

Architectural marvels along the beach. Discover now!

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Mon 8/5/2024 10:40 AM

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Issue 18 • August 2024

City spotlight: Mamallapuram



ARCHITECTURAL WONDERS, RELAXING BEACHES AND PLENTY TO DO

Step into the ancient port city of Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) , a UNESCO World Heritage Site on the southeastern coast of India, known for its magnificent rock-cut caves and temples, intricately carved sculptures and monuments that date back to the Pallava Dynasty of the 7th and 8th centuries. The Shore Temple, with its beautiful backdrop of the Bay of Bengal, stands in all its glory, displaying the architectural ingenuity of ancient Dravidian and Pallava craftsmen. The Five Rathas, a collection of monolithic temples, each carved from a single rock, the grand Arjuna's Penance - an open-air rock relief, and Krishna's Butterball - a massive boulder balanced on a hill are amongst the many must-see attractions that offer a glimpse into the region's rich mythological past.

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Beyond its historical and architectural allure, Mamallapuram boasts a serene coastal charm that is perfect for relaxation. The town's beaches, such as Mahabalipuram Beach, offer a peaceful escape where you can bask in the sun, take leisurely strolls, or indulge in water sports like surfing, windsurfing and many more. The local seafood cuisine is another highlight, with numerous seaside shacks and restaurants serving that day's freshly caught fish cooked in traditional South Indian style. And, a visit to nearby Kanchipuram, □ will enrich your trip even more with its famous silk sarees and ancient temples, such as the Ekambareswarar and Kailasanathar Temples. Mamallapuram provides a beautiful experience that takes you back into the past while providing all the modern comforts of the present.



TOP 6 EXPERIENCES IN MAMALLAPURAM



The Shore Temple is an ancient granite marvel built on the seafront

The Shore Temple, lying on the edge of the Bay of Bengal is one of Mamallapuram's most visited landmarks. This grand granite structure, built in the 8th century during the reign of the Pallava king Rajasimha, is renowned for its intricate carvings and elegant design. The temple complex comprises three shrines, with the main one dedicated to Lord Shiva. As the waves crash against its base, the temple exudes an ethereal charm, especially during sunrise and sunset, making it a perfect spot for visitors, devotees, and photographers.

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The Five Rathas are the most intricately carved monolithic wonders

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The Five Rathas, also known as Pancha Rathas, are a remarkable group of monolithic rock-cut temples, each sculpted from a single large stone. These five structures, named after the Pandava brothers from the Mahabharata, depict the architectural diversity and skill of the Pallavas. Each ratha is distinct in its design, with detailed carvings and motifs that reflect the grandeur of ancient India. The largest, the Dharmaraja Ratha, stands tall with intricate sculptures, while the smaller Draupadi Ratha, shaped like a hut, exudes a simplistic charm.



Arjuna's Penance is a colossal bas-relief of mythological splendour

Arjuna's Penance, also known as Descent of the Ganges, is one of the largest and most impressive open-air rock reliefs in the world. This colossal bas-relief, spanning 96 feet in length and 43 feet in height, depicts vivid mythological scenes and everyday life, intricately carved into two adjacent boulders. The central narrative illustrates the penance of Arjuna from the Mahabharata, seeking the blessings of Lord Shiva, interwoven with the descent of the sacred river Ganges to earth.



Sand, sea, watersports on the historic shores of Mahabalipuram Beach

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Stretching along the southeastern coastline, Mahabalipuram Beach is an ideal spot for sunbathing, taking leisurely walks, and watching the sunrise over the Bay of Bengal. You can also indulge in a variety of water sports, including surfing, windsurfing, and paddleboarding, adding an exciting touch to a peaceful ambiance. The beach is dotted with charming seafood shacks and eateries where you can enjoy freshly caught fish of the day cooked in traditional South Indian style. Its proximity to historic monuments allows for fascinating exploration.



