

# HISTORY OF THE CHENNAI MUSEUM

The proposal for a Museum in Madras was mooted by the Madras Literary Society in 1846 and Sir Henry Pottinger, the then Governor, obtained the sanction of the Court of Directors of the East India Company in London. In January 1851, Dr. Edward Balfour, Medical Officer of the Governor's Bodyguard was appointed as the First Officer in charge of the Government Museum. The notification in the Fort St. George Gazetteer dated 29 April 1851 contained the first announcement regarding the opening of the Madras Government Museum. The Government Museum otherwise called as the Central Museum was started in the College of Fort St. George, in the premises of the present Office of the Director of Public Instruction, on College Road. The college had been established in 1812 and made a significant contribution to the development of South Indian Languages. The Museum was started in the first floor of the college with the 1100 geological specimens of the Madras Literary Society. It steadily developed and expanded under the guidance and supervision of a succession of Directors. As the building was in a dilapidated condition, the Museum's Superintendent, Dr. Balfour advocated shifting it to another building. In December 1854, the museum was shifted to a building named the Pantheon, also known as the Public Rooms or Assembly Rooms, where the elite of the city met. The building was being utilized for banquets, balls and dramatic performances from the last decade of the 18th Century. The estate of the Pantheon was the property of Hall Plumer, civil servant and public works contractor who subsequently, in 1793, assigned the grounds to a Committee of 24, which regulated the public amusements in the city at that time. In 1821, the Committee sold the main house and central garden space to E.S. Moorat, a wealthy Armenian merchant, who in turn, sold it back to the Government in 1830, for Rs.28,000. The property was originally 43 acres in extent and stretched from Casa Major Road to the present Police Commissioner's Road, and it was flanked by the Pantheon Road and Halls Road. In December 1896, the Front Building (Anthropological Galleries) and The Museum Theatre were opened. The new extension (main entrance) was built in 1939 in order to display stone sculptures, period-wise. Between 1941 and 1946, (i.e., during the full-fledged World War II and Indian freedom struggle) a great part of the buildings and the grounds had to be handed over for an ARP depot stationed in the Museum. The galleries had to be used as storage rooms and therefore the showcases were removed. The most valuable among the collections, such as bronzes, copper plate grants, selected coins, relic caskets of Bhattiprolu, etc. were sent to places of safety. As the Amaravati sculptures were too heavy and difficult to transport, the Government ordered that they should be protected in situ in the gallery. The Government Museum took over the Victoria Technical Institute Building (constructed in 1909), named it as National Art Gallery, and opened it for the public from November 27, 1951 onwards. Museum celebrated its Centenary on November 27, 1951, which was inaugurated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. In Order to display the exquisite rich collection of bronzes, a separate building was constructed in 1963. In the same year, a new block was added to the Chemical Conservation Section to cope with the increasing work of preservation. A new building for the Birds Gallery was also opened in 1963. A separate building for Contemporary Art was opened in January 25, 1984 and a new Children's Museum building was opened in April 1988. Notable collections of this museum are the world famous Chola and other south Indian bronzes, Amaravati sculptures, Thanjavur kingdoms' armory weapons, stone inscriptions, copper plate grants, Dowleshwaram gold coins of Raja Raja I and Kulothunga I, Chengam copper coins, prehistoric Adhichanallur artifacts, Bruce Foote collection of prehistoric stone implements, Arikamedu (near Pondicherry) Roman artifacts, exquisite crystal reliquaries from Bhattiprolu stupa and the enormous whale skeleton obtained on shore near Mangalore.

## Principal Secretary

Chandra Mohan, I.A.S, serves as the Principal Secretary to the Government, holding a pivotal role in overseeing the effective functioning of key departments or ministries. With extensive administrative expertise, he ensures the smooth implementation of policies and programs, acting as a crucial link between the government and its various departments. His responsibilities include drafting, reviewing, and implementing policies aimed at public welfare while maintaining transparency and efficiency in governance. As a senior decision-maker, he plays a significant role in shaping and executing initiatives that benefit society at large. Chandra Mohan also represents the government in meetings, conferences, and public forums,

demonstrating strong leadership and commitment to administrative excellence. He motivates officials to achieve departmental goals and ensures that government initiatives are implemented efficiently, reaching the grassroots level. His dedication and integrity embody the values of public service, making him a key figure in the governance process.

