

MADURAI



Issued by :

**The Public Relations Officer,
SOUTHERN RAILWAY, Madras.**

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MADURAI

I GENERAL

- a) Area : 8.5 square miles.
- b) Population : About 4,00,000.
Besides this, being a pilgrim centre, there is always a floating population.
- c) Altitude : 330 feet above sea level.
- d) Climate : Summer : Max. 98.8°F. Min. 78.0° F. April, May and June.
Winter : Max. 84.7°F. Min. 68.4°F. November, December and January.
Rain : Southwest monsoon in August, September.
Season : Throughout the year except during the hot summer months.
- e) Short Historical account :—

Sometimes referred to as the Athens of South India, Madurai is one of the most ancient towns of India and is the religious capital of South India. It was once the capital of the Pandyan Kings from the 12th to 14th centuries. During this time it carried on an extensive trade with Greece and Rome. Later it grew into an important religious and cultural centre where gathered the Great Tamil men of letters who constituted the "Tamil Sangham".

Later in the 17th century, the Nayak Kings, who were the descendants of the Vijayanagar Kings came into power and under their rule Madurai became renowned. The Nayak Kings contributed much towards the architectural development of the town. The word Madurai means "Sweetness" and is indicative of its culture and peace.

f) Local Customs and Festivals :

1. The Chitrai Festival in April-May celebrates the marriage of Meenakshi "the fish eyed Goddess" and Lord Sundareswarar. According to the legend, Meenakshi was the daughter of a Pandya King who ruled Madurai and in the course of time, Meenakshi was also crowned as Queen of Madurai. The coronation of Meenakshi is celebrated during this festival and later her marriage to Sundareswarar. The procession of the deities in the Temple Car is an impressive sight.

2. The Avani Moolam Festival occurs in August—September when the coronation of Lord Sundareswarar takes place. An interesting event in this festival is the ninth day when Lord Sundareswarar is dressed as an ordinary labourer and taken to the banks of the river Vaigai. The legend behind this is that the Lord Sundareswarar once appeared as a labourer to help an old woman who sold rice - cakes for a living.

3. The floating festival takes place in January—February and is celebrated in the Vandiyur Teppakulam-about three miles from the town. A specially constructed raft decorated with flowers and lights carries the deities

round the tank. Temple music and fireworks are also one of the highlights of this festival. This festival was originated by Tirumal Nayak after he built the Teppakulam, and is fixed for the anniversary of his birthday.

II PLACES WORTH VISITING

a) Places of Tourist Interest :

1. **The Meenakshi Temple** - (Distance - $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the railway station).

Temple open from 5 a.m. to 12 Noon

„ „ „ 4 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Temple is closed from 12 Noon to 4 p.m. and can only be visited by a special sanction during these hours. The beating of the drums takes place at 5 p.m. Friday is the special day when more people visit this temple.

One of the most impressive temples of South India, the temple as it stands now was reconstructed by the Pandyan and Nayak Kings mostly in the 16th and 17th centuries A. D. Major renovations were made in Tirumal Nayak's time.

There are four gopurams or towers on the four sides of the temple which serve as entrances. These are the most impressive features of the temple scheme. (Some of the towers are over 150 feet to 200 feet). These are lavishly carved with groups of figures portraying legends from Hindu mythology.

There are two shrines inside the temple - one dedicated to Sri Meenakshi and the other to her consort Lord Sundareswarar. This twin

temple structure is typical of the Madurai style of architecture.

The Meenakshi Temple is best seen from the pillared portico that runs on the four sides of the Golden Lily Tank. The walls of these porticos are decorated with paintings of Hindu legends.

The Hall of Thousand Pillars was built in the 16th century by one of the Nayaks. These pillars are elaborately carved and many of them display the "rearing dragon," which is very impressive.

The Musical Pillars are also an interesting feature. There are several of them and when tapped lightly with a stone, they produce one octave in the musical scale.

The New Mantapam also known as Vasanta Mantapam was built by Tirumal Nayak and was probably used as a reception hall for the deities during festivals. The rows of impressive pillars here support life size figures of the Nayaks of Madurai.

2. The Palace of Tirumal Nayak - (1623-1654). (Distance 2 miles from railway station and three miles from the Meenakshi Temple).

The palace is a huge structure of mediaeval Hindu architecture with saracenic influence. The most striking features here are the scalloped arches supported by granite pillars 40 feet high with carved backings. "The Swarga Vilasam" (Celestial Pavilion) where formerly stood the thrones of kings is an arcaded Octogan, crowned by a huge dome. This dome is constructed wholly of brick and

mortar without a single rafter or girder to support it.

3. **Vandiyur Mariamman Teppakulam** — (1623-1654). (Distance 3 miles from railway station and $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Meenakshi Temple).

This is a 1000 feet square tank, enclosed by a granite parapet on the four sides and has a small temple in the centre. One can cross over in the boat to the temple inside the tank. The fare is 2 annas per person. On the four sides are the Nirazhi Mandapams. During January—February the “Floating Festival” is celebrated here on a grand scale, with temple music and fireworks.

