vanakkam

... Information and Guidelines to visitors and volunteers to Aravind

ARAVIND EYE CARE SYSTEM

(Revised March 2012)
# Content

1. Aravind Eye Care System  
   - A Brief Introduction 04  
   - Guiding Philosophy 05  
   - Our Founder 05  
   - An Overview of Aravind Eye Care System 06  
   - Aravind Eye Hospitals 06  
   - Camps 07  
   - Training and Education 08  
   - LAICO 09  
   - Aurolab 09  
   - Aravind Medical Research Foundation (AMRF) 10  

2. Getting to Aravind  
   - Pre-Arrival 11  
   - Travel to India 12  

3. Travelling in Tamil Nadu  
   - Language 13  
   - Weather 13  
   - Food 13  
   - Security 13  
   - Photography 13  
   - Medical Assistance 13  
   - Electricity 14  
   - Local Transportation 14  
   - Culture/Conduct 14  
   - Shopping 15  
   - Banking Facilities 15  
   - Communication 16  
   - Telephones 16  
   - Internet 16  
   - Festivals 17  
   - Useful Tips 17  

4. While at Aravind  
   - Dress 18  
   - Working Hours 18  

5. Madurai  
   - About Madurai 19  
   - Travel to Madurai 19  
   - Restaurants 20  
   - Places of Worship 21  
   - Leisure Time 22
• Shopping 23
• Sightseeing in the city of Madurai 24
• Sightseeing out of the city of Madurai 26
• Places to stay 27

6. Theni
• About Theni 28
• Aravind Eye Hospital 28
• Places of Interest around Theni 29

7. Tirunelveli
• The Land of Tamiraparani 30
• Sightseeing 32

8. Coimbatore
• About Coimbatore 35
• General Information 35
• Restaurants in Coimbatore 36
• Places to worship 37
• Sightseeing in and around Coimbatore 39

9. Puducherry (Pondicherry)
• About Puducherry 42
• General Information 43
• Sightseeing in the city of Puducherry 43
• Sightseeing out the city of Puducherry 45

10. Salem
• About Salem 46
• Transport 46
• Tourist Attractions 47
• Famous Temples 48
• Recreation 49

11. Appendix
• Map of India 46
• Map of Tamil Nadu 47
• Map of Madurai 48
• Map of Theni 49
• Map of Tirunelveli 50
• Map of Coimbatore 51
• Map of Pondicherry 52
• Important Phone Numbers 53
• Quick Links 53
1- Aravind Eye Care System

A Brief Introduction
Aravind Eye Hospitals are the expression of a vision quest, a response to the silent call of thousands who have lost their sight.

Under the leadership of Dr. G. Venkataswamy, Aravind Eye Hospital was founded in Madurai in 1976 with the mission to eliminate needless blindness in Tamil Nadu.

Today, Aravind’s innovative eye care delivery system is recognised as a model for other developing countries. Much importance is given to ensure that all patients are accorded the same care and high quality service, regardless of their economic status. As a result of a unique fee system and effective management, Aravind is able to provide free eye care to 60% of its patients from the revenue generated from the other 40% from its paying patients.

Aravind follows the principle that large volume and high quality service result in low cost and self-sustainability. Aravind’s network of hospitals has the distinction of being the most productive eye care organization in the world, in terms of surgical volume and the number of patients treated.

With less than 1% of the country’s ophthalmic manpower, Aravind performs about 5% of all cataract surgeries in India.
**Guiding Philosophy**

Aravind Eye Hospitals are named after Sri Aurobindo, one of the 20th century’s most revered spiritual leaders. In essence, Sri Aurobindo’s teachings focus on mankind’s transcendence into a heightened state of consciousness through service, as an instrument of, what he called, the Divine Force.

At Aravind one finds, combined with modern technology and management practices, a measure of compassionate spirituality, awareness beyond the matter-of-fact, and the impetus of a mission.

**Our Founder**

Dr. G. Venkataswamy (Dr. V), 1918-2006, was born in a small village in South India. He received his medical degree from Stanley Medical College, Chennai in 1944. He joined the Indian Army Medical Corps, but had to retire in 1948 after developing severe rheumatoid arthritis – a disease that left his fingers crippled and changed the course of his life. Despite his condition he returned to medical school and earned a Diploma and Masters Degree in ophthalmology.

With hard work and determination, Dr. V. trained himself to hold a scalpel and to perform cataract surgery. In time, he personally performed over one hundred thousand successful eye surgeries.

He joined the faculty at Madurai Medical College as the head of the Department of Ophthalmology and later served as the Vice Dean. In these capacities he introduced a number of innovative programmes to address the problem of blindness in India - including the outreach eye camps, the rehabilitation centre for the blind, the initiation of a training programme for ophthalmic assistants and the world’s first rehabilitation centre for the blind. For much of his life Dr. V. was a pioneering eye surgeon. In 1976, upon his retirement at age 58, he formed the GOVEL Trust under which the Aravind Eye Hospital was founded.

Guided by a philosophy that taught the spirituality of service, driven by compassion far beyond the ordinary and backed by the support and assistance of those who believed in his vision, Dr. V. set in motion a dynamic crusade against blindness. His work and its remarkable results have gained international recognition. He was the recipient of many awards, among them: the Helen Keller International Award, the IAPB Award, the International Blindness Prevention Award by the AAO and the Padmashree award from the Government of India.
An Overview of Aravind Eye Care System

Our Mission: “To eradicate needless blindness by providing appropriate, compassionate and high quality eye care to all.” In an endeavor towards fulfilling this mission, Aravind has expanded in various directions. Today, Aravind is more than just an eye hospital…it is:

- A social organization committed to the goal of eradication of needless blindness through comprehensive eye care services.
- An international training centre for ophthalmic professionals and trainees who come from within India and from around the world to teach or to learn, to offer their skills and to acquire new ones.
- An institute for research that contributes to the development of eye care.
- An institute to train health-related and managerial personnel in the development and implementation of efficient and sustainable eye care programmes.
- A manufacturer of world class ophthalmic products available at affordable costs.

Aravind Eye Hospitals

Over the years Aravind Eye Hospital has grown from an 11-bed hospital with 3 doctors to one of the most productive eye hospital systems in the world. Today, in addition to the hospital in Madurai, there are eight other Aravind Eye Hospitals in Theni, Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, and Puducherry, Dindigul, Tirupur, Salem and Tuticorin with a combined total of around 3500 beds.

At Aravind Eye Hospitals great stress is placed on maximum utilization of resources. With less than 1% of the country’s ophthalmic manpower, Aravind accounts for 5% of the ophthalmic surgeries performed nationwide. The hospitals have well-equipped specialty clinics with comprehensive support facilities.

2,646,129 outpatient visits were handled and 315,483 surgeries were performed at the Aravind Eye Hospitals in 2010-2011 at the end of March. A unique model of eye care service gives free medical and surgical treatment to 60% of the patients from the revenue, generated by the remaining 40% who can pay.

Aravind now has full-fledged super-speciality clinics including:

- Retina and Vitreous
- Cornea
- Glaucoma
- IOL and Refractive Surgery
- Paediatric Ophthalmology
- Neuro-ophthalmology
- Uvea
- Orbit and Oculoplasty
- Vision Rehabilitation Centre
Manned by highly-qualified specialists, these clinics provide superior care as well as intensive training. The eye banks located in the Aravind Eye Hospitals actively seek donations and conduct awareness programs.

**Camps**
An integral part of Aravind is its community outreach programmes which include screening eye camps, school eye health programme, village volunteer programme in all of which provide different strategies for taking eye care service to the doorstep of the community. They provide curative, preventive and rehabilitative care in the community along with IEC (information, education & communication) programmes to improve service delivery to potential patients in the community.

Apart from screening camps, other outreach activities include:
- Community-Based Comprehensive Rehabilitation Programme
- School Children Screening
- Village Volunteers Programme
- Refraction Camps
- Diabetic Retinopathy detection and awareness camps

In the year ending March 2011, 2639 camps were conducted through which 7,08,831 patients were screened, 89,075 spectacles were dispensed and 76,033 surgeries were performed

**Aravind Tele-Ophthalmology Network**
Specialty eye care is available today, only in urban areas. However, in rural areas where the need for specialty eye care is greater, there is none available to make eye care services accessible to everyone, Aravind Eye Hospital launched its Tele-ophthalmology Network (ATN) in the year 2002 along with Orbis International and Acumen Fund, USA. Since then, a Telemedicine link has been established between all the satellite hospitals of Aravind.

Aravind also uses this network to enhance the skills of ophthalmologists. By collaborating with various leading eye institutes such as Wilmer Eye Institute of Johns Hopkins University, Cornell University and Columbia University for education, training and research, Aravind doctors can interact and share their experiences with experts around the world.
Vision Centres

Aravind experimented with different ways of providing rural primary eye care, of which the successful Vision Centre model has grown to a network of more than 40 such centres. These centres are connected to an ophthalmologist at the nearest Aravind Eye Hospital via teleconferencing and thus, address the issues of transportation and unavailability of a specialist at the various primary care centres. Each of these centres covers a rural population of 50,000 and they have been able to achieve remarkable penetration into the community – up to 40% in the first year itself. Some of the first centres have been able to cover over 75% of those who need eye care.

Training and Education

Aravind’s network of hospitals has the distinction of being the most productive eye care organisation in the world, in terms of surgical volume and the number of patients treated. This volume enables Aravind to provide training and consultancy in both clinical and management areas.

A list of courses, currently being offered, can be found on the Aravind website. http://www.aravind.org/education/homepage.htm.
LAICO

Asia’s first eye care training institute, LAICO was established in the year 1992. LAICO’s mission is to “contribute to the prevention and control of global blindness through teaching, training, publications, consultancy, research and advocacy in eye care”. In addition to the many eye care management and skill based training programmes, LAICO also shares its knowledge through consultancy and capacity building programmes. LAICO helps participating hospitals in strategy development and implementation, especially in the field of cataract services. LAICO works with over 278 hospitals across India and other developing countries including Nepal, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Malawi, Kenya and Latin America. This program has been extended to set up tertiary eye care services such as paediatric ophthalmology services and diabetic retinopathy services. LAICO has also developed training and teaching capacity in the developing countries.

Through its consulting services, LAICO has taken a new direction i.e., the contract model of managed hospitals whereby LAICO (and Aravind) manage eye hospitals with Aravind-trained personnel and provide the necessary technical support.

Committed to sharing Aravind’s experience, LAICO, with the support of IAPB, has launched an eye care management online resource centre, “Vision 2020 e-resource”. This online resource centre has a comprehensive collection of eye care management materials that are useful to the eye care programmes around the world. It shares valuable tools that help assess, plan, implement and manage high quality, efficient, and sustainable eye care programmes in the developing world.
Aurolab

Aurolab, Aravind’s manufacturing division, has filled a critical need in the fight against needless blindness by providing affordable ophthalmic products to the developing world. In today’s competitive global marketplace, Aurolab is on the verge of a new period of growth as it begins to expand its product line to cover a wider range of ophthalmic needs. Aurolab has set up manufacturing facilities to produce intraocular lenses (IOLs), suture needles, pharmaceuticals, and surgical blades. Aurolab facility is located at Veerapanchan, about a fifteen minute drive from Aravind Hospital, Madurai.