## Director of Museums

Tmt. Kavitha Ramu, I.A.S, serves as the Director of Museums, bringing her vast administrative expertise to the cultural and historical domain. As the head of the museum department, she oversees the preservation, management, and promotion of museums under her jurisdiction. She plays a crucial role in curating exhibitions, enhancing visitor experiences, and ensuring that museum collections are maintained to international standards. Her leadership fosters initiatives to promote cultural heritage and increase public engagement with historical artifacts. Known for her commitment to excellence, Tmt. Kavitha Ramu ensures that museums serve as vibrant centers for education and research. She works closely with various stakeholders, including historians, curators, and the public, to uphold the relevance of museums in modern society. By promoting inclusive and innovative programs, she makes museums accessible to a wider audience. Her vision emphasizes the importance of safeguarding cultural heritage for future generations. Tmt. Kavitha Ramu's dedication to public service and cultural preservation highlights her invaluable contribution to the field of museums and heritage management.

## Museum Heads from 1999

The leadership of the museum department has seen a series of distinguished individuals contributing to its growth and success since 1999. Dr. R. Kannan, Ph.D., I.A.S., served as Commissioner from 1999 to 2004, bringing academic rigor to the role. He was succeeded by M. A. Siddique, I.A.S., who served as Director from 2004 to 2006. Dr. Kannan returned as Special Commissioner and later as Commissioner between 2006 and 2007. Dr. Sitharam Gurusurthy, I.A.S., held the position of Principal Commissioner in 2007, followed by Dr. Shanthini Kapoor, I.A.S., who served as Principal Secretary/Commissioner from 2007 to 2008. Dr. T.S. Sridhar, I.A.S., led as Principal Secretary/Commissioner from 2008 to 2011, succeeded by S.S. Jawahar, I.A.S., as Commissioner from 2011 to 2013. Dr. R. Kannan, I.A.S., returned in various capacities, including Principal Secretary and Additional Chief Secretary, during 2013–2015. Dr. D. Karthikeyan, I.A.S., served briefly as Commissioner in 2015, followed by Dr. D. Jagannathan, I.A.S., who was Director from 2015 to 2017. Selvi Kavitha Ramu, I.A.S., held the role of Director during 2017–2019, with brief stints by Dr. Pinky Jowel, I.A.S., in 2018 and Mr. T. Udhayachandran, I.A.S., from 2019 to 2020. Mr. M.S. Shanmugam, I.A.S., was Commissioner from 2020 to 2021, succeeded by Mr. S.A. Raman, I.A.S., as Director in 2021–2022, and Mr. Sandeep Nanduri, I.A.S., from 2022 to May 2023. Tmt. A. Suganthi, I.A.S., served as Commissioner from May to July 2023, followed by M. Arvind, I.A.S., from July 2023 to July 2024. Currently, Tmt. Kavitha Ramu, I.A.S., has been serving as Director since July 2024, continuing her dedication to preserving and promoting cultural heritage.

## Latest Events

The Government Museum has been actively organizing and hosting several engaging events to promote art, culture, and education:

### 1. NINGYŌ: Art and Beauty of Japanese Dolls (31-08-2024)

This exhibition highlights the exquisite craftsmanship and cultural significance of traditional Japanese dolls, offering visitors a glimpse into Japan's artistic heritage.

### 2. Madras Revisited - Participate and Win Cash Prizes (20-08-2024)

An exciting competition celebrating the history and culture of Madras, inviting participants to showcase their creativity for a chance to win cash prizes.

### 3. **Know Your Art & Archaeology (16-07-2024)**

A program designed to deepen public knowledge about art and archaeological treasures, encouraging learning and exploration of historical artifacts.

### 4. **Kalainjar 100th Function Inaugurated by Hon'ble Minister (05-09-2023)**

A grand celebration honoring the 100th function of Kalainjar, inaugurated by the Hon'ble Minister, highlighting Tamil Nadu's rich heritage and achievements.

