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Madurai

An ancient city dating back to 550 AD, Madurai, in Tamil Nadu is known for housing age old temples in its heart. Not only does it guarantee serenity and peace for Hindu devotees, it also promises historical exploration and scholastic knowledge to seekers. It is an ideal family destination replete with greenery. Head to Madurai to find peace, knowledge and comfort.



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Madurai is second largest city in terms of population in the state of Tamil Nadu. A number of sobriquets such as Athens of the East, City that Never Sleeps and the Temple City are given to this city. Madurai has been a prominent human settlement for two thousand years. Mostly visited for the Meenakshi Temple of Goddess Paravati and Lord Shiva, which is a brilliant example of Dravidian Architecture, the cityscape has a multiplicity of other temples like the Alagar Temple, the Koodal Alagar Temple and the Thiruparankundram. It also has the Thirumalai Nayak Palace, which was constructed way back in the 17th century. Though largely in ruins now, this place makes for a great site of historical exploration for enthusiasts. The Gandhi Museum is located here, boasting of a large number of texts about the freedom struggle and drawing scholars to Madurai every year. Pilgrims and tourists still come looking for the place where Shiva performed his 64

Thiruvilaiyadals (divine games, often mischievous, that the lord played on gods and mortals) and where Meenakshi chose to marry him in the form of Sundareshwarar. Stand in the shadow of the 160- foot-tall gopuram, lose yourself in the stonework neither muted by age nor defiled by grease, see the customs that have lived on across centuries and you will begin to find that place. Mariamman Teppakulam is a square tank spread across an area of 16 acres. Every year a colourful float festival is organised here in the month of Ja

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**When To
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Jan

Pleasant weather. Carry Light woollen.

What To SEE



5 Sights

<http://www.ixigo.com/places-to-visit-see-in-madurai-ip-10503>

1 ISKCON Madurai, Sri Sri Radha Mathurapati Temple



12 / 37, Maninagaram Main Road,
Madurai, Tamil Nadu 625001, India

Another one from the ISKCON temple series, visit this serene temple for an experience of Krishna devotion. Lose yourself in the spiritual kirtans and lectures here, or just sit back and enjoy the aura of purity and quiet divinity.

Famous for its temples, your trip to Madurai will be somewhat incomplete without a visit to this one.

2 Thiruparankundram



According to myths and local folklore, Murugan came to this hill after fighting the 6 battles against 'evil' rakshasas (demons), to finally save the heavens from the rakshasa, Soorapadman. It is here that he married Goddess Deivayanai, the daughter of Lord Indra, who was given to him as a reward for his victory of evil forces. It is this strand of the myth that makes the temple a popular and sacred marriage location, especially during the festival of marriages, Pankuni Uttiram, held towards the latter half of March every year.



8 kms From South of Madurai Junction, Madurai, Tamil Nadu 625001, India

The devotion to Lord Murugan (or Subramanya), the son of Lord Shiva, is central to the cultural fabric of Tamil Nadu. He represents war and patriotism and is often known as the patron god of the region. The Murugan Temple at Thiruparankundram is an example of this cult of devotion, one of the 6 most important pilgrimage sites for Hindu devotees of the deity. Situated atop a scenic hill in Thiruparankundram, this temple and the surrounding region is rich with its own share of myth and legends.



Periyakulam, Theni, Madurai, Tamil Nadu 625001, India

The complex is rock-cut and is built along the caves here, lending the place its historic aura. It is believed that during the reign of the Pandiyas and the Nayaks, between 16th and 18th centuries, the temple got its beautiful gopurams (or gateways) and pillars carved intricately with the lotus-pattern. One can also find inscriptions on the walls here that showcase the history of the temple. The presiding deities here are Lord Murugan and Goddess Deivayananai, while other idols dedicated to Lord Shiva, Ganesha, Vishnu and Goddess Durga are also housed here.

If this aspect of history wasn't sufficient, there also exists a dargah dedicated to Sikander, or Alexander The Great, who was believed to be a friend of King Murugan.

