

Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple



History

Meenakshi Temple, also referred to as Meenakshi Amman or Minakshi-Sundareshwara Temple, is a historic Hindu temple located on the southern bank of the Vaigai River in the temple city of Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India. It is dedicated to Meenakshi, a form of Parvati, and her consort, Sundareshwar, a form of Shiva. The temple is at the center of the ancient temple city of Madurai mentioned in the Tamil Sangam literature, with the goddess temple mentioned in 6th century CE texts.

Though the temple has historic roots, most of the present campus structure was rebuilt after the 14th century CE, further repaired, renovated and expanded in the 17th century by Thirumalai Nayak. In early 14th century, the armies of Delhi Sultanate led by Muslim Commander Malik Kafur plundered the temple, looted it of its valuables and destroyed the Madurai temple town along with many other temple towns of South India. The contemporary temple is the result of rebuilding efforts started by the Vijayanagara Empire rulers who rebuilt the core and reopened the temple. In the 16th century, the temple complex was further expanded and fortified by the Nayak ruler Vishwanatha Nayakar and later others. The restored complex now houses 14 gopurams (gateway towers), ranging from

45–50m in height, with the southern gopura tallest at 51.9 metres (170 ft). The complex has numerous sculpted pillared halls such as Ayirakkal (1,000 pillar hall), Kilikoonda-mandapam, Golu-mandapam and Pudu-mandapam. Its shrines are dedicated to Hindu deities and Shaivism scholars, with the vimanas above the garbhagrihas (sanctums) of Meenakshi and Sundaresvara gilded with gold. The temple is a major pilgrimage destination within the Shaivism tradition, dedicated to Meenakshi Devi and Shiva. However, the temple includes Vishnu in many narratives, sculptures and rituals as he is considered to be Meenakshi's brother. This has made this temple and Madurai as the “southern Mathura”, one included in Vaishnava texts. The Meenakshi temple also includes Lakshmi, flute playing Krishna, Rukmini, Brahma, Saraswati, other Vedic and Puranic deities, as well as artwork showing narratives from major Hindu texts. The large temple complex is the most prominent landmark in Madurai and attracts tens of thousands visitors a day.

The temple attracts over a million pilgrims and visitors during the annual 10-day Meenakshi Tirukalyanam festival, celebrated with much festivities and a ratha (chariot) procession during the Tamil month of Chittirai (overlaps with April-May in Georgian calendar, Chaitra in North India). The Temple has been adjudged best ‘Swachh Iconic Place’ in India as on October 1, 2017 under Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi's Flagship Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

The town of Madurai is ancient and one mentioned in Sangam era texts. These are dated to be from the 1st to 4th century CE. Some early Tamil texts call Madurai as Koodal, and these portray it as a capital and a temple town where every street radiated from the temple. Goddess Meenakshi is described as the divine ruler, who along with Shiva were the primary deities that the southern Tamil kingdoms such as the Pandyan dynasty revered. The early texts imply that a temple existed in Madurai by the mid 6th century. In medieval literature and inscriptions, it is sometimes referred to as Kadambavanam (lit. “forest of Kadamba”) or Velliambalam (lit. “silver hall” where Shiva danced). It was described to be the sangam of scholars, or a place where scholars meet. It is mentioned in the Tamil text Tiruvilayadalpuranam and the Sanskrit text Halasya Mahatmya.

Early Tamil texts mention the temple and its primary deity by various epithets and names. Thirugnanasambandar, the famous Hindu saint of Saiva philosophy for example, mentioned this temple in the 7th century, and described the deity as

Aalavai Iraivan. The origin of the temple is mentioned in these early Tamil texts, some in the regional Puranam genre of literature. All of these place the temple in ancient times and include a warrior goddess, but the details vary significantly and are inconsistent with each other. Some link to it deities they call Alavai Iraivan and Alavai Annal, or alternatively Angayar Kanni Ammai. Some link its legend to other deities such as Indra who proclaims the primacy of the goddess, while some describe Hindu gods appearing before ancient kings or saints urging wealthy merchants to build this temple in the honor of a goddess. One legend describes a childless king and queen performing yajna for a son, they get a daughter who inherits the kingdom, conquers the earth, meets Shiva ultimately, marries him, continues to rule from Madurai, and the temple memorializes those times. Instead of such inconsistent ahistorical mythologies, scholars have attempted to determine the history of the temple from inscriptions found in and outside Madurai, as well as comparing the records relating to South Indian dynasties. These largely post-date the 12th century.