### 5. **Minister Inspected Government Museum (23-04-2022)**

A significant visit by the Hon'ble Minister to oversee the museum's facilities and ensure the preservation of its invaluable collections.

### 6. **International Museum Day Celebration at Government Museum Chennai (18-05-2023)**

A vibrant celebration emphasizing the importance of museums in cultural exchange, education, and heritage conservation.

### 7. **Inauguration of a 700 MW PHWR Type Nuclear Power Plant Working Model (14-06-2022)**

This educational exhibit showcases the functionality of a 700 MW PHWR nuclear power plant, fostering awareness about modern scientific advancements.

These events reflect the museum's dedication to cultural enrichment, public engagement, and educational initiatives.

## Entrance Fee for Chennai Museum

The entrance fee structure for the Chennai Museum is divided into categories for Indian citizens and foreign visitors. This museum offers a rich cultural and historical experience, making it a popular destination for both tourists and locals.

### Indian Citizens

The ticket price for adult Indian visitors is set at Rs 50. This nominal fee provides access to a vast collection of artifacts and exhibits that showcase India's heritage. Children, defined as those under a specific age limit, enjoy a reduced entry fee of Rs 25, encouraging family visits and educational outings. Bonafide students, typically school students with a valid identification card, are charged Rs 20, making the museum an affordable educational experience.

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## Foreign Visitors

Adults from overseas are required to pay Rs 250 for admission. This pricing reflects the international appeal and maintenance costs of the museum. Foreign children are charged Rs 125, enabling families visiting from other countries to explore Indian culture. Bonafide students from abroad can enter for Rs 75, provided they have appropriate identification.

## Photography Charges

Museums often allow photography for personal memories or educational documentation. However, there are specific charges associated with using cameras inside the premises, reflecting the added responsibility and impact of photography on the exhibits.

### Chennai Museum

The fee for using a still camera is Rs 250. Visitors are allowed to capture photographs of their favorite exhibits for personal use, although flash photography might be restricted to protect sensitive artifacts. The charge for a video camera is Rs 700, a higher fee due to the potential for extended recording sessions and the additional space required.

## Government Museum Chennai Timings

The Government Museum Chennai, located in Egmore, is one of the most prominent cultural and historical landmarks in Tamil Nadu. Known for its extensive collections of artifacts, sculptures, and exhibits that reflect India's rich heritage, the museum attracts both local and international visitors. Understanding the operational hours and working days helps visitors plan their trips effectively.

### Opening Hours

The museum opens its doors to the public at 9:00 a.m. every morning and remains operational until 4:30 p.m. in the evening. These timings allow visitors to spend ample time exploring the various galleries and exhibits. It is recommended to arrive early to make the most of your visit, as the museum houses numerous sections that require time to fully appreciate.

## Working Days

The museum is open on the following days: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday. This six-day schedule ensures that the museum is accessible to visitors throughout most of the week, including weekends, making it a popular choice for family outings and educational tours.

## closed Days

The museum remains closed on Fridays for maintenance and administrative purposes. This regular closure allows the staff to clean and preserve the artifacts, ensuring that they are well-maintained for public viewing.

Additionally, the museum is also closed on festival days. The specific festival holidays may vary each year, depending on the local and national calendar, and it is advisable to check the official announcements or website for exact closure dates during major celebrations. By adhering to these timings and being aware of the working and non-working days, visitors can plan a seamless and enriching experience at the Government Museum Chennai.

## Book Tickets

Planning to visit the Government Museum Chennai? Booking your tickets in advance can help you avoid long queues and enjoy a hassle-free experience. Whether you're a history enthusiast, a student, or a family looking for an educational outing, securing your entry online makes your trip more convenient. The museum offers affordable ticket prices for both Indian and foreign visitors, along with special rates for students. Additionally, if you are interested in photography, you can pay for camera permits along with your entry fee. To book your tickets quickly and securely, use this link :

## Location

The museum is located in what is known as the Pantheon complex, or "public assembly rooms." It is located in the Government Museum Complex on Pantheon Road in Egmore. The road on which the museum is located too takes its name from the complex. The Government Museum Complex also houses the Connemara Public Library and the National Art Gallery.