A blend of antiquity and modernity for memorable MICE events

Mamallapuram, with its rich historical backdrop and coastal charm, combined with the modern amenities of nearby beach town, Kovalam (20 km), presents an exceptional destination for MICE events. The town, with its impressive heritage sites, offers unique and inspiring venues for cultural and themed events. Luxury resorts and convention centres in Mamallapuram and Kovalam are equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, providing traditional elegance and contemporary convenience, also for corporate retreats, and incentive programs.



Craft heritage of bronze sculptures and Pattamadai mats from Tamil Nadu

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Look for Swamimalai bronze statues, which come from Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu. They are masterpieces of ancient craftsmanship renowned for their intricate artistry and historical significance. Using the lost-wax casting method that dates back over a millennium, they are celebrated for their precision and detailed iconography. Originating from the Chola dynasty era, these bronze sculptures of deities and significant figures reflect the region's rich cultural heritage and spiritual devotion. You will also find Pattamadai Mats (Pattamadai Pai), awarded the GI tag in 2013, crafted from native korai grass, legendary for their silky softness and detailed patterns, integral to events like weddings and religious ceremonies.



[Read more on Mamallapuram](#)

India Celebrates

India offers a vibrant array of festivals, fiestas, boat races, and cultural events that attract visitors year-round. From colorful celebrations with dancing and music to thrilling boat races on serene backwaters, each event displays the country's rich cultural heritage and exuberance. They provide unforgettable experiences, blending spirituality, community, and centuries-old customs.

TOP FESTIVALS TO EXPERIENCE IN AUGUST-SEPTEMBER



Nehru Boat Race

The Nehru Boat Race, held annually in the backwaters of Alappuzha, Kerala, is a spectacular event that attracts tourists from around the globe. This thrilling race, named after India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, sees majestic snake boats, manned by over 100 oarsmen, slicing through the waters to the rhythm of traditional songs. The amazing energy, the synchronisation of the rowers, and the festive atmosphere create an unforgettable experience.

When and where to celebrate:

10 August 2024

The best place to experience the Nehru Boat Race is the Punnamada Lake in Alappuzha. To get there you can fly into Cochin, about 85 kilometers away. From the airport, you can hire a taxi or take a bus to Alappuzha. It is also well-connected by train.



Independence Day Independence Day

Come celebrate Independence Day with a nation that commemorates its freedom even today with a fervour that is incomparable in the world! It is a heartfelt and patriotic celebration. It marks the country's 'non-violent' freedom from British rule and is characterised by grand parades, cultural performances and patriotism in every school, office and military base in the country. The highlight is the flag hoisting ceremony, and an address by the Prime Minister to the nation at the Red Fort in Delhi. A delightful tradition is kite flying on this day, symbolising freedom and joy.

When and where to celebrate:

15 August 2024

The best place to be is New Delhi, where the main celebrations take place. At the same time, the day is marked with joy and patriotism in every city across India.

Enjoy Independence day in India wherever you are.



Raksha Bandhan

Raksha Bandhan is celebrated with immense joy and affection across India. It highlights the cherished bond between siblings. On this auspicious day, sisters tie a sacred thread, or rakhi, around their brothers' wrists, symbolising deep love and respect. The brothers, in return, promise to protect their sisters and often give them gifts as a token of their affection. The day is marked by family gatherings, sharing of sweets, and colourful festivities that offer a glimpse into the warmth of family relationships, a hallmark of Indian society.

When and where to celebrate:

19 August 2024

India's markets come alive with people buying rakhis, sweets, and traditional clothes, while families gather in their homes for the Rakhi ritual and meals. Visiting India during Rakshabandhan offers an experience of tradition and festivity, Indian style!



