



Tamil Nadu & Chennai

Includes ➔

Chennai (Madras)...	327
Mamallapuram	346
Puducherry (Pondicherry)	358
Thanjavur (Tanjore)...	371
Trichy (Tiruchirappalli)	374
Madurai	380
Ooty	400

Best Temples

- ➔ Meenakshi Amman Temple (p381)
- ➔ Brihadishwara Temple (p371)
- ➔ Arunachaleswar Temple (p356)
- ➔ Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple (p375)
- ➔ Nataraja Temple (p367)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Visalam (p380)
- ➔ Les Hibiscus (p362)
- ➔ Bungalow on the Beach (p367)
- ➔ Sinna Dorai's Bungalow (p398)
- ➔ 180° McIver (p398)

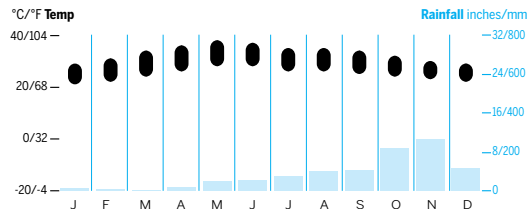
Why Go?

Tamil Nadu is the homeland of one of humanity's living classical civilisations, stretching back uninterrupted for two millennia and very much alive today in the Tamils' language, dance, poetry and Hindu religion.

But this state, with its age-old trading vocation, is as dynamic as it is immersed in tradition. Fire-worshipping devotees who smear tikka on their brows in the famously spectacular Tamil temples might rush off to IT offices to develop new software applications – and then unwind at a swanky night-time haunt in rapidly modernising Chennai (Madras). When the heat and noise of Tamil Nadu's temple towns overwhelm, escape to the very end of India where three seas mingle, or up to the cool, forest-clad, wild-life-prowled Western Ghats. It's all packed into a state that remains proudly distinct from the rest of India, while at the same time being among the most welcoming.

When to Go

Chennai



Jan Pongal (harvest) celebrations spill into the streets and the weather is at its (relative) coolest.

Jul–Sep Hit the hill stations after the crowded 'season' but while the weather is still good.

Nov–Dec The full-moon festival of lights.



Tamil Nadu Highlights

- 1 Soaking up the unique Franco-Indian flair and yoga scene of **Puducherry** (Pondicherry; p358)
- 2 Climbing into the cool, misty forests of the Western Ghats at **Kodaikanal** (p390) or **Ooty** (p400)
- 3 Admiring the magnificence of Chola architecture at

Thanjavur's **Brihadishwara Temple** (p371)

- 4 Spending the night in an opulent mansion in **Chettinadu** (p378)
- 5 Exploring the countless faces of the traditional but cosmopolitan capital **Chennai** (Madras; p327)

- 6 Getting lost in the colour of Madurai's **Meenakshi Amman Temple** (p381)
- 7 Relaxing at tranquil **Tranquebar** (p367), a quirky old Danish colony
- 8 Tracking down rare, exotic wildlife at **Mudumalai Tiger Reserve** (p406)