## The museum complex

The museum complex consisting of six buildings and 46 galleries covers an area of around 16.25 acres (66,000 m<sup>2</sup>) of land. The objects displayed in the museum cover a variety of artifacts and objects covering diverse fields including archeology, numismatics, zoology, natural history, sculptures, palm-leaf manuscripts, and Amravati paintings. Window inside Government Museum, Chennai. Inside of Chennai Museum. Located close to the main museum entrance gates on Pantheon Road, the museum theatre is a rare specimen of the Italianate style of architecture, inspired by Classical architecture and developed in 1802 at Britain by John Nash. However, the theatre was built by the British in the late 19th century when this style was no longer popular in England. The structure has a high plinth and is accessed through a tall flight of stairs. It is primarily a semicircular structure with a rectangular wing at the rear. The latter wing now houses some of the galleries of the museum. The main hall is accessed through a verandah with a row of columns linked by semicircular arches. The walls and columns are embellished with floral and geometric designs. The huge main hall was initially designed for staging theatrical performances. It has around 600 seats and a commodious stage and the actors' dressing rooms adjoin this stage. During the British era, the theatre was mainly used for staging English plays preferred by the British elite of the city. Now, the museum has been using the theatre for its own cultural and academic programs such as art workshops, lectures and conferences. It also rents the hall for various cultural performances, mainly dramas. The hall has witnessed several plays including those of Shakespeare. Since August 2004, the museum is also a designated "Manuscript Conservation Centre" (MCC) under the National Mission for Manuscripts established in 2003. The museum has taken preventive care of about 19,007 manuscripts and given curative conservation treatment to about 7,402 manuscripts.[7] The museum for children in the complex houses several static exhibits such as galleries of dolls adorned with costumes of various nations and civilisations and also exhibits pertaining to science, transportation, and technology.

## Visitors

As of 2013, the Children's Museum in Chennai attracts an impressive 1,000 visitors daily, making it a popular destination for families and educational groups. The museum offers a variety of exhibits and activities that captivate the interest of children and adults alike. On weekends, the number of visitors significantly increases, as families take advantage of their leisure time to explore the museum together. Special events and interactive sessions further enhance the weekend experience, drawing in larger crowds. The museum's engaging atmosphere and focus on learning make it a favorite spot for locals and tourists. Its consistent popularity reflects the museum's commitment to providing an enriching and enjoyable experience for all ages.

## Future Improvements

An air-conditioned 3D theatre, the first of its kind facility in a state museum, is under construction at the children's museum in the museum complex at a cost of ₹ 4 million. Equipments are to be provided by the National Council of Science Museums, Kolkata. The theatre will screen science-oriented films. It screen a 20-minute-long film and will play five shows a day. The project is expected to be completed by April 2013. There are also plans to upgrade the 3D theatre to a 5D one.[8] In 2018, the Department of Museums started evaluating bids for renovating the museum as part of an Asian Development Bank–funded scheme.

## Ways To Reach

Reaching the Government Museum in Chennai is convenient due to its central location in Egmore. Here's a detailed guide to accessing the museum via air, train, and road:

- **By Air**

The nearest airport is Chennai International Airport, which is well-connected to major cities across India and abroad. From the airport, visitors can hire a taxi, book a cab, or use public transport to reach the museum, located approximately 17 km away. The journey takes around 40 minutes, depending on traffic conditions.

- **By Train**

Chennai Egmore Railway Station is the closest train station, situated just 2 km from the museum. This station is a major hub for trains connecting various parts of Tamil Nadu and neighboring states. Visitors can take an autorickshaw, taxi, or even walk to the museum, making it a convenient option for rail travelers.

- **By Road**

The museum is located on Chennai Pantheon Road in Egmore, a well-known area in the city. It is easily accessible by bus services operated by the Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC), as well as by private vehicles. Visitors can also use app-based cab services for a hassle-free journey. Ample parking facilities are available near the museum for those traveling by private vehicles.

With excellent connectivity via air, rail, and road, the Government Museum Chennai ensures a smooth and pleasant travel experience for visitors from all over.