Janamashatami Janamashatami

Janmashtami celebrates Lord Krishna's birth. Watch the 'Ras Leela' depicting the playful and divine life of Krishna, along with bhajans that fill the air with prayer and gratitude. In cities like Mathura and Vrindavan, where Krishna is believed to have spent his childhood, the celebrations are especially grand, with the exhilarating Dahi Handi event, where teams form human pyramids to break a pot of curd suspended high in the air. Devotees happily observe a day-long fast until midnight. Another charming tradition is the swinging of baby Krishna idols in temples and homes. This ritual, known as 'Jhulanotsav', attracts devotees seeking blessings of their beloved Krishna. □



When and where to celebrate:

26 August 2024

The best place is undoubtedly Mathura and Vrindavan, where Lord Krishna is believed to have spent his childhood. These cities, a few hours' drive from Delhi, host elaborate festivities, including Ras Leela performances, and the famous Dahi Handi event.



Velankanni Church Feast

The Velankanni Church Feast is celebrated in Velankanni, Tamil Nadu. It is a deeply spiritual event drawing thousands of devotees from across India. Dedicated to Our Lady of Good Health, the festivities blend religious solemnity with cultural exuberance. Pilgrims flock to the Basilica, decorated and illuminated by lamps and candles. The feast includes prayer services, and the offering of candles and flowers. In a significant moment, Pope Benedict XVI declared Velankanni a holy city, affirming its global significance as a sacred place of pilgrimage and spiritual renewal.

When and where to celebrate:

29 Aug – 08 Sept 2024

The best place to experience the Velankanni Church Feast is in Velankanni itself, at the Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health. It can be reached conveniently from Tiruchirappalli - Trichy, (150 km) and Puducherry (162 km) or Chennai and Madurai a little further.

Explore India in August-September

The monsoon rains leave the hillsides covered in washed green foliage in August and September (post monsoons), while the rivers and streams flow with newfound force, creating stunning views at every turn. This is an ideal time to trek through forest trails, visit quaint villages, and enjoy the rich beauty of terraced fields and blooming flora. The cooler, pleasant weather adds to the charm, making it perfect for outdoor activities.



Amarkantak is a sacred confluence of nature and spirituality

Amarkantak, in the state of Madhya Pradesh, is known as the 'Teerthraj' or 'King of Pilgrimages', as it lies on the sacred confluence of the Vindhya and Satpura ranges and the origin of the holy rivers, Narmada, Sone and Johila. Amarkantak is a green haven, especially in September after the monsoons. The surrounding forests have a rich variety of medicinal plants, the Kapil Dhara and Dudh Dhara waterfalls are breathtaking, and many ancient temples stand here steeped in legend, while the revered Narmada Kund offers a spot for a quiet prayer and devotion.



Periyar National Park, a wonderland of wilderness in the heart of Kerala

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Periyar National Park is one of the sanctuaries open in the monsoons. Spanning over 925 sq.km. in the Western Ghats, this renowned wildlife sanctuary is home to many different plants and animals, including elephants, tigers, and innumerable bird species. The pretty Periyar Lake, spread across 26 sq.km. in the heart of the park, offers boat cruises to witness wildlife up close. You can trek through the dense forests and explore the rich biodiversity and the beautiful landscape. The park also offers unique experiences such as bamboo rafting, guided nature walks, and visits to tribal villages.



Enjoy much more than Goa's beaches with pleasant weather and lesser crowds

Visiting Goa when the rains are on their way out is a lovely experience, as the region emerges fresh from the monsoon season. The rich green landscapes, rejuvenated beaches, and lesser crowds create a much calmer setting. A drive to the famous Dudhsagar Falls provides a breathtaking sight. At this time, the weather is pleasant with occasional showers, perfect for exploring the countryside, spice plantations, and historic forts. Goa also comes alive with traditional festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi, offering a glimpse into local customs. The quieter beaches and off-season discounts make this a great time to relax and enjoy Goa.