Dr. G. Venkataswamy Eye Research Institute

Aravind Medical Research Foundation (AMRF):

AMRF was formed to investigate issues concerned with causes and treatment of various eye diseases and problems related to delivery of eye care. The research activities at AMRF reflect Aravind’s commitment to finding new ways to reduce the burden of blindness. The combination of high clinical load, extensive community participation, and access to a large network of eye hospitals provide ideal opportunities for conducting clinical, laboratory and population-based studies and social and health systems research. Located adjacent to LAICO, the new Dr.G.Venkataswamy Eye Research Institute is a state of the art facility that accommodates all sections of research under one roof.
2 – Getting to Aravind

Pre-Arrival
• A Visa is necessary for you to travel to India. Please contact your local Indian Embassy or Consulate for the proper forms and information. Note: As of 2007, Indian visas for visitors from the USA are being outsourced to Travisa India. See the “https://indiavisa.travisaoutsourcing.com” section for website information. Be sure to apply for your visa early enough. You will need to send your passport together with the necessary payment.

• Foreign nationals desirous of coming to India are required to possess a valid passport of their country and a valid Indian visa. There is no provision of ‘Visa on Arrival’ in India and no fee is charged for immigration facilities at the airports. Foreign passengers should ensure that they are in possession of valid Indian Visa before they start their journey to India except nationals of Nepal and Bhutan who do not require visa to enter India.

• The Government of India has issued a rule requiring people with multiple entry tourist visas to wait for a period of two months before returning to India. Initially, it was deemed relevant only to those holding five and 10 year tourist visas. So, even if you have a six month multiple entry tourist visa and you leave India, you most likely won’t be allowed to return to India for two months. Exceptions can be made by applying for special permission from the “Mission/Embassy” abroad.

• Depending on the length of your stay it may be necessary to obtain a ‘Residential Permit’ from the Police Department in Madurai on arrival.

• It is advisable to carry additional copies of your visa/ passport/ residential permit. Having spare passport-sized photographs with you will also be useful.

• It is advisable to obtain a travel insurance policy to cover theft, loss and medical problem before leaving for India. There are a wide range of policies, and your travel agent can advise you. Be sure to check the small print that covers things such as an emergency flight home with a medical escort and the ambulance costs. Keep a copy of this policy apart from the original.

• Before leaving your own country you should visit your doctor to receive information on the precautions and vaccinations needed for travel in India.

• Since India can be quite dusty, contact lens wearers may find it difficult, especially in the rural areas. It is advisable to bring along a pair of sunglasses and some sunscreen lotion. It’s also advisable to bring along some mosquito repellant or use electric mosquito repelling devices..
Travel to India

• When making your flight arrangements, try to find a travel agent familiar with India. Some inexpensive flights can be found, both from the major carriers and also from some of the new “budget carriers” in India.

• For travel to India from the USA, you can purchase a TSA approved “travel lock” with a strap to go around your suitcase, minimizing the chances of items disappearing from your luggage.

• Planes are sometimes double-booked and confirmation of booking and flight time is important.

• When checking your luggage for your journey to Aravind, you can usually check your baggage all the way to Chennai (or other major international airports). After going through customs inspection, you can re-check your bags for the remainder of your journey.

• For local flights within India, in addition to the other items you normally carry in your checked baggage, transfer all extra batteries from your hand baggage to your checked baggage – otherwise they will be seized by airport security during check-in.

• Most Indian airports with international facilities have two separate terminals, one for “international” and one for “domestic” flights. When scheduling connecting flights, be sure to allow enough time for immigration, customs inspection, and transfer to the other terminal.

• Retain the baggage tags that you receive when you check in, as security may require you to show the tags when you leave the destination airport.

• If you have to stay overnight in Chennai, between connecting flights, we recommend the Hotel Mount Heera as a safe place to stay.

• Retiring rooms are also usually available at the Chennai airport. The cost is 750 rupees for one bed in a two-bed room, or around 500 rupees for a bed in the eight-room dormitory. These retiring rooms cannot be booked in advance. When you arrive at the Chennai airport, go to the Airport Manager’s offices, mid-way between the domestic and international terminals, and enquire whether space is available. This is a convenient, clean, and safe way to spend the night if you’re leaving on a flight the next day. The airport restaurant is located above these rooms, on the next floor.
3 – Travelling in TamilNadu

Language
• Tamil is the local language in Tamil Nadu (South India) though English is widely understood and spoken.

Weather
• The climate is tropical, generally hot and humid for most of the year. Daytime temperature ranges from 25°C (77°F) in the winter to 45°C (113°F) in the summer. The rainy season strikes in May/June and a smaller monsoon once again in November/December. The most pleasant time to visit is during the months of July through February. April and May are the hottest months.

Food
• Food is generally spicy. So, always specify if you would like your meal to be made less spicy.
• Tipping at restaurants: A moderate tip of 20 INR is acceptable.
• Drinks: While it is generally acceptable to get coffee or tea from the local street vendors, other drinks should only be purchased in sealed bottles. This includes bottled water (ask for “mineral water”), soda, and beer.
• Do not ask for ice cubes, as they are merely frozen water.
• Fruit drinks mixed with local water should also be avoided.
• Sugar cane juice from local vendor should also be avoided.
• Use bottled water for brushing your teeth.

Security
• Though incidents of theft are rare, it is advisable to keep your luggage and room locked. Madurai is a constantly bustling city making it quite a safe place to go about.

Photography
• Film processing and printing from either film or digital cameras is readily available. The “Mini Studio” in Madurai is located about four blocks from LAICO and does excellent work at low prices.
• Generally locals in TamilNadu love to have their photos taken. Please ask first to be sure, but once you take one photo, you will probably be asked to take dozens more!
• Photography inside temples is sometimes restricted. You may need to purchase a camera pass.

Medical Assistance
• The pharmacy at Aravind carries all the common drugs. However, there are many well-stocked drug stores near the Aravind campus. You should bring your own supply of any special medicines you take, as they may not be readily available in India in the same prescription strengths.
• In case of any medical emergency, the physician at Aravind is available. Guests who feel ill should not hesitate to see the Aravind physician, as in many cases a simple cure is available for visitors with stomach problems, etc.

**Electricity**

- 240 V AC, 50 Hz
- Sockets: 2 or 3 Round pin
- If your country uses a different kind of plug, conversion adapters are available.
- Most computer related devices and chargers will operate on 110 or 220 volt power, but check yours ahead of time to be sure. It is handy to bring one 3-way adapter to plug into the conversion adapter.

**Local Transportation**

- Auto-Rickshaw – This is the most convenient way to get around. Auto rickshaw stands can be found all over, or you can simply flag one down if you see one without passengers in the back seat. Typical charges should be from 80 to 100 rupees per trip – as an example, from the Aravind campus to the Meenakshi Temple the charge should be 80 rupees. Tipping is not expected. Always agree on the price before getting into the auto rickshaw, and be prepared to bargain with the driver. If the driver insists on a higher price than you feel is reasonable, simply walk away to find another autorickshaw.
- Buses – Most Indian cities have an excellent system of low-cost buses, which are a convenient and inexpensive way of getting around. However, the signs and other information are all written in Tamil. If asked, the bus conductor will usually help you out by telling you when to get off for your desired destination. For finding the correct bus, look for the “bus number” prominently displayed on the front of the bus. There are three main bus stands in the city of Madurai, namely Periar bus stand, Arapalayam bus stand and Mattuthavani bus stand. If you are taking a long distance bus, ask which bus stand you should go to, to find the bus for your destination.
- Taxis – Taxis are also available, at a higher charge.

**Culture / Conduct**

South Indians are mild mannered and are quite open to foreigners. The following tips should help you understand what appropriate behavior is.

- Use only your right hand to give or receive anything.
- Avoid criticism of local customs or traditions.
- Avoid aggressive behavior.
- Be a patient guest; the pace may not be as fast as that to which you are accustomed. The formality of sitting at length in conversation is a time-honored custom.
- Shaking hands: Don’t shake hands unless a hand is offered. If in doubt say “Namaste” with both hands clasped together, especially when greeting women. Handshakes may be longer and could involve both hands at times.
• Always remove your shoes before entering a temple or someone’s house.
• Indians assume that Westerners dislike hot and spicy food, so if you prefer hot and spicy food do tell them.
• If your host insists on paying for things, don’t force the issue.
• Observe social protocols in meetings - for example, don’t force junior people to speak in front of the seniors.
• The approach to time in India is more relaxed than abroad, so don’t be surprised if people turn up late for meetings or just cancel it at the last minute.
• It’s a friendly and common gesture for people of the same sex to hold hands.
• Smoking, consumption of alcohol, and chewing gum are not permitted within any of the Aravind premises. Smoking in public is also banned.

Shopping
• Shop Hours: Most shops are open from 10 am to 6 pm. They generally don’t close for lunch. Many shops are closed on Sundays.
• Credit Cards: Only the larger shops accept credit cards (Master Card and Visa) and traveller’s cheques.
• Bargaining: At most of the local shops the prices start out quite high, and you are expected to bargain to get a more reasonable price. If you don’t feel comfortable about bargaining, there are some “fixed price” shops you can go to.

Banking Facilities
• The current exchange rate is around 50 Rupees per Dollar, as of March 2011 visit www.xe.com to find the current exchange rate
• Currency Exchange: You can contact any government approved exchange office or hotel to change money, or you may ask the hospital cashier for help.
• ATM machines are available in plenty and usually handle VISA & master cards.
• If you change money from your local currency to Indian currency, keep the receipt. You will need it later if you wish to change your extra Indian currency back to your local currency.

Communication
• Post and post-related services like courier and FAX are available; ask the hospital receptionist where to find these services.

Telephones
• There are three kinds of telephones, sometimes located inside a phone booth. There are phones for LOCAL calls, Long Distance within India (STD), and international calls outside of India (ISD). They are located on many streets near the hospital. In addition, there is an STD and ISD booth at the hospital.
• Cell phone service is available at reasonable rates from several local service providers including Airtel, Vodafone (formerly Hutch), and BSNL. Cell phone reception is generally good in all major cities and even in most small towns. If you want to purchase a mobile phone in Madurai, you will find excellent pricing starting as low as 1500 rupees for a basic phone.
  - You will need an “unlocked GSM tri-band or quad-band cell phone” for use in India. If you are bringing a GSM style phone with you to India, first call your home phone company to obtain the “unlock code” which may be necessary to allow you to use your phone with a different mobile phone service.
  - To obtain a local SIM card to insert in your phone, along with your application you will need to submit a copy of your passport and a letter from Aravind saying that you are involved in Aravind related projects.
  - If you will be spending most of your time in Madurai you should purchase your SIM card in Madurai rather than a different Indian city, to be sure of being charged only local Indian rates when using your phone in Madurai.
  - Cell phone service for visitors is usually “pre-paid”. You purchase “air time” and “validity” as required. Extending either is very simple – there are numerous mobile phone suppliers who will be glad to assist you and sell you the appropriate card. One such supplier is located only two blocks from the LAICO building.
  - If your home service provider allows it, you can also use your existing SIM card, but you will be paying higher prices as your local and international calls will all become international calls.