Nestled on the banks of the River Vaigai, “Meenakshi Amman Temple” is one of the oldest and biggest temples of India. Not just a 2500 year old temple complex but it is like a city with in the Madurai city dedicated to the deity Meenakshi, an avatar of Goddess Parvati, and her consort Sundareswarar, Lord Shiva. So if you are planning

for a calm religious tour Meenakshi Amman Temple is the best place to visit as this will offer you a complete peace of mind, rejuvenating inner spirit and the most astounding views of the sculpture and architecture that no other place can present.

Sprawled over an area of 17 acres has 4 entrances facing 4 directions has significant historybut the credit for the present architecture and structure goes to the Nayakas, who ruled the region between the 16th and 18th centuries and brought the architecture of the temple to its present majesty.

5 Must Attraction to See in Meenakshi Amman Temple

1. First have a look on various minor quadrangular complexes, 14 gopurams or towers or on out of which the tallest one, the southern tower, which stretches nearly 170 feet (52 meters) high.
2. Next, move towards outstanding vimanas which are covered with stones, animal, demons and god figures in bright colours/ gold plated over the idol of the two main deities is undoubtedly a wonderful sight that captivates you.
3. A visit to this temple also calls for a visit to the “Hall of 1000 Pillars” or “Aayiram Kaal Mandapam” (which in actually has 985 pillars). Some of these pillars are also noted as Musical Pillars, which when you tap or strike, you hear distinct musical note struck/ notes of Carnatic music.
4. The “Golden Lotus Tank” or “Pottramarai Kulam” is another fascinating sight of the complex. This is believed that Pottramarai Kulamis the same pond in which Golden Lotus had bloomed which was used by Indra to perform his mahayagya. Beside this there are many legends for this pond, first it is believed that the lord Shiva had blessed this pond that no fish or other marine life would ever grow in this pond and surprisingly till date no marine life is found in the pond. Another famous legend says that the waters of this pond were a test for good or bad literature, where good literature would stay afloat and bad literature would sink.
5. Last but not least don't forget to watch an expansive “Parrot Cage” or “Kilikoonda Mandapam Corridor” around sanctum of Meenakshi which was used to keep/train parrots to call out the name “Meenakshi”.

If your heart still wants more, you can visit the in-house museum here you jump into its 2500 year old history.

According to legend, the sacred Suyambulingam discovered by the king of Gods Indira at Kadambavanam, was later enshrined by him in Madurai. The fact that the Lord is seen on the vehicle of Indira in this temple is said to be proof for this. Many historical evidences of the temple have been found dating back from early A.D. The temple was almost completely destroyed in the year 1310 following the invasion of the Islamic conqueror Malikkapur. As kings who were followers of Islam were noted for their intolerance towards other religions, the invaders destroyed most of the ancient sculptures of the temple.



Thirugnanasambandar the Hindu Saint has mentioned the temple in his songs which go back to early 7th century. The Lord has been described as Alavai Iraivan in his songs. The temple was restored to its pristine glory in the late 14th century when the Hindu Kings came back to power in Madurai. This can also be termed as a new beginning of a new era in the history of the temple, when it was almost rebuilt. The King Thirumalai Naicker played an important role in the construction of the new form of the temple according to records. The Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple is now under the administration of the HR and CE department of Tamil Nadu.

Temple Deities:

The presiding Lord of this sacred shrine was in the times of yore known as Chockanathar, and Chockalinga Perumal.

Now the deity is known as Sundareswarar, Meenakshi Sundarar, Somasundarar, Kalyana Sundarar, Shanbaga Sundarar, Attavai Shevagan, Chockalingam, Adiyarku Nallan, Adhiraveesi, Vilayaduvan, Abhideka Chockar, Azhagiya Chockar, Kadambavana Chockar, Puzhugu Neidhu Chockar, Kadambavaneswarar, Karpoora Chockar, Madureswarar, Irayanar, Peralavayar and other names.