Untouched by modern development Megamalai retains a very special charm

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Megamalai, known as Pacha Kumachi or Green Hills, is an enchanting world shrouded in clouds and dotted with lush green tea plantations. Experience village life here, make new friends, savour local cuisine, and enjoy spectacular views. The journey is an adventure in itself, with 18 needle bends leading to a place where the fog seems eternal. Places to see include the wildlife sanctuary - where you can spot elephants, bison, and spotted deer, Meghamalai Falls, Suruli Falls, various dams, and the Maharaja Metu Viewpoint. Enjoy the Gampan Valley from the Manalar Dam, and visit Villi Hill that stands as one of the most charming spots.





Visit Bhimtal for adventure and tranquillity in the hills with its enchanting lake

Bhimtal is located in the Kumaon hills of Uttarakhand, less than 25 km from Nainital. Named after Bhima from the epic Mahabharata, this town is steeped in history and natural beauty. The centrepiece of Bhimtal is its gorgeous lake, surrounded by forested hills, dotted with charming islands, and plenty of local birdlife. It has intriguing attractions such as the Bhimeshwar Mahadev Temple, an ancient 17th-century temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, revered for its spiritual significance. Hike up to the centuries-old Hidimba Parvat, named after the demoness Hidimba from the Mahabharata, for panoramic views of the lake and surrounding hills.

Beyond Incredible



VISIT HERITAGE INDIA TO OPEN DOORS TO ANCIENT LEGENDS ETCHED IN STONE

Welcome to India's rich heritage with stories etched in stone, and tales whispered through centuries of valour and grace. Behind the door lies a journey into the heart of legends, where brave warriors and glorious queens shape the narrative of a civilisation ahead of its time. Step into India, where every corner reveals a saga waiting to be lived - a journey not just through history, but through the essence of human spirit that defies all odds. In the alleys of Dholavira, amid the footprints of a 5000-year-old Harappan civilisation, visitors encounter more than relics; they unearth a testament to resilience and creativity that transcends eras. Artistic renditions breathe life into these heritage sites, weaving tales that captivate the imagination. Here, in India, every traveller becomes a part of the narrative - a journey through living legends.

The 46th session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee was held very recently in New Delhi, from 21 to 31 July 2024, marking a pivotal moment for global conservation efforts. The committee assessed proposals for the inclusion of 27 new sites on the prestigious World Heritage List, while reviewing the conservation status of 124 existing properties, including those on the list of World Heritage in Danger. By safeguarding these treasures, the international community reaffirms its dedication to preserving our planet's diverse heritage for future generations, while honouring the intrinsic local and global connections these places hold.

#livethelegend

**POTENTIAL WORLD HERITAGE SITES.
KEEPING ITS SPLENDOUR ALIVE WITH SUSTAINABLE EFFORTS
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**UNAKOTI
TRIPURA**

An archaeological site renowned for its ancient rock carvings and stone images, believed to date back to the 7th-9th centuries.



**RABDENTSE
SIKKIM**

An ancient royal city that served as the second capital of the former Kingdom of Sikkim from 1670 to 1814.



**BIDAR FORT
KARNATAKA**

An imposing historical structure known for its impressive architecture and rich history dating back to the 15th century.



**RANG MAHAL
HIMACHAL
PRADESH**

A palace in Chamba renowned for its fusion of Mughal and Rajput architectural styles and intricate wall paintings.

Truly Indian

Travelling to the smaller towns and villages in India offers an enriching experience of the country's different cultures, traditions, and natural beauty. Exploring these lesser-known destinations allows travellers to experience their way of life, far removed from the urban cities. You can contribute directly by supporting small businesses, artisans, and farmers. This promotes economic sustainability and preserves the rich cultural heritage of these communities. Joining hands with government initiatives thus ensures that the economic benefits of tourism are more evenly distributed, fostering growth and development in India's rural heartlands.

