundary
- District Boundary
- Taluk Boundary
- National Highways with No.
- State Highways
- Major Roads
- Other Roads
- Distance in Kms.
- Railway Line



Scale : 1cm = 5.4 kms Approx.

### Puttu thiruvizha (September)

This festival is celebrated as a part of Avanimoolam festival to commemorate the legendary Food for work scheme undertaken by Lord Siva in Madurai.

### Avanimoolam festival

It is basically celebrated to re-enact the 64 Thiruvilayadal (Divine games) of Lord Sundareswarar, in the month of Aavani (August / September).

### Float festival

The Mariamman Teppakulam tank hosts a colourful float festival every year in January / February. There are celebrations on land with dance, music, food and revelry while the deities of Meenakshi and Shiva are taken around in the beautifully illuminated float.

### World Tourism Day

World Tourism Day, celebrated every 27<sup>th</sup> September around the world, is a unique opportunity to raise awareness on tourism's actual and potential contribution to sustainable development.

### THINGS TO BUY

Pudumandapam, an age-old stone structure bang opposite the East Tower of the Meenakshi Temple, is referred to as the world's oldest mall, for it houses anything you can think under the sun! From clothes avant-garde jewellery and bags to knick-knacks, brass utensils, copper vessels, Pudumandapam is a shopper's paradise. The numerous tailors who sit inside the heritage structure stitch you a perfect fitting kurta/shirt. Sungudi Sarees, brassware, madurai malli, souvenirs, golu dolls, malls, jigarhanda, textiles & jewellery, kari dosai are unique here.

### ACCESS

- Air** : Madurai Airport is connected with Chennai, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Sri Lanka etc.
- Rail** : Madurai is a major Railway Junction connected with important cities of Tamil Nadu.
- Road** : Well connected with all important cities.