Temple Holy Tank:

It was in this pond that the Golden Lotus for Indra to perform his pooja bloomed. This pond is also known as Adhi Theertham, Sivaganga and Uthama Theertham. This pond is situated within the temple complex. This theertham was created by Lord Sivaperuman by thrusting his Soolam (three pronged spear) into the earth in

deference to the plea of Nandhi Devar and other deities. It was here, that the plank of Sangam appeared and established greatness of the moral text called Thirukkural. It was here that Chockalingam was found by the grace of the Lord, by the first Guru of Dharmapura Adheenam and Saint Srilasri Guru Gnanasambandar. In keeping with the boons granted by the Lord to a stork, upto this date no fish nor other life is found in this miraculous sacred pond. Since this theertam was created before all other theerthams it is called Adhi Theertham and because it is much greater importance than all other theerthams, it is also called Parama Theertham as Gnana Theertham because it confers prosperity on all who bathe in it. As it grants heavenly abode it is also called Mukthi Theertham and as Sivaganga because the water from Ganga from the head of Lord Siva confluences with it and as Uthama Theertham because of its purity than any other theertham..

If the devotees bathe in the waters of this pond of Golden Lotus on Amavasya (new moon) day, the first day of the month, days of eclipse and other auspicious days and worship the Lord, they will be blessed with all their aspirations for success.

Ezhu Kadal (Seven seas) :

According to legend, in deference to the plea of Goddess Thadathagai, the Lord summoned the seven seas for Kanchanamala..

Kondazhi:

This is also called Valaiveesi theppakulam. This is another holy theertham situated at Ellis Nagar..

River Vaigai:

Legend has it that the Lord ordained River Ganga to flood in the area in order to slake the thirst of Gundodaran. This river is also known as Poompunal Aru, Vaiyai, Poyyakulakodi, Sivagangai, Sivagnana Theertham and Vegavathi..

Kiruthamalai:

Kiruthumalai, another theertham is a tributary of Vaigai river....

Teppakulam (Lake):

The teppakulam was constructed by Thirumalai Nayakkar in 1645, about three kilometers east of the temple. Every year on the day of Thaipooosam Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareswarar are taken in procession on a decorated float on

this lake, when they bless the devotees. This is one of the famous festivals of Madurai....

Purathotti Nirmaliya Theertham:

This is a theertham on the second corridor of the Swamy temple.

Temple Structure:

The temple which has five entrances, covers an area 847 feet (254.1 meters) long and 792 feet (237.6 meters) wide in the North South direction, the circumference of the Adi Veedhi which is the path within the great walls is 830 feet (249 meters) on the east west and , measuring 730 feet (219 meters) from North South direction.

If the devotees bathe in the waters of this pond of Golden Lotus on Amavasya (new moon) day, the first day of the month, days of eclipse and other auspicious days and worship the Lord, they will be blessed with all their aspirations for success.

The Temple Towers

The temple has four Rajagopurams or majestic towers, there are five towers on top of the sanctum sanctorum of the Lord, three on top of the sanctum sanctorum of the Goddess and two golden towers or gopurams, all which have been exquisitely designed and sculptured. All fourteen towers have been segregated based on the stages they are,

Nine tier gopurams – four

Seven tier, Chittirai gopuram – one

Five tier gopurams – five

Three tier gopurams – two

Golden gopurams – two

Rajagopurams (Nine Tier Gopurams)

1. The tower on top of the sanctum sanctorm of the God (east)

This tower was constructed by Maravarman Sundarapandian the Pandian King (1216 – 1238)

The tower is 153.3 feet in height, and the base measurers 111.3 feet by 65.6 feet..

This bears 1011 episodes from puranams sculptured in it.

2. South Rajagopuram

It was constructed in the year 1559 by Siramalai Sevanthi Murthy Chetti.

It is the tallest of the temple towers measuring 160.9 feet in height, with a base area of 108 feet by 67 feet

1511 mythological figures are seen in it.

3. North Rajagopuram (Tower Without Roof)

Construction of this tower was started by Krishnaveerappanaicker (1564 – 1572) and completed by the family of Amaravathi Pudur Vayinagaram Nagappa Chetti in 1878.

This gopuram remained unfinished for a number of years and was therefore called Mottai Gopuram meaning a tower without a roof.

This is 152 feet in height and the length of the base is 111.6 feet with a width of 66.6 feet..

This houses 404 carvings depicting mythological stories.

4. The West Rajagopuram.

This was constructed by King Parakrama Pandian during his reign between 1315 and 1347.

This has a height of 154.6 feet with a base length of 101 feet and a width of 63.6 feet.

This tower houses 1124 sculptures of mythological importance.

The Towers of Swami Shrine

There are five towers above the sanctum of the Lord.

1. Swami shrine gopuram (three tiers).

Built by King Kulasekarapandian (1168 – 1175).

Of all the towers of the temple, this is the most ancient.

This is situated at the entrance to the Swami Sannidhi near the Lords flag staff mandapam.