Internet
• Many Aravind buildings including the Aravind Guest House in Madurai and Pondicherry provide WiFi. You can connect directly from your laptop. Simply turn on your wireless search program, and it should find an access point to
connect to. Ask the hospital receptionist where WiFi is available. If asked for a security code, ask someone from Aravind to get the access code. Internet service at most Aravind locations is often good enough to allow the use of programs such as “skype” for “free” phone calls, although the connection speed sometimes will slow down when the networks are busy. Internet Browsing Centre offers Internet access at nominal charges. You will find quite a few cyber cafés in most commercial areas of the cities.

• Internet from Mobile Phones - Most newer high-end mobile phones also have WiFi capabilities. You can use these to perform most of the same functions as a laptop computer. A Good way to get an inexpensive connection for laptop on phone is to sign up at www.jajah.com.

Festivals (Tamil Nadu State)
South India celebrates fairs and festivals in a very grand manner. Festivals in India are usually celebrated with the family. These festivals are some of the more grand occasions when the city comes alive…

• PONGAL or the harvest festival, in January, is a thanks giving to the Sun God and is a colourful sight complete with decorated cows!
• JALIKATTU or bull-taming on the days after Pongal is an impressive show of strength and courage by the village youth. The Madurai Chamber of Commerce organizes tourist visits to the “bull taming”.
• DIWALI, the festival of lights in November, is a nation-wide celebration of the conquest of good over evil.

Useful Tips
• It is advisable to bring your own supply of toilet paper with you when traveling to India, as it is not always available at public toilets. If you travel away from the hospital area, you should carry your own supply with you.
• Also bring along some mosquito repellant or use electric mosquito repelling devices.
• Make copies of your passport and visa, and carry them with you instead of the originals.
• Be aware that what people in other countries such as America call the “second floor” is referred to as the “first floor” in India. Think of the ground floor as “0” and count up from there for additional floors.
• If you expect to use the autorickshaws, have your destination / return address written down in Tamil so you can show the driver. This will make your communication much easier.
4 – While at Aravind

**Dress**

- Since South India is warm even in December and January, you really do not need any warm clothes. Cotton clothes are most suitable. However, if you are planning to travel to North India during winter months or if you plan to visit any of the regional hill stations, it is advisable to bring adequate warm clothes, as it could be cold.
- Women: It is appropriate for women to wear long skirts or full pants and loose fitting tops. Sleeveless tops are not appropriate. Please do not wear tight leggings or jeans and skimpy tops to work. Those who are staying for longer periods can buy Indian clothes such as the salwar kameez, as these will be more appropriate and comfortable.
- Men: Here the men mostly wear button-down shirts and loose trousers. Avoid wearing jeans, t-shirts or shorts to work.
- Shoes: Sandals or other loose shoes would be comfortable. Most visitors wear socks for fear of foot problems. Flip-flops are useful and can be purchased locally at a cheap rate.

**Working Hours**

- LAICO and Aravind Eye Hospitals work a six-day week: Monday through Saturday.
- Working hours at the hospitals are 7:00 am - 5:30 pm.
- Working hours at LAICO are 9:00 am - 6:00 pm.

**Madurai Hospital Address:**

Aravind Eye Hospital,
1, Anna Nagar, Madurai 625 020
Tamilnadu, India.
Phone:+91-452-4356100
Fax: +91-452-253 0984
E-mail: aravind@aravind.org
www.aravind.org

**Important Madurai Phone Numbers**

Aravind Eye Hospital : 0452 – 43 56 100
LAICO : 0452 – 43 56 500
Harmony Guest House : 0452 – 252 1364

Note: When calling one of the operators, please tell the receptionist who your contact person at Aravind is, so she will be able to connect you to the right person.
5. Madurai

About Madurai
India, with its traditional and diversified culture, stands unique in the south of Asia and attracts many visitors from abroad. Nearly 19 languages are spoken in India. Though Hinduism is the main religion, others like Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism are also practiced. India has the second largest population in the world, which recently crossed the 1 billion mark. There are numerous places of interest in India. India saturates the senses, from the tropical backwaters to the towering Himalayan peaks.

Tamil Nadu, situated in Southern India is the home of Dravidian art and culture, characterized by the amazingly ornate temples with their soaring towers known as ‘gopurams’. Chennai, (Madras) ‘The Gateway to the South’, is the state capital.

Madurai, probably over 2, 500 years old, is the oldest city in Tamil Nadu. Its origin and name emerge from the myths of a lovely legend.

In a forest near a lotus pond, Indra, King of Gods, worshipped Lord Siva as a Swayambu Lingam. At this hallowed spot the Pandiyan monarch, Kulasekhra, built a great temple and by clearing the forest, created a lotus-shaped city around the temple. The city was henceforth known as ‘Madhurapuri’. Madhurapuri grew and prospered to become the capital of the Pandiyan Kingdom. It is referred to in the Ramayana and in Kautila’s Arthashastra.

Madurai lies on the banks of the river Vaigai. The temple and the old city are on the southern bank, while modern Madurai with its textile mills; engineering and large university sprawl around.

Travel To Madurai
• BY AIR: Chennai, is the closest international airport to Madurai, and even if your port of entry is not Chennai, we advise you to get to Madurai through Chennai. There are three airlines flying between Madurai (IXM), and Chennai (MAA). These are Air India, Jet Airways, and Spicejet Airways.
• BY RAIL: Madurai is an important railway junction of the Southern Railway and is directly connected to Chennai, Coimbatore and Tirunelveli. It is advisable to make a reservation on these trains, at least a week in advance. Be aware that Chennai has two railroad junctions – trains to Madurai depart from the Egmore Station.
  • If you need a place to rest while waiting for your train, or even overnight, the Hotel Regent close to reasonably Egmore Station has rooms for only 350 INR rupees, and is safe and clean. Bring your own towel, soap and bathroom tissue.
  • There are signs at the railway junction telling you which platform to wait on for your train, and where to stand so you will be close to the car your ticket is booked for. If in doubt, ask one of the attendants.
  • Railway seats can be booked in advance or cancelled over the internet.
  • For Air & Train travel in India visit [http://www.cleartrip.com](http://www.cleartrip.com) Please see this web page to see the current train timings: www.srailway.com. Additional assistance can be provided by your contact person at Aravind.

• BY ROAD: You may also decide to take the road from Chennai to Madurai. You could take an overnight bus or rent a taxi and ride down.

**Getting to Aravind once you Arrive in Madurai**
• You can get to Aravind from the airport, train station, or bus terminal either by Taxi or Auto rickshaw – just ask for “Aravind Eye Hospital”.
  - Typical autorickshaw fare from the train station will be around 80-90 rupees.
  - Typical taxi fare from the airport will be between 450 and 500 rupees. Prepaid taxi service is available at Madurai Airport.
• Transportation will not be provided by Aravind unless specified earlier.

**Restaurants**
Indian food is generally spicy. However, Continental and Chinese food are also available. Make it a point to specify if you would like your meal to be made less spicy. A wide variety of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods are available at most hotels.

**Restaurants near the Aravind complex, Madurai**
• Star Residency hotel, with rooftop restaurant near LAICO.
• Amaravathi Hotel, within walking distance of the hospital, is a multi-cuisine restaurant.
• Meenakshi Bhavan near the Anna bus stand (a few blocks from LAICO) offers a wide range of traditional South Indian vegetarian food
• Hotel Annapoorna near LAICO serves good non-vegetarian and vegetarian dishes.
• Fortune Pandyan’s ‘Orchid’ restaurant offers a delicious spread at its lunch and dinner buffets. It also has a pastry shop during the day.
• Hotel Sangam: Besides its multi-cuisine restaurant, it has opened up ‘Athangudi’ which serves authentic South Indian dishes.

• Hot Breads near the KK Nagar Arch, offers baked foods, soups and a variety of more western style foods.

• Café Coffee Day: Located opposite the Golcha Complex on “80 ft. road”, in Anna Nagar Coffee day serves fresh cappuccino and snacks and is open until 11 pm.

• Cafe Floats and Blaack Forest near Big Cinema (KK Nagar) offer fresh and delicious pastries, drinks and sandwiches.

• Metropole, near the court, is a roof-top restaurant that offers multi-cuisine fine dining.

• The Dominos PIZZA is located opposite to the wackboard College Main Gate on ground floor, in KK Nagar. Where you get delicious pastas, varieties of Pizzas and soft drinks.

• Marry Brown :It is a part of the MGM Group of companies, is a restaurant chain equally popular for its food and entertainment. With ever-enticing new dishes on the menu, a hygienic kitchen and exemplary service, the restaurant is located in Majestic Cinema Hall, Lake View Road, K K Nagar, Madurai. It offers short eats, wholesome meals, both vegetarian and non - vegetarian and delicious desserts.

• Andhra Curry : This restaurant is famous for Andhra delicacies. The food is tasty. Only 15 minutes walk from the Inspiration Hostel.

Restaurants in Downtown Madurai
• The Supreme Hotel, near the railway station, has a roof-top vegetarian restaurant that provides a good view of the temple.

• The Park Plaza Hotel, near the railway station, also has a roof-top restaurant, and offers a non-vegetarian menu as well.

• Hotel Anna Meekashi, near College House, is a vegetarian multi-cuisine restaurant.

• Bell Hotel, an out-door multi-cuisine non-vegetarian eatery is located on Tamil Sangam road near Simmakal and offers excellent food at low price.

• The Taj Garden Retreat, atop a hillock, offers a 5-star eating experience with a spectacular view of the entire Madurai city at night.

Places of Worship
Mosques
• There is a small mosque about a five-minute walk from LAICO. Larger mosques are found near the Goripalayam junction and one in K.K Nagar, in the presence of Wakf Board College.

Churches
• Madurai has many churches. At the beautiful and historic St. Mary’s Cathedral masses are held every Sunday, although in Tamil. Sunday services in English are also held at the quaint American College chapel. Regular 7:30 am and 6:00 pm
communion mass can be attended at the pretty church of Divine Patience in the Railway Colony, also in English. There are various other churches, such as the large Lutheran Church near the railway station and the Pentecostal church at KK Nagar.

**Temples**
- In the temple city of Madurai, you’ll find a temple on virtually every street. They vary greatly in size and architecture and house different deities. You will be asked to remove your shoes and socks before entering a temple. A storage place is usually available nearby – when you get your shoes back, a two-rupee tip is generally appreciated. Cameras may not be permitted inside some temples, and at others you need to purchase a “camera pass”. If in doubt, ask. The following list will give you an idea of a few of the major temples (See the section on “Sightseeing” for additional descriptions.):
  - Meenakshi Amman Temple
  - Alagar Koil is located 20 km from Madurai at the foothills of Alagar Malai.
  - Surya Nagar – a fascinating temple found about 7km south of Madurai, located on Alagar Koil Road, about 1/3 of the way to Alagar Koil.
  - Thirumohur Temple about 10 km north of Madurai.
  - Thirupparankundram, 6 km southwest of Madurai,
  - Buddhist Prayer Hall.
  - Pandian Temple, located about 5km east of Madurai.
  - There is a Buddhist prayer hall within the Gandhi Museum campus.

**Meditation Halls**
- Meditation rooms at all the Aravind Buildings are always open. There is one on the first floor of the paying section of the hospital and one on the ground floor at LAICO.
- Nithyatha – is a retreat center that celebrates the life and work of Dr.G.Venkataswamy situated at Aurofarm. It is an ideal place for contemplative practice as well as collective strategic planning and organisational retreat. The brilliant floor plan of this building incorporated the Mother’s symbol through a stunning combination of building, landscaped garden and ponds. The entrance of the building lines up with a beautiful banyan tree Dr. V himself planted.