EXCURSIONS

1. **Alagar Koil** (12 miles from Madurai) is a well known Vaishnavite shrine. Local buses are available. Trip by taxi costs Rs. 25/-. The temple has a beautiful location at the foot of the Alagar Hills. The beauty of the temple lies in the exquisite sculptures in the hall facing the sanctum sanctorum.

2. **Tiruparankundram** (4 miles south of Madurai) has a cave temple dedicated to Lord Subramanya. Return trip per taxi costs Rs. 10/-.

3. **Gandhigram** (35 miles) Community Project.

4. **Periyar Game Sanctuary** (about 75 miles via Kumbum and Kumili by bus).

5. **Kodaikanal** (100 miles by road)
A popular hill station.

III COMMUNICATION & TRANSPORT

A) External

(a) By Rail

i) From Madras. 305 miles (via Chord Line)

Trivandrum Express.	Tuticorin Express.	Tirunelveli Express.
Dep. Madras Egmore		
20-30	21-50	19-25
Arr. Madurai		
07-46	10-48	07-05

About 11 hours overnights journey.

Fare :

Air Conditioned Coach	Rs.	54	0	0
I class	...	Rs.	27	0 0
II class	...	Rs.	17	1 0
III class	...	Rs.	9	12 0

(ii) From Tiruchirapalli (Trichy) 96 miles About 5½ hours Journey

Tuti- corin Exp.	Trivan- drum Pass.	Virudhu- nagar Pass.	Madurai Pass.
Dep. Trichy Jn.			
6-30	10-55	15-25	17-38
Arr. Madurai			
10-48	16-28	22-20	23-30

Fare :		Rs.	A.	P.
Air Conditioned Coach		Nil		
I class		9	0	0
II class (Express or Mail)		5	8	0
II class (Ordinary)		4	12	0
III class (Express or Mail)		3	2	0
III class (Ordinary)		2	10	0

(b) By Road :—

(i) Madras - Madurai

Total distance - 300 miles.

Route - via Tindivanam, Tiruchirapalli, Dindigul and Kodaikanal Road.

Condition of the road :—

104-4 - the South Pennar river causeway is impassable at intervals during the North-east monsoon.

223-0 - causeway. Passable except in heavy rains.

225-0 - causeway. Passable except in heavy rains.

Condition of the road is good, it being the South Trunk Road.

(ii) Tiruchirapalli - Madurai

Total distance :—100 miles.

Route :—Via Manaparai, Dindigul and Kodaikanal Road.

Condition of the road :— Milestone 223-0 - causeway - passable except during heavy rains.

225-0 — causeway - Passable except during heavy rains.

Condition of road is good, it being the South Trunk Road.

B) Internal

i) Taxis.

In all about 40 taxis are available out of which approximately 15 are parked at the taxi stand in front of the railway station.

Charges - Rs. 0-12-0 per mile and Rs. 1-8-0 waiting charges per hour within municipal limits and also outside city limits. The waiting charges for a taxi outside municipal limits is subject to a maximum of Rs. 12-8-0. On Ghat roads the charges are Rs. 0-14-0 per mile. Taxis can also be hired on an hourly basis. The rates are as follows :—Rs. 7-8-0 per hour within municipal limits. Beyond municipal limits Rs. 1-4-0 per mile. Return trip to the airport is Rs. 12-8-0.

Charges for a three hour excursion of the Meenakshi Temple, Tirumal Nayak Palace and Vandiyur Teppakulam by taxi is Rs. 22-8-0.

ii) **Bus Service** :—There is a local bus service which connects all important places in the city. For town buses the charges are one anna for the first stage and half an anna for every subsequent stage of about a mile.

iii) **Auto-rickshaws** :— (Charges $3\frac{1}{2}$ annas per mile). Waiting charge is one anna for every five minutes. Cycle rickshaws and horse-carriages available.

Guide Services :—Guides are recognised by (1) municipality (9 guides), (2) Temple authorities (30 guides) and (3) Court (8 guides). 3 English speaking guides are available with Mr. V. R. S. Mani, Proprietor of South India Travel Agency. Mr. Mani himself acts as a guide to special parties.

Rates :—Rs. 10/- for half day and Rs. 30/- for full day (when Mr. Mani accompanies the party). For other guides the rates are Rs. 5/-

for half day and Rs. 15/- full day, irrespective of the number of persons.

Messrs Pillai have 7 guides out of which 4 are generally at the railway station. Guide fees per day or part thereof are Rs. 7-8-0.

IV ACCOMMODATION.

1. First Class Accommodation.

(i) Circuit House, Madurai.

Number of rooms - 4. (with attached bathrooms having modern sanitation.)

Rent : Single - Rs. 5/- per day.

Rs. 2/8/- for every additional five persons.

Rs. 3/12/- for Government Servants.

Board: Khansama can prepare western style food.

Rates are—Non-Vegetarian meal—Rs. 3/-

Vegetarian meal—Rs. 1/8/-

For reservation apply to Collector, Madurai.

(ii) English Club or Madurai Club : (only meant for foreigners).

Situated opposite the Circuit House.

Name of the Secretary : Mr. E. Cooper.