2. Gopura Nayaka Gopuram, also called Swami Sannidhi gopuram (five tiers).

It was constructed by a person named Vasuvappan in 1372

It is situated between the flag post of the Swami Sannidhi and the Thirukalyana Mandapam or marriage hall.

Standing 66 feet tall, it has a base area of 42 feet x 33 feet.

It has 280 mythological figures on it.

3. The Mukkuruni Vinayagar gopuram or Nadukkattu gopuram or Idaikattu gopuram (five tier) .

It was constructed by Siramalai Sevanthi Murthy Chetti in 1559

It is situated opposite to the shrine of the Mukkuruni vinayagar which is situated in the passage that leads from the Amman sannithi to the Swami Sannithi.

It is 69 feet in height with a base area of 44 feet x 33 feet. 112 mythological figures are sculptured on it.

4. Wooden gopuram (timber) or the Swami Sannithi west gopuram.

It was constructed by Mallappan in the year 1374.

It is situated in west end of the second corridor of the swami sannithi.

It is 72 feet in height with a base area of 48 feet x 31 feet.

340 mythological figures are seen on it.

5. Sinnamottai gopuram (small roofless gopuram) or Swami Sannithi North Gopuram (five tiers).

It was constructed by Sevanthivellappa Chetti in 1560.

This tower is also situated on top the second corridor of the Swami Sannithi on the north side near the Kalyanasundareswarar Sannithi.

There are 184 sculptures on it.

Amman Sannithi Gopurams:

There are five towers above the sanctum of the Lord.

1. Amman sannithi gopuram (three tier).

It was constructed by Anandathandava Nambi between 1227 and 1228.

It is seen on top of the entrance of the Amman Sannithi at the west end of the Killikoondu mandapam.

2. Kadahagopuram or Amman Sannithi west gopuram

This was constructed in the year 1570 by a person called Veerathummasi.

It is seen on top of the first corridor surrounding the Amman sannithi in the west end..

It is about 64.6 feet tall, with a base area of 50 feet x 28.6 feet.

There are 228 mythological figures on it.

3. Chittira Gopuram or Amman Sannithi gopuram

It was constructed by Kallathiappan Mudaliar in the year 1569.

It is situated inbetween the Meenakshi Naicker mandapam and the Muthupillai mandapam in the Amman sannithi.

As it contains 730 aesthetic sculptures of exquisite refinement it is also called the Chittira gopuram.

It 177 feet in height and has a base area of 78 feet x 38 feet.

Procedure for Worship:

Worshipping Arulmighu Meenakshi Amman at first had been the manner of prayer traditionally.

Devotees should enter the temple through East Gopuram, pass along Ashtasakthi Mandapam, Meenakshi Nayakar Mandapam and Mudali Mandapam, take a bath in the Golden Lotus pond and wear clean clothes. Foremost, they must worship the Viboothi Vinayakar on the south of the sacred pond. From the southern bank, devotees could worship the golden pinnacles of Swamy and Amman temples. They can see the 64 miracles of Lord Shiva on the walls surrounding the pond.

After worshipping Sithi Vinayakar, Kumaran and other deities in the parrot cage mandapam, must go round the altar at the Amman Sannidhi, and then enter the sanctum through the main entrance. Men and women should stand in separate rows

and worship the deity. Devotees should meditate the five holy alphabets, recite the sacred names of the Lord, sing divine songs and go round the shrine..

Under the auspices of the Temple administration, a girls higher secondary school called Arulmighu Meenakshi Sundareswarar Girls Higher Secondary School is being run near Teppakulam, Madurai.

While going round the first corridor, Airavatha Vinayakar on the south east, Valla Vinayakar on the south west, Nirutha Ganapathy and Muthukumaraswamy and Chandikeswarar on the northwest must be worshipped. While going round the second corridor, the devotees could see a statue of Thirumalai Naicker in the east, kolu mandapam and Koodalkumarar sannidhi in the west. After worshipping Kumarar, the devotees should proceed to the second corridor of Swamy shrine. It is the normal practice to seek the permission of Nandiam Perumal to grant permission to enter the temple.