**Leisure Time**

**Movies**
- The Tamil film industry is one of the largest in the world. Most Tamil films are musicals and are two-and-a-half hours long. Film-going is very popular in Tamil Nadu and a number of theatres are located near the Aravind campus.
- Most of the theatres are air-conditioned. Ask for ‘balcony’ class for the most comfortable seats.
- English movies are rarely screened.
• Check the local paper (The Hindu) for reviews and what’s showing. The Cine-Priya Theatre Complex and Adlabs Theatre are located just a few blocks from Aravind Hospital usually shows good movies.

• Movies are shown in two parts, with a brief intermission to give you time to get refreshments or use the rest rooms.

Swimming
• Hotel Sangam, on Alagar Koil Road has a small swimming pool with sun beds.
• The Taj Garden Retreat Hotel is located on a hillock just out of town providing a spectacular view over the whole of Madurai in a very peaceful setting. The hotel has a swimming pool, available at a nominal charge for the day and includes towels, changing facilities and showers.
• The Fortune Pandyan has a swimming pool, though quite small.
• The Madurai Corporation maintains a swimming pool near the Gandhi Museum. Tickets can be purchased at the entrance.
• Aurofarm Swimming Pool: Aravind’ own swimming pool is located at Aurofarm. This clean, and attractive pool is built with all the modern amenities and contains a special shallow section exclusively for the kids

Yoga
• For early risers there are Yoga classes held at 6:00 am each morning at the Swami Sivananda Yoga Centre just opposite LAICO on Sathar Road. Classes are held from Monday through Saturday, for an hour and a half and cost Rs.150 per month. Classes are also from 6.30pm to 8pm.

Shopping
Shopping in Madurai is a whole new experience. The streets around the Meenakshi Amman temple are jammed with shops. Madurai markets, many of which are located on narrow streets, can be overwhelmingly noisy and crowded. Small shops selling the same wares are often grouped together in the same area. You will need to bargain in most smaller shops where there isn’t a fixed price. Books and cotton clothes are cheap. Madurai is also a good place for local crafts.

Clothes Shopping in Madurai
• Pothys located in West Masi Street is your ultimate destination for silks and silk sarees, perfect for weddings & other festive occasions. We give you the assurance of the finest silks, authentic designs, genuine customer service and a luxurious shopping experience. Pothys offers you our own exclusive brands of pure silk sarees, artistically designed & hand crafted at our looms. The collections are displayed in different sections within the complex where you can have wide choice for ladies outfits, kids and Mens ware.
• If you are looking for traditional Indian wear, the best-known outfit for women is the Sari. Churidars or Salwar Kameez are also elegant and comfortable to wear. Most Indian girls and younger women prefer wearing them.
• Hajeemoosa is a trusted name for clothes. Besides men’s wear they also have an excellent collection of silk saris.
• Millineum mall is located in KK Nagar where there are different varieties of shops from Clothing, footwear, jewellery, food court and departmental stores. The mall will be open from Morning 10am to 10pm. You can also go by walk or can hire an Auto and ask for Millennium mall.

• Naidu Hall is located in 80 Feet Road, KK Nagar the famous outlet of all kinds of Ready made materials. The most appropriate landmark is below the mega mart. You can get varieties and latest designer outlets.

• Next to the famous Meenakshi Temple is a bustling business centre that is housed in a quaint, ancient stone-pillared hall - ‘the Puthu Mandapam’. This is a delight for most visitors. You can select from an assortment of silk and cotton material and have one of a dozen tailors to make your outfit. Both the material and the tailoring are inexpensive here.

**Handicrafts Shopping in Madurai**

• Palma Corner, near the TTS Building at Arasaradi is a small shop that sells handicrafts produced by the locals. The rates are cheap and the proceeds go to supporting the local artisans.

• The Kadhi Bhavan located on the Town Hall Road is an authorized sales depot for handicrafts as well as Kadhi clothes. If you are purchasing antiques or crafts from the boutiques around the temple, be sure to bargain hard!

**General Shopping in Madurai**

You can purchase most things, from stationery to clothes, along the “80 ft Road” in Anna Nagar.

The new Milan’em Mall on the KK Nagar Main Road has a good supermarket. It also has a good food court.

**Festivals Unique to Madurai**

• The Float Festival in Madurai in January is a grand spectacle in which the deity is taken around the large Mariamman Teppakulam temple tank on an elaborately decorated float.

• Chithra Festival in April is Madurai’s most colorful carnival. It is about a fortnight-long celebration of the coronation and the marriage of the local deity, Goddess Meenakshi in the first month of the Tamil Calendar, Chithirai. This is a wonderful time to visit the Meenakshi Amman Temple, but the streets will be extremely crowded.

**Sightseeing in the city of Madurai**

Within the city of Madurai, common places of interest include the Meenakshi Amman Temple, Gandhi Museum, etc. While these can be visited during the day, tours to other places can be arranged. Local travel agents can organize short trips over the weekends. Besides these, look out for periodic special events and festivals, which are announced by the Tamil Nadu Tourist Office or local newspapers (Metro Plus section of The Hindu), for example Jallikattu at Alanganallur, Pongal in the villages and classical dance or music concerts.
Meenakshi Amman Temple
The main attraction of Madurai is the Meenakshi Amman Temple, which is situated in the heart of the old town. It is a fine example of Dravidian architecture with gopurams covered from top to bottom with a breathless profusion of multi-coloured images of gods, goddesses, animals and mythical figures. It houses the large central ‘Tank of the Golden Lotus’. Its large towers and sunning architecture is not to be missed. It is the heart of the Old Madurai city. The city is said to be ruled by Lord Shiva and his consort Goddess Meenakshi, who are the main deities. If you bring a camera, you will need to purchase a camera pass. Some parts of the temple are for Hindus only – if in doubt, ask first. It is just a 15 minute autorickshaw ride travel from Aravind.

Tirumalai Nayak Mahal
About 1.5 km from the Meenakshi Amman Temple is this palace that was built in 1636, by King Thirumalai Nayak with the help of an Italian Architect.

It is open from 9 am to 5 pm. There’s an entertaining sound-light show in English everyday at 6.30 pm, narrating Madurai’s history and the temple carvings.

Gandhi Museum
It was in Madurai in the year 1921, that Gandhiji adopted for the first time, the loin cloth as his mode of dress, which made him known throughout the world as “The Naked Fakir”. It was in Madurai again that the doors of the great Meenakshi Amman Temple were thrown open to Harijans, thus winning a historic battle against “Untouchability”. Gandhiji visited the Temple in the year 1946 along with Harijans as a triumph for the cause of Harijan Temple entry.

Located at just a 10 minute walk from the Aravind Eye Hospital the Gandhi Museum is housed in the old palace of Rani Mangammal. This museum is worth seeing and gives a clear history of the independence of India. Some of the utensils used by the Mahatma are also kept on display.

Mariamman Teppakulam Tank
This tank is located 5 km east of the old city and covers an area almost equal to that of the Meenakshi temple. It is the biggest tank of its kind in Tamil Nadu and one of the most imposing sights of Madurai when it is full of water. This enormous temple tank was fed by water brought from the Vagai River through an ingenious system of underground channels.

This is the site of the popular Teppam festival. In commemoration of the birth of the king, the colourful Float Festival is held in this tank, in the Tamil month of ‘Thai’ (January-February).

Thiruparankundram
Located 6 km’s southwest of Madurai, this is a small town known for its sacred granite hill. Also regarded as one of the six abodes of Lord Subramaniya, this is a rock-cut
temple. Here, Lord Subramaniya was wedded to Devayanai, daughter of Indra, after annihilating the demon, Surapadman. There is a long walk to the top, but the view is spectacular once you get there!

**Surya Nagar**
It is a fascinating temple found about 7km south of Madurai, located on Alagar Koil Road, about 1/3 of the way to Alagar Koil.

**Thirumohur Temple**
is a quiet and serene temple with a lotus pond about 10 km north of Madurai. The main deity is Lord Vishnu.

**Azhagar Koil**
This is a Vishnu temple located 21 kms north of Madurai at the foothills of Alagar Malai, a lovely wooded hill. It is a picturesque place alive with monkeys. The main deity is Lord Vishnu. Vishnu presides as Meenakshi’s brother “Azhagar”. During the Chithirai festival in April/May, when the marriage of Meenakshi to Sundereshwarar is celebrated, Azhagar travels to Madurai for the wedding ritual in an impressive procession.

**Athisayam Theme Park**
Located at a distance of 12 kms from Madurai along the Dindigul road at Paravai is the Athisayam theme park, the only one of its kind in this part of the region, which promises you non-stop fun. World-class water sports offer plenty of exciting entertainment.

**Sightseeing Outside the City of Madurai**

**Vaigai Dam**
This is a popular picnic spot 70 kms from Madurai. Well laid out gardens on one side of dam is a prime attraction. On Sundays the dam is illuminated with an array of colored lights.

**Kodaikanal**
Is an enchanting hill station 2,130 m above sea level on the Western Ghats and 120 km from Madurai. Travel takes about 3 hours. Kodaikanal is an ideal place for trekking.

**Rameswaram**
Known as the ‘Varanasi of the South’, Rameswaram is a major pilgrim site for Hindus. With temples, shrines, and an incredible beach, it makes for a nice day or an overnight trip from Madurai. Bus tours leave at 7.00 am and return in the evening at 7.00 pm. Hiring a car and driver is also a good option. It takes four hours to get there and the drive itself is picturesque. This is beautiful historic town is only a 4 hour train ride from Madurai and offers good sightseeing in a relaxed atmosphere. The Hotel Vinayaka next to the Railway station previous comfortable rooms at a reasonable price.
Places to Stay

Aravind Guest houses

- Harmony: A three-storied guesthouse with all facilities, located just a five-minute walk from the hospital. It consists of sixteen air conditioned and two non-a/c rooms all attached with western style bathrooms. A housekeeper is there to serve the volunteers and guests. The guest house is equipped with a TV and DVD player. The guesthouse also has a small library.

- Aspiration, (also called PG Hostel) is located just across the Aravind Eye Hospital, set up mainly for post graduate students, fellows and short term trainees.

- Inspiration – Hostel for the international visitors and trainees

The following are some timings and guidelines for guests, to allow smooth running of the guesthouse and hostels

Meals

- Breakfast is served from 7am to 8am
- Lunch is served from 1pm to 2pm
- Dinner is served from 7:30pm to 8:30pm

If you will be away for a meal, please inform the staff in advance. This will allow them to clear the table after the meal so they will not have to wait for you. Lunch and dinner are not served on Sunday, as this is the cook’s day off.

Hotels near Aravind

Hotel Sri Annapoorna Towers: It is a 3-star hotel located near to Aravind Eye Hospital. The amenities include provided here are direct dial phone, local and international TV channels, laundry and dry cleaning facilities. www.annapoornatower.com

Hotel Star Residency: The rooms are elegantly furnished with centralized AC, LCD, satellite TV, telephones with direct dialing facility, Wi-Fi internet and so on. www.starresidencyhotels.com

Hotel Fortune Pandian: An ideal place to stay for business and leisure travelers. It offers the highest standards in accommodation and cuisine. www.fortunepandianhotel.com
6 – Theni

About Theni
In 1997 Theni District was formed after separation from the Madurai District. Subsequently the Theni municipal town was upgraded as Taluk and district head quarters. It is mainly a commercial town and is known for its big weekly Shandy held every Sunday.

