

The Nagarathars Chettinadu - Karaikudi

- Departure (Madras) - Thursday, 16th July
- Tour dates – 17th and 18th July
- Arrival (Madras) – Sunday 19th July

Chettinad is an arid land and yet the aridness is in sharp contrast to the luxurious lifestyles of the Chettiars or The Nagarathars ('sophisticated townspeople'; literate, cultured, well-travelled and philanthropic)

Palatial houses with carved, stone and teak pillars, stained glass windows, sprawling open courtyards and verandas, Ravi Varma oleographs and laquerware from Burma contrast some of the region's most ancient cave temples and earliest images of Ganesha, the god we all love.

Homes and temples have the finest example of art work not just from India but from South East Asia as well. The successful maritime traders brought Western influences and knowledge to these remote villages — Italian marble, Belgian mirrors and Murano glass. Add to this an eclectic and unique cuisine - Appams and Paniyaram served with NaatuKozhikurumilagupirattal, Pallathur mutton masala or a Vegetable Mandi. After a meal suffused with fine hospitality there is always retail therapy - the antique shops of Karaikudi still have a secret object or two in their shelves for you to take back as souvenirs.

Welcome to Chettinadu : Encounter history at the Thirumeiyyam fort, experience the coconut throwing ritual at Ariyakudi, witness how the world famous Athangudi Tiles are made, learn how to whip up some of the delectable chettinaduspecialities, enjoy the influence of various countries in the art, decor and architecture of the mansions, hunt for antiques and taste the exquisite cuisine.

The elite trading and banking community transformed the barren land of Sivagangai District into a web of imposing mansions, strong traditions and a unique cuisine. The region derives its name from the community that chose to make it their homeland. Though most of them have stepped out beyond their native land, the place still reflects the glory, the traditions and opulence of a bygone era.

Embassy Travels, along with Historian PradeepChakravarthy, attempts to embrace every aspect of this marvelous land in a two day trip. We will in this trip, trace the early temples of the region, cave temples with unique histories and rare images as well as the homes and lives of the Chettiars themselves. We will also be putting our culinary skills to test, learn a verse from ancient texts and try our hand at creating artwork inspired by the art of the Chettinad home.

We have hand picked the sites to visit which cover history, architecture and craft. We also promise you an outstanding experience commencing with our stay at the luxurious and immaculately restored Chidambara Vilas in Kadiapatti (<http://www.chidambaravilas.com>) and indulge in mouth watering local fare.

Day 1:

1930 - Meet at Chandra Park Hotel for a brief orientation. We have a few announcements so kindly ensure to be there.

2140 - Leave from Chennai Egmore station – Rameswaram Express. Packed vegetarian Dinner will be provided

Day 2 :

0710 - Reach Karaikudi station and leave for hotel

0830 - Breakfast at hotel

1000 - Leave for Tirumeiyam Fort that holds the secret of one of Tamil Nadu's bloodiest wars and also learn a verse on the temple

1230 - Cookery class at Chidambara Vilas

1300 - Lunch at Chidambara Vilas

1500 - Leave to Athangudi – a little tour of the tile factory and the Athangudi House

1645 - Leave to Iranni Temple and Vairavanpatti

1845 - Break at Pillaiyarpatti for Tea

2030 - Dinner at Chidambara Vilas

Day 3 :

0600 - Leave to Tirukkolakudi and explore a magical series of temples on a small hillock and learn about the ancient commerce of the region

0800 – Breakfast at Chidambara Vilas

0930 - Chettiars have a unique "clan" system which is centered around nine clan temples which have a distinct architecture. Explore one such fine example at Mathur.

1100 - Leave to Ariyakudi, explore the paintings of the temple, experience a unique and fun ritual and listen to the musical heritage of the town. Later leave for Karaikudi, the headquarters of

Chettinad to potter around the antique shops at Muneeswaran Koil Street.

1330 - Built by expert artisans with funds from extensive business in south East Asia, Chettiar homes are unique and filled with superb craftsmanship. Explore one such home and learn more about the lifestyles of the community and experience their hospitality. Lunch at Kottaiyur

1445 – Leave to Chidambara Vilas for tea and relax and enjoy a refreshing dip in the lovely pool

2000 - Check out and Leave for Karaikudi

2030 – Dinner at the Bangla, Karaikudi

2245–Leave for Station

2335 – Leave to Chennai – RMM Chennai Express

Day 4 :

0820 - Arrive in Madras

Essential pre-reads:

Several places we will be visiting are places of worship and therefore we request your special attention to the following :

- Please dress conservatively and avoid wearing shorts and sleeveless wear. A dupatta or shawl will be much appreciated.
- Comfortable shoes or slippers since monuments are footwear free zones
- We strongly advice carrying sun block, sunglasses and cap
- Basic medication/ first aid will be available. Please carry your specific medication if any
- Camera - certain places may charge anything between Rs. 10 and Rs.100 for the usage of camera.

Photography may not be permitted in certain Places

- We would like to iterate that this is not a religious trip and therefore we all need to respect the time and interest of those who are coming to enjoy the heritage aspect of the trip. Therefore PLEASE ENSURE TO RESPECT AND STICK TO TIME SCHEDULES.

Inclusions and specifics:

- Train travel
- Road travel on AC coach
- Accommodation in heritage property and AC rooms accommodating upto 2 adults. Children will be accommodated depending on the age and hotel policy. In this Trip we will be staying at Chidambara Vilas.
- Meals mentioned - 2 breakfast, 2 lunch and 3 dinners per person (Request you to specify your preference in advance)
- 2 bottles of water per person will be provided on the coach every day
- Regular entry tickets where required will be provided

- Darshan at temples will be included if People wish to and ONLY if time permits.

Non inclusion:

- any expenses of personal nature
- any other attraction/temple not mentioned in the itinerary
- room service