3 Vaigai Dam



Built over the Vagai River at Andipatti, this massive dam is a sight to behold. It is the central source of drinking and irrigation water for Madurai and hence of great strategic and political importance. Over the years, it has become a popular picnic spot, especially for group excursions.

The area surrounding the dam is rich in vegetation, with lush greenery spread across its sprawling acres. Though the area lacks any official amenities for a proper picnic, you can always plan a laid back afternoon here.

4 Sri Meenakshi Temple



East Chitrai Street, Madurai, Tamil Nadu 625001, India

One of the most spectacular temple complexes of India; Sri Meenakshi Temple is a wonderful mix of legends, myths, and some brilliant architectural techniques.

The original temple is believed to have been built by Kulasekara Pandya, who received a boon from Goddess Parvati in the form of his daughter, Meenakshi. The legend and beauty of the temple lend Madurai most of its current character, including the planning of the lotus-shaped city which has this temple as its centre. Meenakshi literally translates to fish-eyed, a symbol of beauty and godly grace. The credit for the current shape and form of the temple goes to the Nayakas, who ruled the region between the 16th and 18th centuries and brought the architecture of the temple to its present grandeur. Be it the fascination for history or for the pure sense of devotion, you're sure to experience a heavenly feeling at this temple.

Give yourself at least 3 hrs to appreciate the complex. On any given day, you'll be one among 20,000 visitors here. Dedicated to Meenakshi, an incarnation of Parvati, and her husband Sundareswar (an avatar of Shiva), the Sri Meenakshi Temple has Meenakshi as its central deity instead of Shiva, a marked distinction from the usual norm. Located on the southern banks of River Vaigai, the temple houses a black-stone idol of Meenakshi Amman in its main shrine and a swayambhu (self-appearing) lingam in the shrine close to it, marking Lord Shiva's

presence. Meenakshi Amman's idol is depicted here with a parrot in her right hand, usually associated with the presence of the Vaishnava Azhwar saint, Andal. There is also a hall named Kilikoondu Mandapam

(a corridor of the parrots), which was previously used to train parrots to recite and chant Goddess Meenakshi's name.

Sri Meenakshi Temple is also one of the few temples which has 4 gateways facing 4 different directions. The complex has several smaller quadrangular complexes and has 14 gopurams or towers, out of which the tallest is about 52 m high. The eye-catching vimanas over the shrine of the two central deities are another sight to behold, each with their own set of intricate carvings depicting humans, animals, demons and gods, both being plated in gold. A visit to this temple also calls for a visit to the Hall of 1000 pillars or Aayiram Kaal Mandapam (which in reality has 985 pillars).

Some of these pillars are also called Musical Pillars, which when struck, produce notes of Carnatic music. This was built in 1569 by Ariyanatha Mudaliar, with perfect symmetry and artistic vision. Each pillar here is intricately carved with figures of Shiva, Karthekeya, Ganesha and Rati (wife of Kama). If your heart still desires more, you can visit the in-house museum here to delve deeper into its 1200-year-old history.

5 Alagar Kovil



 Melur Taluk, Madurai, Tamil Nadu
625001, India

Set amidst lush greenery and absolute serenity, this temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu in his avatar as Goddess Meenakshi's brother, Alagar (or Sundararajan). Legend has it that Lord Alagar was unable to attend his sister's wedding to Sundareshwar (an avatar of Lord Shiva) and had turned back from the banks of river Vaigai. This event is re-enacted every year through a procession of the idol of Alagar from this temple till the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai, during the Chitra Festival that celebrates her marriage.