After that the Anukgnai Vinayakar and the Nandi at the main entrance to the Swamy temple. After that the devotees should proceed along the six pillared pedestal and worship Chandrasekarar and other deities and the Natarajar who danced changing his legs at the Velliyambalam and then worship the Lord at the sanctum. While going round the first corridor of the Swamy temple, Vandhiyammai, Sivalingam, Sun, Kalaimagal, the Saints, Somaskander, various Lingams, Pitchadanar, Kasiviswanathar, Ellam Valla Siddhar, Durgai Amman, Kadamba tree, Kanagasabai Natarajar, Chandikeswarar, Atcharalingam, Mahalakshmi, Rathnasabai Natarajar, Vanniyum well, Lingam and Bhairavar should be worshipped in that order before coming out.

On the north of the main entrance is the shrine of Arulmighu Palani Andavar. Having worshipped the deities including Sadayappar between the Nandhi Mandapam and coming round the hundred pillar hall, Agni Veeraputhirar, Ahora Veerapathirar, Oothuva Thandava Moorthy and Badrakali, devotees should proceed to the Thirugnanasambandar mandapam and there offer worship to the four deities, Mangayarkarasiyar, Kulachirayar and Nedumaranayar and then after paying obeisance to the flag pole, they should sit down for a while. Later the idols of Hanumar, Krishnar and other deities on the pillars at the back and then enter the middle way and leave through Amman Sannidhi.

Devotees proceeding the temple should bathe and wear Saiva symbols such as holy ash, Uthiraksham, and carry with them coconut, fruits, incense and other items of

offering to the extent possible. It is the practice to meditate the holy scriptures, and recite the sacred names of the deities while in the sacred premises.

On the first day of every Tamil month, special prayers with abhishekarm are offered at the shrine of Sangam poets on the second corridor of the Swami Sannidhi. Special prayers are also conducted on the birth star days of the temple Adiyars and 63 Saints.

Daily Pooja Schedules:

Pooja Name	Daily	Time
Thiruvanandal pooja	Morning	05 : 00 AM – 06 : 00 AM
Vizha pooja	Morning	06:30 AM – 07 : 15 AM
Kalasantidhi pooja	Morning	06:30 AM – 07 : 15 AM
Thrikalasantidhi pooja	Morning	10:30 AM – 11:15 AM
Uchikkala Pooja (Noon Pooja)	Morning	10:30 AM – 11:15 AM
Maalai pooja	Evening	04:30 PM – 05:15 PM
Ardhajama Pooja (Night Pooja)	Night	07 : 30 PM – 08 : 15 PM
Palliarai pooja	Night	09 : 30 PM – 10 : 00 PM

Festivals:



During the 12 months of the Tamil calendar year, every month there is a festival in the temple.

Serial No.	Name of Tamil Month		Detail of the Festival
1	<u>Chithirai</u>	April – May	Chithirai Brahamostavam – Arumigu Thirukkalyanam.
2	<u>Vaikasi</u>	May - June	Vasantham Festival
3	<u>Aani</u>	June- July	Unjal Festival
4	<u>Aadi</u>	July- Aug	Aadi – Mulai Kottu Festival – <u>Aadi Festiva Invitation 2016</u>

5	<u>Aavani</u>	Aug.-Sep	Aavani Moolam Festival – ” Puttukku Mansumantha Leela Festival” <u>Invitaion 2015</u>
6	<u>Purattasi</u>	Sep – Oct	Navarathri festival
7	<u>Ayppasi</u>	Oct -Nov	Kolattam Festival
8	<u>Karthikai</u>	Nov -Dec	Kolattam Festival
9	<u>Margali</u>	Dec -Jan	Thiruvathirai – Arudhra Dharsan Festival and Thiruvembavai and Thiruppavai Festival.
10	<u>Thai</u>	Jan- Feb	Major portion of utsavam performed in A/M Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple. Thepporstovam in A/M Mariyamman temple theppam.
11	<u>Masi</u>	Feb – March	Masi – Mandala utsavam for 48 days.
12	<u>Panguni</u>	March – April	Summar Vasantham Festival

Festivals are celebrated in this temple throughout the year. Some of the most popular festivals of the temple are Chitra festival, Avanimoola festival, Masi Mandala festival, Float festival, and Navarathri cultural festival.

MONTH OF CHITRAI (APRIL):

The Chitra festival is celebrated for 12 days during the Tamil month of Chitrai (April in the English calendar) and begins with the flag hoisting on the first day. On the 8th day the coronation of Meenakshi Amman takes place. On the 9th day the Goddess is taken out in procession. On the 10th day the celestial wedding of Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareswarar is performed, followed by car

festival the next day, Theertha festival is celebrated on the 12th day with the Lord and Goddess going round Masi streets.