Aravind Eye Hospital, Theni
Aravind Eye Hospital, Madurai conducted eye screening camps around Theni region in the earlier days. A medical team travelled from Madurai to Theni to conduct eye camps and brought patients back to Madurai for eye surgery. After a 7 day stay in Madurai, the patients were taken back to Theni. During this period, Dr.P. Namperumalsamy, the present chairman of Aravind Eye Care System visited Theni during the weekends to screen patients. Due to positive community support of the eye camps and their continued growth, Aravind - Madurai treated a permanent facility in Theni.

Theni Taluk is a small town with a population of 112,000. Aravind Eye Hospital, Theni serves the Theni District, within a radius of 50km and covering a population of 1.1 million. Besides this primary service area the hospital also covers the neighbouring areas in Kottayam and Idukki districts of Kerala state with a population of 3.1 million thus serving a total population of 4.3 million.
Places of Interest Around Theni

**Thekkadi**
Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary at Thekkadi is 155kms from Madurai. Situated in Kerala, the forest of this beautiful sanctuary slopes down to a manmade lake. The motor boat ride allows one to view wildlife in their natural habitat. Elephant, gaur, sambhar, bear, even tigers and leopards come down to drink from the lake.

**Cochin**
The fascinating city of Cochin has a plethora of things to see including churches, winding streets crammed with 500 year old Portuguese homes, Chinese fishing nets, a Jewish community whose roots go back to the diaspora, a 16th century synagogue and a palace built by the Portuguese. The best way to get there is by hiring a taxi, which may cost you around Rs.3000 (US$70).

**Backwaters Trip**
Kerala is a labyrinth of lazily meandering backwaters. Sprinkled with traditional houseboats, country crafts, rural lifestyles and tranquility, it is an intricate network of innumerable lagoons, lakes, canals, estuaries and the deltas of forty-four rivers that drain into the Arabian Sea. Kerala thrives along these backwaters. That snake across the state, bestowing paddy fields with good harvests, and provide whole villages with drinking water.

**Kodaikanal**
It is an enchanting hill station located 2,130m above sea level on the Western Ghat. It is an ideal place for trekking.

**Munnar**
Rolling mountain scenery, craggy peaks, manicured tea estates and crisp mountain air form the quaint hill station Munnar. It is the commercial centre of some of the world’s highest tea-growing estates. A 3.5 hour drive from Theni, it is a perfect getaway for a weekend.

**Megamalai**
130 kms from Madurai, Megamalai lies 1500 m above sea level. One has to climb up from the Chinnamanur side. There are many cardomon estates and tea plantations in the hills. Wild animals like sambhar, elephant, tiger, cheetah, gaur and spotted deer are found amidst thick vegetation.
7 – Tirunelveli

The Land of Tamirabarani
Situated in the far south of Tamilnadu the Tirunelveli district is famous for its ancient temples, enchanting forests, waterfalls, and the elegantly flowing river Tamirabarani - the lifeline of the region. In this district we have the Pothisaiy Hills, the abode of sage Agasthiyar who is said to have developed the Tamil language. A number of renowned Tamil scholars, journalists and writers have their origins in Tirunelveli district. The green paddy fields fed by Tamirabarani and the tall palm groves add a picturesque dimension to the landscape of this district.

The district headquarter town of Tirunelveli is blessed with the river Tamirabarani and the legendary Nellaiappar - Kanthimathi temple, the holy landmark of the city. Another holy landmark is the beautiful Cathedral built in 1826 by Rev. Rhenius. Once the capital of the Pandiya Kings, Tirunelveli, has a 2000-year-old history and a rich tradition. Though the weather here can be quite hot (reading upto 420 C in the summer) it is quite pleasant in winter. Tirunelveli is well known for korai (reed) mats woven in a small village, Pathamadai, 30 kms. away from Tirunelveli town. Tirunelveli is also popular for useful articles made of palm leaves and the delicious sweet “Halwa”.

Shopping in Tirunelveli
Handicrafts Shopping : Poompuhar, a unit of Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited is located very close to Aravind Eye Hospital. The shop offers bronze icons, brass lamps, carvings on stone, sandalwood and wood, paintings, kalamkari, Thanjavur art plates and so on. Textile Shopping: RMKV and Pothys are the famous textile shops in Tirunelveli.
Eating Out in Tirunelveli

• Sri Janakiram Hotel: located very close to Aravind Eye Hospital, it has a roof top vegetarian restaurant and offers a wide range of traditional South Indian and North Indian Vegetarian Food.
• Hotel Nellai Saravana Bhavan: Offers a wide range of traditional South Indian Food.
• Hotel Aryaas: Offers both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food
• Arasan Bakery & Restaurant Limited is a well known shop which offers a wide range of bakery items, pastries and good quality Ice creams at reasonable costs.

Travel to Tirunelveli

By air: The airports nearest Tirunelveli are Madurai (170km) and Tuticorin (52km).
By Train: Railway connections are available from all major cities.
By Road: Tirunelveli is linked by a good network of roads including a national highway.

Restaurants to Visit in Tirunelveli

• Hotel King Chik: Multi cuisine restaurant specialising in chicken preparations.
• Hotel Apple tree: Located very close to our hospital. Hotel with good ambiance, good rooms. The family restaurant serves good food.
• Hot Tandoor Restaurant: Non-vegetarian Indian Restaurant.
• Aryaas: Located at Madurai Road. It is a famous Multi cuisine Restaurant which offers both Vegetarian and Non Vegetarian dishes.
• Janakiram: Roof top garden restaurant serving tasty and delicious food of all vegetarian varieties
• Barani: It is a Multi cuisine restaurant for vegetarian food.
• RR Inn: 24 hours residency, and a multi cuisine with a roof top specialty Garden restaurant including a breakfast serving delicious food of all varieties located at Madurai Road
• Nainaar: Ideal hotel to taste multi cuisine food.
• Hotel Bharathi: Multi cuisine restaurant offering varieties of vegetarian food.
• Vinjai: Located near Town Victory Memorial and is famous for its Tasty Idlis.
• Achees: Serves tasty Non vegetarian dishes.
• Vairamaligai: Situated in Vannarpettai. Good Parking facilities for cars, Nattukozhi items are served.
• Lakshmi Gayathri: Located opposite to over bridge Vannarpettai. Vegetarian diets are served.
• Saravana Bavan: Opposite to Palayamkottai Bus station. Different varieties of Vegetarian foods are served.
• Mathuram: Provides tasty tasty homely vegetarian food items.
Fast Food and Pastory Shops in Tirunelveli

- Arasan Bakery: Variety of cakes and Biscuits and Sweets. Having Branches at Palaymkkottai, Tuticorin and Nagercoil.
- Iruttukadai Halwa: Famous all over world with sales hour restricted from 5.00 PM to 9.00 PM. We can see long Que of people purchasing Halwa. Not easily perishable per KG Halwa cost Rs.140/- and is located opposite to famous Nellaiappar Kovil.
- Shanthi Sweets: Located behind the Junction Bus-station. 24 hours shop selling Halwa and Mixture, etc., People rush to purchase hot Halwa available.
- Lakshmivilas: A 24 hours shop selling Halwa and savories.
- Aryaas Sweets, Palayamkottai: Aryaas, the King of Hotels run this sweet stall. Just opposite to Nehru Stadium.
- Chennai Sweets: Offers All varieties of pastries and snack items like Pizza, Burger, Sweets, Chips etc.

Sightseeing in and Around Tirunelveli

There are many places for short tours and pilgrimage near Tirunelveli. Notable among them are:

Swami Nellaiappar Temple

Swamy Nellaiappar Gandhimathiamman Temple dedicated to Siva (Nellaiyappar) and Parvati (Kanthimathi) is situated in the heart of the city and built by the Pandyas. The main deity is a ‘Suyambu Lingam’ or a Shiva Lingam which erupted from underneath the earth. The temple is worth seeing for its beautiful sculptures, musical pillars, valuable jewels, a golden lily tank and a thousand pillared mandapa. It is one of the five sacred places in Saiva religion.

District Science Centre

The District Science Centre is unique Institution popularising Science. Inculcating the spirit of enquiry, fostering creative talents and infusing scientific temper in life are its objectives. This autonomous body is a unit of the National Council of Science Museums. This is one among the 124 such centres in the country.

Manjolai Estates

It is 57 kms away from Tirunelveli and is at an elevation of 1162 sq. metre. There are many tea plantations in and around this place. Manjolai is noteworthy for the climate, scenery and calm atmosphere. Just above Manjolai, there are places like Kakkachi and Nalumukka which are real gifts of the nature. On the way to Manjolai from Manimuthar there is a very beautiful place called Dasan Pool with plenty of fresh water, greens and fine climate.
Koothankulam Bird Sanctuary
It is situated in tiny village in Nanguneri Taluk of Tirunelveli District and is emerging as a new favourite haunt of the migratory birds. It is just 38 Kms. away from Tirunelveli. Migratory birds start coming by December end and fly away to their northern homes by June or July. About 35 species of birds visit this calm but congenial village for breeding.

Courtallam
60 kms away from Tirunelveli town, at the foot of the Pothigai Hills lies the curative Courtallam. It is the summer resort of thousands of middle class people who could not afford a Ooty or Kodaikanal.

Courtallam is a cluster of 9 waterfalls, both big and small. These lush waterfalls, as well as the cool breeze from the Pothigai Hills, are said to possess medicinal properties. At the entrance of the Main falls, there is an ancient Siva Temple known as Tirukkutralanathar Temple.

Not far from this temple there is a Hall of Pictures called “Chitra Sabha” which is dedicated to `Lord Nataraja”. This is one of the five sabhas where the Lord performed the cosmic dance.

Papanasam
42 kms away from Tirunelveli town, on the western slopes of the Pothigai Hills, there is a holy place called Papanasam. Here there is a waterfall named after the great sage Agasthiyar. And there is also a temple dedicated to him.

Tiruchendur
48 kms away from Tirunelveli is Tiruchendur, one of the six abodes of Lord Muruga. Situated on the shore of the Bay of Bengal sea, the temple draws a perennial stream of devotees. "Kandha Sashti” festival which culminates in the killing (Sura Samharam) of a demon is celebrated in the month of November every year.

Kanyakumari
85 kms away, Kanyakumari lies at the southern most tip of India where the Arabian sea, the Indian Ocean and the Sea of the Bay of Bengal meet. The temple of Kanyakumari, Gandhi Memorial, Rock memorial of Vivekananda and the gigantic statue of the timeless poetTiruvalluvar are worth seeing, as well as the spectacular sun rise and sunset over the ocean.

Krishnapuram
About 13 kms away from Tirunelveli is Krishnapuram. The temple here is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Breathtakingly beautiful life-like sculptures carved with great intricacy adorn the temple.
Kalakkadu Wild Life Sanctuary
This Sanctuary located 47 kms away is a naturalist’s delight. Tigers, panthers, Jackals and wild dogs can be seen roaming in this hilly forest. Lion-tailed macaques can be spotted here.