Telephone: Tallakulam Exchange No. 3117.

Number of } 4 rooms with
rooms : } attached bathrooms.

1 lounge

1 ball room

1 billiard room

1 dining room

1 tennis court.

Rent : Rs. 10—0—0 for lodging only.

Rs. 10—0—0 for boarding.

Rs. 20—0—0 for boarding and lodging plus Rs. 1—8—0 subscription per day for non-member. If occupied by member no subscription for a period of 5 days after which the usual subscription is to be paid. On the recommendation of the Collector, accommodation may be made available to Indian Tourists.

2. Second Class Accommodation

(i) Railway Retiring Rooms :

Number of	}	Attached bathrooms with modern sanitation.
rooms Single 8		
Double 3		

Rent : Rs. 4—0—0 per head for 24 hours.

Harrison's western style restaurant in the station premises.

Mattresses and linen provided.

(ii) Municipal Rest House :

(2 furlongs from the railway station).

Location : Behind railway station.

Number of rooms : 8 single rooms.

Rent : Rs. 1—1—0 per person and Re. 1. for additional person. Families Rs. 2—2—0. As. 0—8—0 for reservation. Rent payable in advance along with the reservation fee.

Board: Khansama not available, but on request, meals can be prepared.

Linen supplied. Western style sanitary fittings.

For reservation apply to the Municipal Commissioner, Madurai.

(iii) **Meenakshi Nilayam** (another Municipal Rest House.)

About $1\frac{1}{2}$ furlongs from the railway station and just opposite the bus terminus.

14 rooms with attached bathrooms (Indian style).

Rent Rs. 2. per room.

Mattress, bedding and linen supplied.

No khansama.

Meals can be ordered from the nearby restaurants.

3. Third Class Accommodation.

(i) The College House

Address: No. 2, Town Hall Road, Madurai.

Telephone No. 436.

Number of rooms: Single 18-Rs. 3.

Double rooms 2 - Rs. 6.
(with fans)

Rates are for 24 hours from the time of arrival.

Meals including curd - As 10.

Monthly ticket for 30 tickets - Rs. 16 payable in advance.

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(ii) Sri Ambal Cafe :

Address: 73 to 76 Town Hall Road,
Madurai.

Telephone No. 697.

No. of rooms } Single 13 (with fan) Rs. 3
and Rent : } Double 4 (with fan) Rs. 5

Single Room (without fan)-Rs. 1-8-0
4 rooms

Full meal - Rs. 0-8-0

Extra curd - 0-2-0

60 Tickets book - Rs. 25-0-0

30 Tickets book - Rs. 13-0-0

(iii) Udupi Boarding Lodge

Address: 159, West Masi Street, Madurai.

Telephone No. 137

Single bed rooms 7—Rs. 2-0-0

do 12—Rs. 2-8-0

do 6—Rs. 3-0-0

do 3—Rs. 3-8-0

do 2—Rs. 5-0-0

Double bed rooms 1—Rs. 5 0 0

do 1—Rs. 6 0 0

do 7—Rs. 7 0 0

do 2—Rs. 9 0 0

do 1—Rs. 10 0 0

do 2—Rs. 12 0 0

Meals rate: Single meal with curd-Re. 1/-
Full meals.

Boarding and Lodging :—Boarding rate for
special rooms- Rs. 2-8-0 per day.
For all the rest boarding charges at
Rs. 2-0-0 per day each.

(iv) **Modern Cafe :—**

Address : 3 & 4, Perumal Teppakulam Street,
Madurai.

Phone : No. 248.

First floor single rooms : 5 — Rs. 2—0—0

First floor double rooms
with fan : 3 — Rs. 5—0—0

First floor double rooms
without fan : — Rs. 4—0—0

Second floor single rooms 12— Rs. 2—8—0
Rs. 3—0—0

Second floor double rooms 17— Rs. 5—0—0
Rs. 6—0—0

Third floor single rooms 9— Rs. 2—8—0

Third floor double rooms 24— Rs. 5—0—0
Rs. 6—0—0

Meals :— Nil.

(v) **Mani's Cafe :**

Address : 5, Town Hall Road, Madurai.

Single bed rooms 13 Rs. 2—0—0

Single bed rooms 12 Rs. 2—8—0

Double bed rooms 2 Rs. 4—0—0

Double bed rooms 2 Rs. 5—0—0

4. Prohibition :—In force. For a liquor permit, foreigners may apply to the Collector of Madurai. Permits obtained at Madras from the Regional Tourist Officer hold good for Madurai also.

VI MISCELLANEOUS

(a) Shopping Centres :—

1. New Mandapam for brassware and old bronzes.

2. Main Bazaar.

Unrecognised Travel Agents :

1. South India Travel Agency, 50 Sandai pettai Street, Madurai.

Cable :—(Sitaviman). Telephone : 345.

2. Sri K. Nataraja Pillai & Co., also function to some extent as unrecognised travel agents for M/s Thos. Cook & Son Ltd., M/s Mercury Travels, M/s Sheriff Travels agency etc.

Guide Book :—Madurai 'The Temple City' by Mr. J. P. L. Shenoy, I.C S.