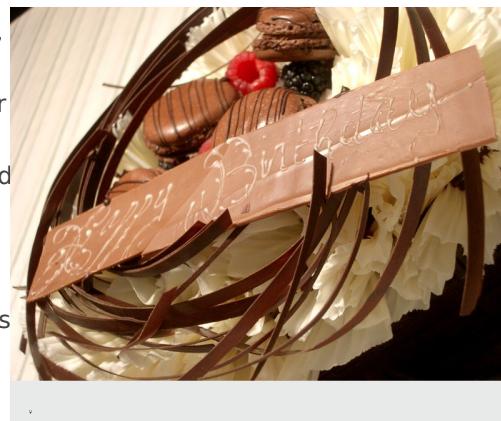
Where To Eat



5 Places

<http://www.ixigo.com/foods-in-of-madurai-lp-1050361>

1 British Bakery



The temple complex is surrounded by the ruins of a historic fort, lending it its old world charm and a historic aura. It is believed that the temple was beautified by the Pandyan rulers during the 13th century, especially the sanctum sanctorum and the main vimana, that were plated in gold. After this, the Nayaka kingdom during the time between the 16th and 18th centuries gained much revenue for renovating and further beautifying the temple. The central idol of Lord Alagar is a fine example of ancient craftsmanship, all in pure gold. Other deities here include Andal and Lord Alagar's wife, Kalyana Sundaravalli.

An interesting legend has it that at the shrine of Karuppannaswamy (the God of Kallars) and the finely carved 18 steps around his shrine prohibit any visitor from speaking anything but the truth. The temple contains inscriptions from various dynasties, including those that point towards the presence of Jain rulers and Ashoka's reign. A beautiful place that blends both religion and history perfectly, this is a must-visit on your trip to Madurai.

 31 a 1/2 West Veli Street, Madurai,
Tamil Nadu, 625001, India

 +91-452-4374477

A popular bakery in Madurai, British Bakery offers a lovely array of breads, baked items and confectionery. If you're in the mood for a snack, the bakery has a small seating area and offers a wide range of sandwiches, pizzas and other snacks.

2 Bamboo Garden



 No 13/7, Opp To Eco Park, Abdul Gafoorkhan Street Azhagar Koil Road, Tallakulam, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, 625002, India

 Rs. 350

 +91-452-4361617|+91-98940-51001

Travel anywhere in the world and you'll find Chinese food to be quite a favourite. Madurai is no exception in this aspect and Bamboo Garden is a fine example of this. Head here for a relaxed, comfortable meal with some authentic Chinese preparations, unlike the fast-food varieties that are otherwise available.

3 Heaven's Park Fried chicken



 Surveyor Colony No.35-36 120 Feet Road, K Pudur Madurai, Tamil Nadu 625007, India

 +91-452-4373144

Heaven's Park Fried Chicken is a great fast food option for those who love chicken. Their perfectly fried, hot and crispy chicken is a delight to eat. For the health conscious

people they even have fat free burgers and bustling, especially during dinner time, but fish cooked in zero oil. Apart from the fried chicken, their chicken wings and chicken wrap are also worth a try.

4 Sree Sabarees



Peruma Maistry Streets, Town hall road, Srm lodge near Town Hall Road, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, 625001, India

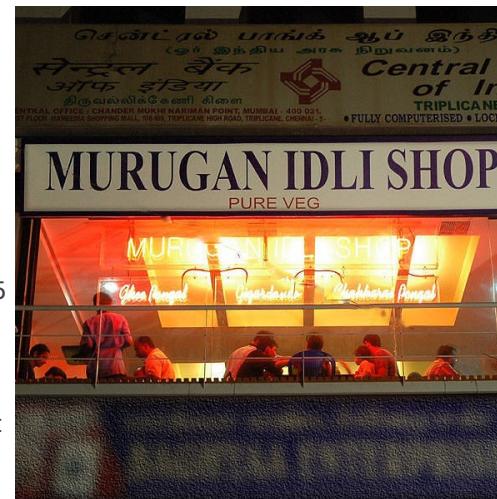
+91-452-2349037 | +91-98421-12875

One of the busiest and most popular restaurants in Madurai, this one will delight you with its delicious and authentic South Indian preparations. One of the oldest restaurants in town, it sees a regular flow of visitors in both locals and tourists.