Srivai-kuntam
Srivai-kuntam, 27 kms away from Tirunelveli, is one of the Nava Tirupathis. It is famous for the temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Its lofty tower and the Tiruvenkata Mudaliyar mandapam rich with sculptures of yazhis, elephants and warriors are worth seeing.

Mundanthurai Wild Life Sanctuary
Situated 55 kms away from Tirunelveli, this sanctuary spans an area of 567 sq. km. This sanctuary is a Project Tiger reserve area, so one might well be rewarded with a glimpse of this magnificent beast. Trekking is allowed, with prior permission from the forest department.
8 – Coimbatore

About Coimbatore
Coimbatore is an important industrial city, in the state of Tamil Nadu. An important textile-manufacturing centre, it is also known as the ‘Manchester of South India’. There are more than a hundred textile mills in and around Coimbatore apart from a number of other manufacturing units, which produce engineering equipment and electronic items. Today it is also known for its educational institutions, medical care and software industry. Coimbatore lies at the foot of the quaint Nilgiri Hills. Its vicinity to the Nilgiri hills gives Coimbatore a pleasant climate.

History of Coimbatore
There are interesting versions as to how modern Coimbatore got its name. Historical evidences from the 8th Century AD point to a particular tribal community called the irulas who lived in the jungles and led a life in harmony with nature. As their population grew, little hamlets and villages sprouted alongside the jungles and rivers. Legend has it that people chose kovan as their king. Down the ages, puthur, the area that became kovan’s capital was called kovan pudur. Over time, it came to be known as Coimbatore. Another version of the name draws its story from the tale of Koniamman, the ruling deity of Coimbatore. It is believed that Koniammanpudur has today become the city it is.

General Information
Getting to Coimbatore
• By Air – Coimbatore has an international airport connected to most metropolitan cities in India and the UAE.
By Rail – Coimbatore is well connected to major cities like Bangalore, Chennai, Madurai, New Delhi, Thirupathi, Trichy, Ooty and Palghat by rail.

By Road – Coimbatore is easily accessible by buses. Taxis at reasonable prices are also available.

**Restaurants in Coimbatore**

- **KFC**: The KFC restaurant is situated in three places: one is in Avinashi Road and in RS Puram and Brookfield’s. They are specialized in Veg Snacker, Veg Strips with Salsa Chicken Snacks, Veggie selections, Toasted Wraps, Burgers, Chicken delight, Popcorn chicken, and deserts etc.,

- **Why Food**: That’s Y Food was set up in Coimbatore in 2002 as a fine-dine North Indian restaurant. That’s Y Food is a fine-dine restaurant serving primarily North Indian cuisine located in RS Puram, Coimbatore. The restaurant opens for guests at 12.30 in the afternoon and closes at 3.30, to reopen in the evening at 7, till 11. The restaurant has a weekly off on Wednesdays. Since the restaurant usually remains busy, hence, request booking. We like our guests to reserve tables and arrive, since the restaurant usually remains busy.

- **My place**: My place is situated in P N Palayam, Coimbatore. It is Multi Cuisine Non-Vegetarian Restaurant.

- **Pizza Hut**: One of the flagship brands of Yum! Brands, Inc., which also has KFC, Taco Bell, A&W and Long John Silver’s under its umbrella. It is situated at DB Road RS Puram.

- **Chin Chin**: This specialty restaurant at The Residency on Avinashi Road offers a wide variety of Chinese cuisine – Located in Avinashi Road, Coimbatore.

- **Coffee Pot**: The 24 hours Coffee Shop at The Residency, overlooking the pool offers a variety of cuisine including a buffet for breakfast, lunch & dinner, and a la carte dining too.

- **Mangala International**: Multi-cuisine restaurant with a roof top garden restaurant serving delicious food of all varieties - located at Nehru street, Ram Nagar.

- **Cloud Nine- Multicuisine restaurant attached to Hotel City Tower, Ram Nagar – Gandipuram**.

- **Annalakshmi**: For vegetarian South Indian dishes. Serves breakfast, lunch, dinner and evening snacks.

- **Annapoorna Park**: Situated directly behind Nehru Stadium, this vegetarian restaurant is known for its multi-cuisine specialities.

**Fast Food Joints and Pastry shops**

- **Little Italy**: Italian Cuisine

- **Serves speciality Italian and Mexican Cuisine, Serves Vegetarian Indian Cuisine, It is located Trichy Road, Near Sungam Junction**

- **The J & M Sons**: J&M Bake World offer beautiful, delicious cakes for all occasions. They offer an array of cakes such as Birthdays cakes, Anniversaries cakes, Weddings cakes, Baby Showers cakes, Baptisms cakes
• KR Bakes: K R Bakes innovative fast food counters set a trend. Now K R Hot chicken is the perfect evening fast food counter in many cities. It offers a wide variety of fresh chicken delicacies to its customers. All mouth-watering items are prepared by using ultramodern machinery to keep the district taste and freshness. Baker’s Corner - In-house confectionary at ‘The Residency’ offers a wide choice of products ranging from gateaux, pastries, assorted savories, breads and chocolates.

• Drive Inn - A popular drive-in restaurant in Hotel Aarvee, serves snacks and light fare.

• Hot Breads - Fast food restaurant and pastry shop located in R.S.Puram is a favourite haunt for the city’s teen crowd.

• Dominio’s Pizza - Situated at Nehru Stadium a place exclusively for hot pizzas.

• Boomerang in RS Puram with Italian gelato ice creams. Gelato have pure milk and natural ingredients. sugar free gelato also available. gelato have 10 flavours. At west Venkitaswamy road RS Puram (opp spencer’s daily) behind rajasthani sangh.

• Baskin Robbins is a well known ice cream parlor situated at Coimbatore with two galleries, one in DB Road and the other in Arts College Road. It offers special American ice creams, available in 31 flavors and introduces a new flavor each and every month. Bulk orders are also undertaken for marriages, functions and other parties. The galleries are open from 11 am to 11 pm.

Places to Worship

Marudhamalai Temple
Marudhamalai Shri Murugan Temple is a small natural hill lying about 12km to the west of Coimbatore. More than 800 years old, the presiding deity is Lord Subramaniaswamy. The temple dedicated to Lord Murugan is at a height of 600 feet from the foot of the hill. The flight of steps are interspread with attractive mandapams. Though shorn of all sculptural and architectural glories, the hilly background of this temple compensates for their absence and makes it an attractive picnic spot even from the point of view of an holiday - maker. Thai Poosam and Tirukarthigai festivals are celebrated with great pomp and gaiety at this temple.

Dhyanalinga
Minutes within the sphere of Dhyanalinga is enough to make even those unaware of meditation to experience a state of deep meditativeness and feel the divine energy that overflows from this glorious form. The Dhyanalinga Multi-Religious temple situated at Vellingiri foothills about 30kms from Coimbatore is very much a part of this glorious tradition. Dhyanalinga was consecrated by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, a realized master, Mystic and Yogi, after three years of intense process of prana prathista. Measuring 13”9”, Dhyanalingam is the largest mercury based live linga in the world.

Perur Patteeswara Swamy Temple
It is located 7kms away from the city and is said to be built by Karikala Cholan before 1500 years. The temple is dedicated to Lord Patteeswarar and his better half
Pachainayaki. Devotees gather during the festival occasions. The kanagasabai hall has some exciting sculptures. This is one of the ancient temples of this region. The temple stands on the banks of the holy river Noyyal called ‘Kanchi Manadi’ by the locals. It is believed that the mortal remains of the dead turn into white stones after about 144 days. Pilgrims from all over visit this spot to pay homage to their ancestors. The greatest attraction of the temple is the ‘Kanaka Saba’ or the golden hall which is aborned by a gold plated statue of Nataraja bestowing blessings upon the two sages - Gomumuni and Pattimuni. The gopurams and pillars of the hall display exquisitely carved out sculptures highlighting Dravidian architecture.

**Then Thirumala Balaji Temple**
This temple is a model of the one at tirupathi and is located on the outskirts of Coimbatore city, in beautiful hilly surroundings. The total distance between Tirupati to Coimbatore is 393 KM (kilometers) and 830.85 meters. The mile based measurement distance is 244.7 miles. Tirupati is located nearly north side to Coimbatore.

**Mundhi Vinaykar temple in Coimbatore**
Coimbatore Mundhi Vinayakar temple in Tamil Nadu has the largest Ganesh idol in Asia. The presiding deity in the temple is 10-foot tall idol, which has been carved out of single block stone. Weight of the Idol is 110 tons. It is situated at Puliakulam road.

**Eachanari Vinayagar temple**
The temple is at Pollachi Main Road, Eachanari. The idol that is 6 feet tall and 3 feet wide was being transited from Madurai to Perur, during which the wheel of the conveyance gave away at Eachanari. The Moolavar at this temple was actually meant for Perur Patteshwarar temple and since it got stuck on its way from Madurai, Eachanari became the blessed place. This is one of the oldest temple in Coimbatore and dates to 1500 A.D. Lord Vinayagar is the residing deity of Eachanari Temple.

**Arulmigu Bannari Amman Temple**
To the Southern side of the temple located is Coimbatore, on the Eastern side is Erode and to the southWestern side we have Mettupalayam railway stations. By buses, from Sathyamangalam to Samaraj nagar, Kollegal will lead to the temple. Other than this we can get the buses from Bavani Sagar (via Coimbatore, Tirupur, Tarapuram, Metupalayam) and reach the temple via Kothamangalam. Other than this on every Sunday, Monday, Friday and on no moon days there are special buses to the temple from Sathiyamangalam and Coimbatore.

**Sightseeing in and Around Coimbatore (Kerala Area)**

**Ooty**
Ooty also known as Udhagamandalam is the “Queen of hill stations” and the capital of Nilgiris district. It is one of the most popular tourist resorts in India. Nilgiris means “Blue Mountains”. It is a land of picturesque picnic spots and used to be popular summer and weekend getaway for the British during the colonial days. An added attraction for tourists to Udagamandalam is the mountain train journey on a
ratchet and pinion track which begins at Kallar, near Mettupalayam and wends its way through many hair-raising curves and fearful tunnels begins at the train chugs along beside deep ravines full of verdant vegetation, gurgling streams and tea gardens. With an influx of modern development surrounding it, the old Ooty still retains its charm and appeal. At an elevation of 2,333 m, Ooty makes for a great escape from the heat of the plains below. Hiking, horseback riding and rowing are the main attractions. There is also a large botanical garden on the edge of the town, and peaceful St. Stephen’s Church that has views out over the town. The best way to get to Ooty is on the toy train (Blue Mountain Express) from Mettupalayam, which is 40 minutes from Coimbatore.

There are tourist cruises available from Allepey to Kollom running daily. You can choose to go one way only or return to where you started. A more extravagant option is to hire a houseboat, definitely worth the cost.

Ayurvedic Resorts
A real treat for your body and mind is a trip to an Ayurvedic resort – An Indian style health resort. Ayurveda (meaning life knowledge) is the traditional health science of India. At the resort you can choose from a variety of treatments including a general massage, hot oil treatments, a medicated steam bath and a facial. There are also 7 to 28-day treatment packages designed for different illnesses or for general health care. Yoga classes are also held.

One such resort is the Somatheeram Ayurvedic Beach Resort located south of Kovalam. Set upon the hill overlooking a wide beach and the Arabian Sea are traditional style Kerala houses with Western amenities. A private beach and excellent restaurant are also available.