MONTH OF VAIKASI (MAY):

The spring festival is hosted for ten days during this month. On the 10th day milk mango offerings would be offered to the deities. The Lord and Goddess would proceed to the New Mandapam stay there and be taken out in process. On the day of Moola star, the procession of 63 Saints would be conducted in the morning and at night Thirugnanasambandar would be taken out in procession.

MONTH OF AANI (JUNE):

Oonjal festival would be conducted for ten days during this month. On the 10th day, the triple fruit pooja would be performed. Abhishekam would be performed for Sivakami Amman and Arulmighu Nadarajar on the day of Uthiram. The Panchasabha Nadaraja Moorthy would be taken out in procession along the fur Masi streets.

MONTH OF AADI (JULY):

The Aadi Mulaikottu festival is celebrated for 10 days during this month. The festival would be confined to only to the Amman, who will be taken out in procession along Aadi streets. Spcial recitals of Nadaswaram would be the highlight of this festival.

MONTH OF AAVANI (AUGUST):

The Aavani festival would be conducted for 18 days. Six days of the festival would be devoted to Arulmighu Chandrasekarar and the balance 12 days would be for the Panchamoorthies. On the 7th day of the festival, coronation would be performed for Sundaeswarar and on the 8th day the horse reins would be exchanged. On the 9th day the episode of Lord Sivaperuman carrying soil for earning pittu would be enacted while the theertham on the occasion of the joining of Avittam and Pooranai would be celebrated. On the same night, Arulmighu Thirupparankundram Subramaniyar and Thiruvadhavur Arulmighu Manickavasaka Peruman would bid farewell. During the festival of Chandrasekarar, procession would be taken out along the second corridor of Swami shrine. The Panchamoorthies would be taken around in processiiion along Aavani Moola streets. During these days the ten miracles performed by the Lord of Madurai would be enacted by the Sivachariars.

MONTH OF PURATTASI (SEPTEMBER):

The Navarathri festival would be celebrated for Amman in a grand manner during this month. Amman would appear in a separate dress and look every day and bless the devotees at the 'kolu mandapam' in Amman Sannidhi. Kalpa pooja and Lakshacharna would be performed everyday for the Amman at the sanctum. On the 10th day the washing of hair ceremony would be performed. On that Panchamoorthies would be taken out in procession within the temple premises. On all ten days of the festival cultural festivals would be hosted in a grand manner. The entire temple complex would be bathed in colour lamps and the dolls would be arranged in a manner to find a niche in the hearts of the devotees.

MONTH OF PURATTASI (OCTOBER):

Kanda Sashti festival would be celebrated for six days at the Koodal Kumarar Sannidhi. Soorasamharam is not performed here. On the seventh day when Arulmighu Muthukumarar goes out in procession, 'Pavadai Dharshan' would be conducted.

On the day of Deepavali festival, a durbar would be held for the employees of the temple.

On the days of Pooram in this month, the ceremony of hoisting and swinging Meenakshi Amman would be performed.

MONTH OF PURATTASI (NOVEMBER):

Deepam (lights) festival would be conducted for ten days during this month. Swamy would be taken out in procession along the Aadi streets. On the day of Karthigai one lakh lamps would be lit in the temple. On that day a bonfire would be lit in East Masi street,

MONTH OF PURATTASI (DECEMBER):

Oil anointing ceremony would be conducted for nine days in this month at the New Mandapam. Arulmighu Meenakshi Amman would be taken out in procession along the Chitra streets. On the day of Thiruvadhirai, Arudhra Dharshan will take place. Pancha Sabha Nataraja Moorthigal would be taken in procession along the Masi streets. On the day of Ashtami the Lord and Goddess would ride the oxen vehicle and go round Kottai streets. Thiruvembavai festival would be conducted for ten days. Everyday, Arulmighu Manickavasagar would be taken out in procession along Aadi streets in the mornings. On the 10th rotating wheel and golden spring ceremonies would be conducted. In the mornings Thiruvembavai and Thirupalli

Yezhutchi lyrics would be recited and there will be religious discourses by spiritual leaders. competitions would be conducted for school and college students and prizes presented.

MONTH OF THAI (JANUARY):

The float festival would be conducted for 12 days during the month. Swamy and Amman would be taken out in procession along the Chitra streets. On the 8th day the casting of net festival would be held while theertham festival and the pushing of the float would be held on the 10th day. On the 11th day harvesting of sheaves and on the 12th day the float festival would be conducted.