A BEAUTIFUL JEWEL IN THE RAINFOREST OF THE WESTERN GHATS



Agumbe

Agumbe lies on a mountain pass connecting the plains of Karnataka with the coastal region. It lies in the Western Ghats, often dubbed the "Cherrapunji of South India" due to its average annual rainfall of about 8000 mm. The region is covered with rich forests, fast-flowing streams, and cascading waterfalls. One of Agumbe's most breathtaking sights is the sunset over the Arabian Sea, offering a clear view stretching about 40 km. The Agumbe Rainforest Research Station (ARRS) was established here by the world-famous herpetologist Romulus Whitaker to study the endangered King Cobra. The famous TV serial 'Malgudi Days' was filmed here.

□ Adventurous souls can participate in curated treks organised by expert groups, especially during and after the monsoons, to sight rare species of snakes, frogs, insects, and other wildlife. Within a 5 km radius of Agumbe, there are several waterfalls like Barkana Falls, Jogi Gundi Waterfalls, and Onake Abbi Falls. The journey up and down the hill involves navigating 14 sharp hairpin bends, an exhilarating experience whether driving yourself or observing skilled local drivers. For fans of 'Malgudi Days,' visiting the filming locations offers a nostalgic



journey. Agumbe is an ideal weekend getaway for adventure, trekking, and fun-filled activities with friends and family. □

Things to do:

▶ Hiking:

- Witness the breathtaking sunset from the dedicated viewing deck, offering a clear line of sight of about 40 km over the Arabian Sea.
- Explore several waterfalls within a 5 km radius of Agumbe, such as Barkana Falls, Jogi Gundi Waterfalls, and Onake Abbi Falls. These sites are partly accessible by road and require a short hike.

▶ **Trekking:** Join curated treks organised by expert groups during the monsoon and post-monsoon seasons to explore the wildlife for rare species of snakes, frogs, insects, and other flora and fauna.

▶ **Driving:** Experience the thrill of negotiating 14 sharp hairpin bends while ascending or descending the hill. Full-size buses and trucks are not allowed, so either drive yourself or enjoy the ride with local drivers.

▶ **Nostalgia:** Visit the filming locations of the popular TV serial 'Malgudi Days' based on RK Narayan's novel. Enjoy the greenery and fresh air while reminiscing about the memorable days of storytelling.

▶ **Boating:** Enjoy a peaceful boating experience at the small lake near the forest check post.

▶ **Local Cuisine:** Agumbe offers a delightful taste of traditional Malnad cuisine, featuring dishes like Akki Roti (rice roti), Kesari Bath (sweet semolina), and various delicacies made from fresh and local ingredients.

▶ Places nearby:

- Kundadri Hills:** Located 16 km from Agumbe, Kundadri Hills is an ideal spot for trekking and enjoying panoramic views.
- Sringeri:** Approximately 30 km away, Sringeri is a nice place to visit for its historic temples.
- Kuppalli:** Situated 45 km from Agumbe, Kuppalli is the birthplace of the famous Kannada poet Kuvempu and is surrounded by beautiful landscapes.

Incredible India!

Welcome to the Mamallapuram Quiz!

Participate in our Mamallapuram Quiz and stand a chance to win an exciting prize! Test your knowledge about this UNESCO World Heritage site, famous for its stunning rock-cut monuments and ancient temples. Answer the following questions correctly to enter the prize draw.

Good luck!

Q1. Which famous shore temple is located in Mamallapuram?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| a. Brihadeeswarar Temple | b. Meenakshi Temple |
| c. Shore Temple | d. Sun Temple |

Q2. The group of monuments at Mamallapuram was built during the reign of which dynasty?

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| a. Chola Dynasty | b. Pandya Dynasty |
| c. Pallava Dynasty | d. Vijayanagara Empire |

Q3. Which of the following is a famous rock relief found in Mamallapuram?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| a. Descent of the Ganges | b. Arjuna's Penance |
| c. Krishna's Butterball | d. All of the above |

Q4. What is the architectural style of the Pancha Rathas in Mamallapuram?

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| a. Dravidian | b. Nagara |
|--------------|-----------|

Mail your answers to us at incredible-india@gov.in with your Name, Age, Country for a chance to win prizes.

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