Theme Parks
Asia’ Number one Theme Park - Black Thunder, is sest at the foothills of the gigantic Nilgris. It is a thrilling and adventures water park as Mettupalayam. The water theme park is spread over 65 acres of land with green hill as backdrop and full of coconut and arecanut trees is a pleasant atmosphere. This park has adventurous water games and land games. Another such one is the Maharaja Multiplex and Theme park situated at Nilambur.

Thirumoorthy Dam
This is located about 20kms for Udumalpet on the highway from Palani to Coimbatore. A perennial stream flows by the side of the Amaralingeswarar temple and near by there is a water fall. Thirumurthy Dam is built adjoining the Thirumurthy Hill.

Top Slip
Top Slip is a national park and a medical plant conservation area in Annamalai hills. It is famous for its elephant camp and its wildlife at Kollikamuthi. It got its name during British era, as lots of its timber sliped down to the plains below. For thrill seekers accommodation is also available in a tree house. There are bungalows available within the Sanctuary in order to view natural sceneries and its wildlife.
A picturesque locale in the Anamalai Hills. It is about 37 Kms. from Pollachi (about 90 Kms from Coimbatore). There are bungalows available within the sanctuary. For thrill seekers, accommodation is also available in a tree house.

**Monkey falls**
which is situated some 65 km away from Coimbatore city and it is some 27 km away from Pollachi on Coimbatore-Pollachi-Valparai main road. The Monkey Falls are the most famous and popular tourism spot. People making their travel in the area of Coimbatore or Pollachi district will never miss to visit Monkey falls are they have an outstanding scenic attraction. This Monkey falls is an ideal place for the little children to take bath.

The entry ticket fee is very low and it just cost Rs.2 to enter inside the falls. It lies on the foothill of Valparai. It is about 5 km from Aaliyar. It is continuing waterfalls, one can relax their mind and body by taking Ayurvedic bath in this falls.

**Valparai**
There are many waterfalls, stream, dams and many dense forests in the Anamalai range. This hill station is 102 kilometers from Coimbatore. The main plantation here is tea. The place looks green all over. One can travel to Kerala from Valparai through the mountain route.

**Kovai Kutralam**
This falls is amidst a thick forest, hence visitors are not allowed after 5pm. The Kovai Kutralam waterfalls are located in the Siruvani Hills. It is situated in the dark forest area of the outer part of Coimbatore. The Siruvani River, which flows in the Siruvani Hills, makes the famous Kovai Kutralam waterfalls.

**Maharaja Water Theme Park**
Maharaja Water Theme Park is situated about 12 km from the city, on the Avinashi Road. It promises fun and variety in entertainment - lots of games, movies, and food courts. Water games are the main crowd puller and children are the target visitors. The entry fees are 300 to 350 for adults, while children get a discount of Rs 50-100 per head.

**Malampuzha Dam**
Location: 10km from Palakkad town, North Kerala. Attractions: Dam, amusement park, boating facilities, rock garden and ropeway. Malampuzha, a little township on the foothills of the Western Ghats takes its name from the River Malampuzha. Nurtured by this tributary of Kerala’s longest river, the Bharathappuzha, Malampuzha is a lush green town is a major tourist attraction for its trekking trails and the large irrigation dam.
Around the reservoir of the dam are beautiful gardens and amusement parks. Boating facilities are available on the lake. Other attractions in the Malampuzha garden are the beautiful rock garden, the fish-shaped aquarium, the snake park, the ropeway which takes you on an aerial tour of the park, and the gigantic Yakshi (an enchantress) sculptured by Kanai Kunhiraman, a renowned sculptor of Kerala.

The most interesting feature of the rock garden is that the whole place is made of unwanted and broken pieces of bangles, tiles, used plastic cans, tins and other waste materials. The garden is a master work of sculptor Padmasree Neck Chand Saini. His rock garden in Chandigarh is world famous and attracts thousands of tourists every year.

**Aliyar Dam**
Aliyar lake receives water from Upper Aliyar Reservoir through the hydroelectric power station in Navamali and the Parambikulam.

Aliyar Dam is located at a distance of 24 kilometers from Pollachi, Coimbatore District Aliyar is easily Accessible from Coimbatore (TN) and Palakkad (Kerala). Near Aliyar dam, a good-looking park, an aquarium and a mini theme park is being maintained by Tamilnadu Fisheries Corporation.

**Shopping**
Coimbatore offers an array of products for anyone with an aesthetic eye. Of course, it is the woven cottons and fabric that rule. Shopping as relatively hassle free if one already knows what to buy, there are specific streets that cater to specific demands. The city is demarcated into 3 distinct commercial hubs and each is a beehive of activity - Oppanakara street, which offers everything from groceries to clothes; the Cross Cut Road, a criss cross road of commercial complexes and magastores and RS puram, the place that houses hip brands with as much ease as locally fashioned accessoreis.
9 – Puducherry (Pondicherry)

About Puducherry

Puducherry town is the headquarters of the Union Territory of Puducherry comprised of Puducherry, Karaikal, Yaman and Mahe - four widely separated towns. The first two enclaves in Tamil Nadu, and the other two enclaves in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala respectively, are united by their French connection. Puducherry has recently been renamed to its original name, replacing the name Pondicherry which was used for many years.

Legend associates Puducherry town with the Sage Agastya, who travelled from the north and settled here. Recorded history talks of Puducherry being, for almost 300 years, the centre of Anglo-French conflicts, and, later, the retreat of Indian freedom fighters, including Sri Aurobindo.

Puducherry was a French colony from 1675 until 1954, when Puducherry merged with the Indian Union. Puducherry has a rich history - at one time an obscure village, later a centre of trade with the Romans, then a place of learning. Francois Martin, Dumes and Joseph Francois Dupleix were the most famous Governors who administered Puducherry, which still retains its French character.

Today, the Puducherry of the French is to be found in the policemen’s red kepis, on quaint signboards, in a few houses, in the statues of Dupleix and Joan of Arc, libraries and in the accented Tamil, English and French still spoken there. This oval-shaped township, with the streets aligned at right angles is not like any other Indian town. Its skyline from offshore is typical of the French-influenced Mediterranean settlements as is its town-planning.

Puducherry Hospital Address:
Aravind Eye Hospital,
Cuddalore Main Road,
Thavalakuppam,
Puducherry - 605 007,
India.
Phone:+91-413-2619100 - 04 (5 lines)
Fax: +91-413-261 8848
E-mail: aravind@pondy.aravind.org
www.aravind.org
Neat, pleasant, and charming, Puducherry has a beautiful beach and a sea that is always warm and refreshing. It has been made world-famous by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and its offshoot, Auroville. And in what still remains of its French connection there is a uniqueness that sets it apart from the rest of India.

**General Information**

- **Getting to Puducherry:** Puducherry is connected with Chennai by railway and road (170 kms). There are regular bus services. Taxis can also be hired.
- **Languages:** Tamil, French, English
- **Airports:** Madras and Tiruchirappalli (I.A.), Puducherry (Vayudoot)
- **Climate:** Rains occur principally in October, November and December with a few showers from July to September. The dry season lasts from January to July and the hottest period is from April to August. The most pleasant months are December, January and February. The mean monthly temperature varies from 24°C (75.2°F) to 30°C (86°F) June. The maximum temperature reached in May or June is sometimes 43°C (109.4°F).

**Restaurants**

- **Don Giovani’s Italian Restaurant:** Located in 170 Mission Street, Pondicherry which is one of the main streets for shopping in town. It provides the most authentic Italian food with the characteristic Italian kindness and bonhomie. Though it is a small place, Italian food served is good and tasty. The food served are with organic ingredients.
- **Satsanga Restaurant:** Located in 13 Bussy Street, Pondicherry, India. It is a good place to relax. The restaurant is quite close to beach and peaceful. The place offers good service and lovely ambience.
- **Pizza Hut:** It is located in No 4, Court, Lalbahadur Sastry Street Bussy Road, pondicherry. It is an ideal place where you get beverages (Shakes and cold coffees), Pizzas (Thin crust Pizzas and cheese bites), Pastas, Desserts (Gelatos, Ice Creams and Sharable desserts) and of course different varieties of soups and salads.

**Sightseeing in the City of Puducherry**

**Sri Aurobindo Ashram**

Shri Aurobindo, the great seer, poet and prophet of the twentieth century, made Pondicherry his home from 1910 till his death in 1950. His vision and ideals continue to draw people from all over the world. The Ashram has become a centre for the practice of Yoga and a place of learning. The ashram activities include agriculture, industries, art and culture. The Samadhi in the Ashram premises is the final resting place of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother (see below).
Auroville
Located 10 kms north of Puducherry town, Auroville is envisioned as a universal town, where people from different nationalities, faiths and beliefs, can live in peace and harmony.

The construction of this ‘universal town’ was started in 1968 under the guidance of the Mother, a Paris - born painter-musician who become Sri Aurobindo’s disciple and close companion from 1924 until his death in 1950. The development of this Utopia is still in progress. Several countries have offered to set up permanent pavilions, reflecting the culture and ethos of their countries.

Chunnambar Resort
Water Sports Centre known for its virgin beaches and backwaters, Chunnaamber has a water sports centre which offers exciting boating experiences. It is also a great tourist attraction.

Beach
For sun-bathing, swimming or merely strolling, Puducherry’s beach and the 1 1/2 km-long promenade alongside, are the most delightful parts of the city. On the beach front is a statue of Mahatma Gandhi surrounded by eight exquisitely carved monolithic pillars and a War Memorial raised by the French in honour of those who died in World War I.

Botanical Garden
Established by C.S Perrotet in 1826, it preserves a large varity of exotic species of plants from all over India and abroad.

Puducherry Museum
On display are the findings of Arikamedu, the chola bronzes and sculptures, glimpses of French heritage, specimens of modern and traditional handicraft, paintings, armoires, carvings and many other things of historical interest.

Houses of Bharathi, Bharathidasan and Ananda Rangapillai
Subramanya Bharathi, the Tamil poet-revolutionary whose pen was an important weapon during India’s freedom struggle, sought refuge in this French enclave when the British made life impossible for him elsewhere in South India. At No. 20, Easwaran Koil Street, where he lived in Puducherry, Bharathi composed some of his finest patriotic songs and such immortal works of Tamil literature as the Panchali Sabadham, Kannan Pattu and Kuyil Pattu.

Bharatidasan, another great poet, was inspired by Subramanya Bharathi, whom he regarded as his guru. He won the Sahitya Akademi award for his play “Pisirandayar”. He lived at No.95, Perumal Koil Street. The houses of both Bharathi and Bharathidasan are now maintained as memorials and are places of pilgrimage for Tamil-lovers.
Ananda Rangapillai lived at No. 69-C, Rue Rangapillai (Maison Ananda Rangapillai). His palatial house is an excellent piece of 18th century architecture, a unique blend of French and Eastern styles. Ananda Rangapillai is the famous diarist of Dupleix’s time. The records he maintained of the events between 1736 and 1760 are an invaluable source of information on the history of Puducherry and the French India of that age.

**Raj Nivas**
The former palace of Dupleix is now the residence of Puducherry’s Lieutenant Governor. Across the road from Raj Nivas is the Government Park.