## e-ticket after booking



tickets are sent as e-tickets directly to your registered email address upon successful booking. Please ensure that you provide a valid email during the booking process. You can either print the e-ticket or show the digital copy at the entrance. Physical tickets are not issued for online bookings. If you don't receive your e-ticket, contact support immediately.

## Parking Facilities

parking facilities are available near the museum for the convenience of visitors. The parking area is located close to the entrance, making it easy for guests to access the venue. Both two-wheelers and four-wheelers can be accommodated. Visitors are advised to arrive early to secure a parking spot, especially during weekends or busy hours. Parking fees, if applicable, must be paid directly at the parking lot.

## wheelchair-accessible facilities

the museum does not currently have wheelchair-accessible facilities. Visitors requiring assistance may need to make alternative arrangements. The museum staff, however, are available to provide basic help when needed. We recommend checking ahead for any updates regarding accessibility improvements. Your feedback regarding accessibility is always appreciated.

## Payment Methods

the museum offers multiple payment methods for your convenience. You can pay using UPI, net banking, or credit/debit cards. Popular mobile wallets are also accepted for seamless transactions. Please ensure you have a stable internet connection while making the payment. If you face any issues, contact our support team for assistance.

## Nearest Tourist Places

Chennai is surrounded by several captivating tourist spots worth exploring. Marina Beach, the longest beach in India, is perfect for a relaxing evening stroll and sunrise views. Fort St. George is a historical treasure showcasing British-era artifacts. Kapaleeshwarar Temple, a stunning Dravidian-style temple, offers a spiritual and architectural marvel. Santhome Basilica is a serene white cathedral with rich historical significance. Valluvar Kottam is another must-visit, honoring the Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar with its intricate design and cultural importance.

## Hotels with Ratings

For accommodation, Chennai offers a range of excellent hotels. The Leela Palace and ITC Grand Chola, both 5-star establishments, are renowned for their luxury and exceptional service. Taj Club House provides a blend of comfort and sophistication with a 4.5-star rating. The Residency is a budget-friendly 4-star option offering great amenities. Hotel Savera, another 4-star choice, is centrally located and known for its outstanding hospitality and dining options.

- The Leela Palace (5-star): Known for its luxurious ambiance and world-class service.
- ITC Grand Chola (5-star): A heritage hotel with exceptional dining options.
- Taj Club House (4.5-star): A blend of comfort and sophistication in the heart of the city.
- The Residency (4-star): Affordable luxury with spacious rooms and excellent hospitality.
- Hotel Savera (4-star): A centrally located hotel offering great amenities and dining.

# Beaches

Chennai's coastline is dotted with beautiful beaches. Marina Beach is a must-visit for its iconic length and bustling local charm. Elliot's Beach provides a quieter atmosphere, ideal for families and couples. Covelong Beach is a hub for water sports and beachside resorts. Thiruvanmiyur Beach offers a peaceful retreat, perfect for those looking to avoid crowds. Palavakkam Beach is a lesser-known gem, offering stunning views and tranquility.

- Marina Beach: The longest beach in India, ideal for sunrise views and local snacks.
- Elliot's Beach: A quiet and serene spot for families and couples.
- Covelong Beach: Known for water sports and beachside resorts.
- Thiruvanmiyur Beach: A less crowded beach for peaceful walks
- Palavakkam Beach: A hidden gem with beautiful views and fewer visitors.

# Malls in Chennai

For shopping and entertainment, Chennai boasts some impressive malls. Express Avenue Mall is a favorite, featuring international brands and a cinema. Phoenix MarketCity is known for its high-end stores and vibrant food court. VR Chennai offers a mix of retail outlets and cultural experiences. Forum Vijaya Mall stands out for its excellent gaming zone and diverse shopping options. Chennai Citi Centre is a compact yet delightful mall for quick shopping and dining experiences.

- Express Avenue Mall: A popular shopping destination with international brands and a cinema.
- Phoenix MarketCity: Known for its high-end stores, food court, and entertainment options.
- VR Chennai: Offers a mix of shopping, dining, and unique cultural experiences.