MONTH OF PURATTASI (FEBRUARY):

The Maasi Mandala festival would be conducted for a mandalam (48 days). Six days of the festival is devoted to Arulmighu Vinayaka and six days for Arulmighu Kumar and three days for the triumvirate and six days for Chandrasekarar. The deities would be taken out in procession along the second corridor of Swamy Sannidhi. Panchamoorthy festival would be celebrated for ten days, when they will be taken out in procession along the Chitra streets. Theertham would be held on the day of Maham. Silent festival would be conducted for nine days of which three days would be for Chandrasekarar and an equal number of days for Swamy and Chandikeswarar. On the 10th day, the flag would be lowered and accounts read.

MONTH OF PURATTASI (MARCH):

The summer spring festival would be hosted for nine days at the Velliaymbala mandapam. Swamy and Amman would be taken in procession along Chitra streets. On the day of Panguni Uthiram, Swamy and Amman would proceed to Arulmighu Thiruvappudayar temple and bless those who excel in their religious belief by sprinkling `rasa vadham`.

Meenakshi Temple is open daily from dawn until 10 p.m., except for when it closes between 12.30 p.m. to 4 p.m. This is because Hindu scriptures specify that an abode of Lord Shiva must not remain open in the afternoon.

It's best to visit the temple once in the morning and once in the evening (for the night ceremony). The temple's main entrance is on the east side, and non-Hindus can enter from there. Conservative dress, which does not reveal legs or shoulders, is a must.

Temple Security and What You Can't Take Inside

Do be aware that security was increased at the temple in 2013, following bomb blasts in Hyderabad. Cameras are no longer allowed inside the temple. Cell phones with cameras were permitted up until early February 2018, but have now been banned along with any items made of plastic. This, unfortunately, means that it's no longer possible to take photos inside the temple complex.

You can safely store your camera and other belongings inside a locker at the stall that minds shoes at the east entrance to the temple. After doing so, your bag will be scanned by an X-ray machine and you'll be manually searched by guards.

Highlights Inside the Temple

The temple's main attraction is its stunning Hall of 1,000 Pillars. In reality, there are only 985 pillars, each with magnificently carved statues of yaali (a mythical lion and elephant hybrid) or Hindi deities. The hall was built in 1569 by Ariyanatha Mudaliyar, general and chief minister of Madurai's Nayak dynasty. Its colorfully painted ceiling is also captivating and features a striking wheel of time. There's a set of musical pillars and Art Museum that are worth seeing as well. Tickets cost 50 rupees for foreigners and 5 rupees for Indians.

Darshan (Viewing) of the Goddess

Only Hindus can go into the inner sanctums to see the idol of Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareswarar. If you don't want to wait for up to three hours in the free lines, it's possible to pay extra for "special darshan" tickets. These tickets provide direct access to the idols and can be purchased inside the temple. They cost 50 rupees solely for Goddess Meenakshi, and 100 rupees for both deities.

Services:

Arulmigu Meenakshi Sundereswarar Temple is involved in many valuable community services like education, Annadhanam

Parking Facilities

Parking facility is also available in Ellis Nagar Parking area near Periyar Bus stand.

Clock Room

Safety Clock room facility is also available for the devotees at all Tower entrances.

Spiritual and moral education classes:

As announced by the Hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, spiritual and moral education classes are conducted for children every Sunday from 4.00 p.m. to 5 p.m. More than 35 children are benefitting from these classes. These classes were inaugurated by the Hon. C. Durairaj, Minister for Local Administration on 2.3.3.2002. This scheme was also extended to the Arulmighu Mariamman temple at Teppakulam from 18.8.2002 on the advice of the Hon. Chief Minister. There are about 35 children attending these classes.

Other Activities:

In order to slake the thirst of devotees coming to the temple, Reverse Osmosis plant had been set up at the entrance to each towers and purified drinking water is made available to them.

To enable pilgrims from outside areas and travellers to stay, two and three bedded rooms and air conditioned rooms are available at affordable rates at 'Birla Vishram' travellers lodge on behalf of the temple. This lodge is situated near the entrance to the West Gopuram.

In order to disseminate spiritual knowledge to devotees a library with 1750 volumes is functioning in South Aadi street.

On important days discourses are delivered by spiritual leaders and college professors in the temple and satellite temples to promote spiritual thinking among the devotees. Saiva religious training classes, spiritual seminars, religious reawakening classes are conducted every year by the Temple.