If you're looking for a slice of the local lifestyle of Madurai, head here and you'll find a glimpse of it. The place remains

the quick service ensures that you don't have to wait too long. Their variety of dishesits chutneys. Served with idlis, the six you try each one of their mouth-watering dishes. The restaurant also serves North Indian cuisines, despite being more popular for its South Indian dishes. Not too far from the Meenakshi Amman Temple, this restaurant is also ideal for those breaks between your temple exploration.

5 Murugan Idli Shop



196, Westmasi street, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, 625001, India

Rs. 75

+91-452-2341379

Murugan Idli Shop is extremely popular amongst locals and tourists alike. Serving

the restaurant is highly recommended for different types of chutneys has earned the restaurant its fair share of followers.

The perfect place to head to for a hearty meal. Try the lemon rice and different types of dosas and you won't be disappointed.

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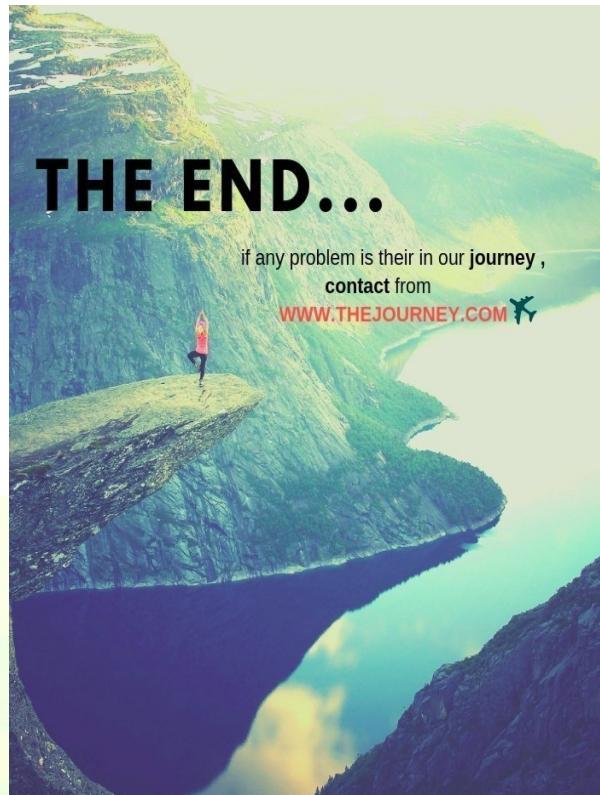
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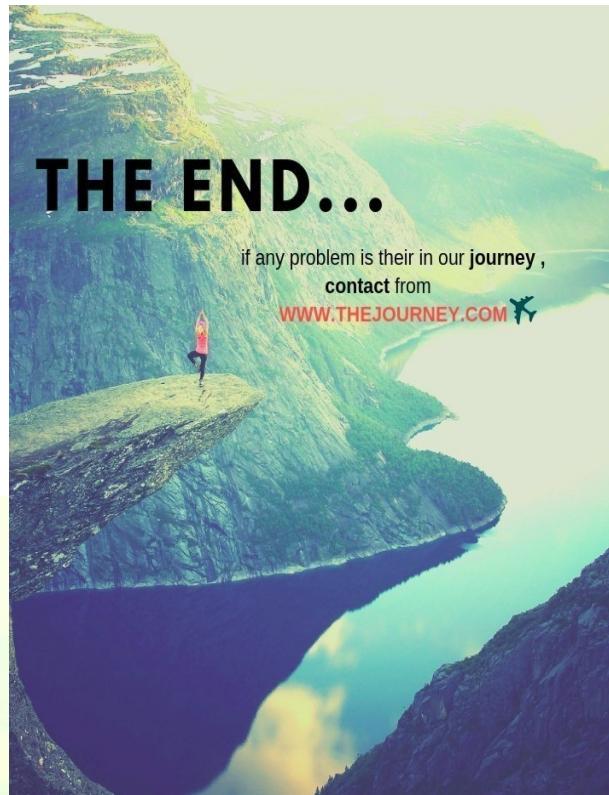
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