To provide an insight into the importance of the temple, to understand the concept easily, to learn the history of the temple, audio and video cassettes as well as a tourist map of the temples of Madurai district, Thiruvilayadal Puranam, Thiruvadhavoor Thalapuram, explanation of Hinduism, Meenakshiammai Pillai Thamizh, Angayarkanni Anupoodhi, The Great Temple of Madurai, Madurai through Ages and other works and pictures of Swamy and Amman are available at the temple book stall.

Girls Higher Secondary School

Under the auspices of the Temple administration, a girls higher secondary school called Arulmighu Meenakshi Sundareswarar Girls Higher Secondary School is being run near Teppakulam, Madurai. Since 7.6.1963. There are 1,266 students on roll here with a staff of 46, including the head mistress and other employees.

The temple is running a mercy home where indigent students are being provided lodging, food, clothing, text books, notes and other requirements. At present there are 46 girls in the home.

Free marriages are performed at a cost of Rs.3,000 for poor couples with temple funds.

In order to offer archana in Tamil, books for this purpose obtained from the office of Madurai Joint Commissioner had been distributed to all priests in the temple and now archana is being conducted in Tamil.

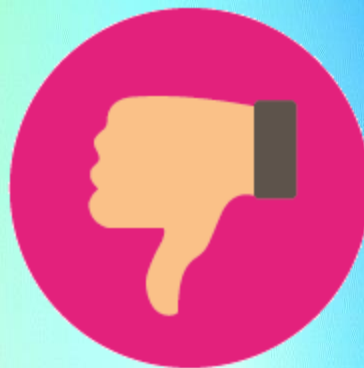
There are 18 guides authorised by the temple administration to guide devotees from other States and foreign countries.

On the first day of every Tamil month, special prayers with abhishegam are offered at the shrine of Sangam poets on the second corridor of the Swami Sannidhi. Special prayers are also conducted on the birth star days of the temple Adiyars and 63 Saints.





DO's



DONT's

Do's and Dont's

Devotees should not enter the temple without taking bath.

Devotees should not enter the temple wearing shorts, Lunges, and caps.

Chewing betal leaves, tobacco, Gutka is prohibited inside the temple.

Devotees are not allowed to enter the temple with foot wears or socks

Devotees with uncomfortable injuries are not allowed inside the temple.

Female devotees should not enter the temple for the first 5 days of their menstruation period.

Devotees should maintain discipline and follow the rules of Vaidhika Dharma.

Cleaning of the temple should be maintained.

Smoking and Spitting inside temple is strictly prohibited.

Devotees can get more or specific information from the Executive Officer of the temple.

Umbrella, Sticks, Materials made of animal skin should not be brought inside the temple.

How to Reach Meenakshi Amman Temple:

Madurai is well connected to all the major cities of India by air, rail and road. Madurai airport is just 10 km away from the city and you can easily reach here with the help of a cab. All major trains are available from Madurai to the various cities of the country and more if you want to travel by road, AC as well as non-AC



buses are available.

About reaching Meenakshi Temple, so it is just 1 Km away from Madurai Junction Railway Station and more from any location in Madurai, you can easily reach here by taxis, local buses and auto rikshaws.

To reach Madurai by Flight: You can book a flight ticket online and you may get the cheaper price if you book it well in advance. Hence make a plan before 2 to 3 months to get a good offer price. The travel time will be approximately 90 minutes from the Chennai - Meenambakkam airport. After reaching Madurai Airport, you can reach Meenakshi Amman Temple by booking a taxi available near Madurai Airport. It may take another 90 minutes to reach Meenakshi amman temple from

the airport.

To reach Madurai by Train

Those who wish to travel by train can book your ticket at least two months before the travel date to avoid the waiting list. In Chennai city, the train starts from Egmore railway station and it will take 8 hours journey to reach Madurai Junction Railway station. It is better to keep food and water items along with you. In your travel plan, make proper arrangements, including a power bank and a Mobile charger. After reaching Madurai Junction Railway station, it is just 1.70 kilometers to reach Meenakshi Amman Temple. You can take an Autorickshaw or taxi to reach the temple within 10 minutes.

To reach Madurai by Bus

From Chennai, people can travel either by State Government bus or Private bus to reach Madurai. Those who want to travel by bus can catch the bus at Chennai CMBT bus terminus at Koyambedu. The traveling time will be 7 to 8 hours journey and you have to get down at Mattuthavani Bus stand at Madurai. From the bus stand, it will take around 20 minutes to reach Meenakshi Amman temple by either share-auto or bus or taxi.