**Sightseeing Outside the City of Puducherry**

**Mamallapuram or Mahabalipuram (130 kms from Pondy)**
Mahabalipuram is famous for its beautiful rock cut temples build over 12 centuries during the Pallava days. It is one of the greatest concentrations of temple art in India, with fourteen cave temples, eight monolithic rathas, and a host of the fragmentary sculptures and of course, the famous shore temples. Crocodile Bank (20km from Mamallapuram).

**Tirukkalukkunram (near Mamallapuram)**
Thirukkalukkunram, with its hill top Pallava temple, famous for the two eagles which come to be fed by a priest everyday. Legend has it that they are two ascetics who upset Shiva and were turned into birds. Everyday they start in Varanasi, and make their way south to Rameswaram making pit stops at several particularly favoured temples on route.

**Crocodile Bank (150 kms from Puducherry)**
Backed by the Worldwife fund, Crocodile Bank was set up in 1976 to provide a captive breeding program for the, rapidly vanishing species of native Indian Crocodiles. The Crocodile bank has around 2,000 crocodiles of six different species and a number of other reptiles, including tortoises, turtles and snakes. Open from 8.30am - 5.30 pm.
10 – Salem

About Salem
Salem is one of the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. The important towns of Salem are Mettur, Omalur and Attur. The district is well connected to other districts of Tamil Nadu by established road and rail networks. The district headquarters is Salem city and it is well noted for mangoes and steel. Salem being the part of Kongu Nadu, is located at the base of Yercaud hills. The boundaries are Jarugumalai on north, Kanjamalai on west, Godumalai on east and Nagarmalai on north.

Salem is one of the ancient districts from which Dharmapuri and Namakkal districts were bifurcated. It has the first cinema theater in India, named as Modern Theater and it is also the fourth most urbanized region of Tamil Nadu.

Transport
National Highways
Three important National Highways pass through or originate from Salem:[30]

- **NH 7 (North-South)** - Originates at Varanasi and terminates at Madurai and Kanniyakumari. Passes via Salem.
- **NH 47 (Southwest)** - Originates at Kondalampatti in the outskirts of Salem and proceeds towards Kanniyakumari via Coimbatore, Palakkad, Thrissur, Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram.
- **NH 68 (East)** - Originates at Seelanaickenpatti in the southern end of Salem and goes via Attur, Talaivasal, Chinnasalem and Kallakurichi to meet NH 45 (South Trunk Road) at Ulundurpettai. This is the preferred route used to travel from Salem to Chennai.

Salem Hospital Address:
Aravind Eye Hospital,
64, Sankagiri Main Road,
Opp. Kaliyamman Kovil,
Nethimedu, Salem
Phone: 0427- 4356100
E-mail: salem.info@aravind.org
www.aravind.org
Road
Salem is the headquarters of the TNSTC Division 1, Salem (SLM-DIV-I) and Division 2, Dharmapuri (SLM-DIV-II). Salem is connected to all important Cities and Towns in Tamil Nadu. Salem has maximum number of buses plying to Bangalore, Hyderabad, Tirupati in Tamil Nadu only after State Capital, Chennai.

There are two major bus stations in Salem
• MGR Integrated Bus Terminus (New Bus Stand)- It is located in the Swarnapuri Area in northern Salem. All mofussil, intercity and interstate routes originate from here.
• Town Bus Station (Old Bus Stand)- It is located in the Town Area in the heart of Salem. Town Buses originate from here to various destinations in Salem district.

Air
Salem has an airport, which is located on Salem-Bangalore Highway (NH-7) in a place called Kaamalapuram near Omalur, which is about a 20 minutes drive from the city. Though the Airports Authority of India (AAI) had spruced up the airport and made it ready for operation in 1993, airlines did not show interest to fly fearing low patronage. The nearest major airports are at Tiruchchirapalli (135 km) and Coimbatore (159 km).

The nearest international airports are Chennai and Bengaluru.

Rail
Salem Junction Railway station is located in the suburb of Suramangalam, 5 km to the west of Salem. Salem is a divisional headquarters in the Southern Railway which was carved out of the existing Palakkad and Tiruchchirapalli divisions in the year 2007.[31] Salem Junction is a very important railway station in the Southern Railway. Salem is connected all important Cities and Towns in rest of country. The Station is well connected by Buses to other parts of City round the clock

Tiruchirapalli (135 km) and Coimbatore (160 km) are major cities close to Salem. Salem Railway Station is a divisional headquarters of Southern Railway and has good rail connectivity

Tourist Attractions
Yercaud(Jewel of the South)
It is one of the most well known hill stations of Tamil Nadu, at a distance of 22 km from the city of Salem. These hills form a part of the Servarayan Range in the Eastern Ghats and are situated at an altitude of 1515 m above sea level. The area of these hills is also popular for coffee plantations and orange groves, along with an orchidarium, which is run by the Botanical Survey of India. The highest point at these hills is the site of the Servarayan Temple, due to which, these hills are also sometimes referred to as Shevaroy Hills. It is also home to the Murugar group of temples. The place also has a nearby lake, which is famous as a boating site, and also for its gardens.
Kiliyur Falls
This delightfully breathtaking waterfalls is 3 km from the Yercaud Lake and should be visited after the South West or North East monsoon. The surplus water from the Yercaud Lake and reaches of the Shevaroys Hills and falls deep into the Kiliyur Valley.

Arthur’s Seat
Vantage Point gives a beautiful view of the Yercaud lake, town and the shevaroyan peak. Vantage point can be reached by taking a steep road from the Yercaud town.

Pagoda Point
Pagoda point is on the eastern side of the Yercaud hills. The name Pagoda point arrives from the four piles of stones in a pyramid shape made by the tribes in Yercaus. Presently there is a temple situated near to the pagodas

Hogenakkal
The main picnic spot in Dharmapuri is Hogenakkal, the place where the River Cauvery enters Tamil Nadu. The broad stream of the river Cauvery gets forked at this point, forming an island from where one stream continues and plunges into a deep chasm to create lovely waterfalls. As the spray of this waterfall raises clouds of droplets resembling smoke this place is known as Hogenakkal (Hoge means smoke, Kal-rock) - smoking rock.

The Mettur Dam
It is a large dam in India built in 1934. It was constructed in a gorge, where the Kaveri River enters the plains. The dam is one of the oldest in India.

Kolli Hills
The terrace type 70 hair pin-bend road leads you to this place. Fruit orchards abound in this place. Still the tribes here are unchanged and follow meticulously their traditional customs and practices.

Famous Temples
Kailasanathar Kovil (Tharamangalam)
This Siva temple is about 30 kms from Salem. Parts of it existed as early as the tenth century: as it stands now, it is the product of the Gatti Mudhali dynasty of the seventeenth century.

It is a paradise to lovers of sculpture. The Kailasanathar temple here vividly portrays the dance competition between Siva and Kali. The two sculptures depicting the episode make the visitors spellbound. The various other sculptures are a feast to the eyes with their minute details and lively expression.

Skandhasramam, Udayapatti
This is a temple complex, constructed between the years 1970 and 1971 by Santhanandha Brahmandhra Sarasvathi Adhyavadhutha Swamy and is about 5 kms from Salem. It is situated on the extreme northern end of the Jarugu Mountain on
the banks of stream called Kannimar Odai and is dedicated to three deities: Murugan as Skandha Guru, Lakshmi as Dhurga Paramesvari.

**Kandasamy Kovil**
Also known as the Sundhara Kandhaswamy Kovil, this temple is one of the seven richest temples in the district. The karum sambal (black ash) that is given to the devotees is believed to cure diseases and to serve as an antidote for snake poison. The temple was founded in the late eighteenth century by Pazhani Kavundar and later (around 1820) was built up by Katteri Lakshmana Kavundar.

**Lingam (1008) Temple**
This temple is under the control of a private department of the Vinayaga Mission. This temple contains 1008 Lingam with Nandi in the ‘Moolasthanam’. This temple is located in Ariyanoor.

**Kottai Mariamman Temple**
This Temple is one of the very oldest pilgrims in the Salem district. Mariamman festival conducted in July – August is very famous. This temple is located in heart of the city. The Kottai Mariamman Temple is one of the oldest pilgrimage centres of Salem City and is situated in the heart of the city and on the banks of River Tirumanimuthar. The presiding deity of his temple is Goddess Kottai Mariamman. The most popular feature of this temple is its Shevapet Mariamman Temple Car Festival, which is held every year, between the months of July and August and lasts for a week.

**Mosques**
- Jama Masjid - The oldest mosque in Salem, situated on the southern bank of the Thirumanimuthu Aru in the heart of the city. It was reportedly built by the Mysore ruler, Tippu Sulthan, who is said to have offered prayers here.
- Meltheru and Keeltheru Mosques in Fort Area. There is a famous Arabic college located near Tamil Nadu Magnesite, Salem, offering world-class Arabic studies to the students.
- Al-Amin Masjid is in Mohammed pura, near old market.

**Churches**
- Infant Jesus Church situated at Four Roads, Salem.
- The Church at Anayampatti situated at Gangavalli, Salem.
- The Calvary Assembly of God Church situated at Bangalore high way, Mamangam, Salem.

**Recreation**

**Kurumpapatti Zoological Park**
This is a small zoological park with natural beautiful environmental circumstance.
Paravasa Ulagam Water Theme park
It is located at a distance of about 16 km from Salem city near Mallur on the NH-7 Trichy Main Road in the midst of cool hilly region surrounded by green trees in a calm atmosphere. This is an ideal place for exciting water games such as Wave Pool, Activity Pool, Rain Dance and activities such as Karting and Biking, Baby Fun Toys, Video Games, Science Park and so on.

Restaurants
- Ponram Hotel - 254 Omalur Main Road, Peramanoor, Salem.
- Clifton Inn, Rahms Road, Near Five Road, Salem, Phone: 04281-222911.
- GRT Nature Trails, No.20th Hairpin Bend, Salem-Yercaud, Main Road, Salem, Phone: (91)4281-223115,16,17,18
- Hotel Cenneys Gateway, 97/4, Saradha College, Main Road, Salem, Phone: 0427-2330566
- Hotel Grand Palace, Killiyur Falls Road, Yercaud, Salem, Phone: 04281-223481
- Hotel LRN Excellency, 7, Saradha College, Salem, Phone: 0427-2312211.

Fast foods and pastry
- Domino’s Pizza
- Pizza Corner
- Big Chick
- Boomerang Ice creams
- Marry Brown
- Golden Dragon Chinese Restaurant
- Purav sukhsagar Restaurant
- Kevis Restaurant
- Guptha Sweets and Restaurant

Shopping
The traditional shopping areas of Salem are located in the town. They are Bazaar Street, Car Street, 1st and 2nd Agraharams and Chinna Kadai Street. There are many famous shops here, such as ARRS Silks, Sri Bhavani Stores, Home Foods, ANS Jewellery, AVR Kumbakonam Silver Shop, Thangamayil Jewellery etc. Salem’s flower market is located in Chinna Kadai Street. Shevapet and Fort area are famous for hardware and furniture products.
10. Appendix

Map of India
Map of Tamilnadu
Map of Theni
Map of Tirunelveli
Map of Pondicherry
Important Phone Numbers

**Aravind Eye Hospitals**
- Madurai: 0452 - 435 6100
- Theni: 04546- 252 658
- Tirunelveli: 0462 - 233 7103
- Coimbatore: 0422 - 436 0400
- Puducherry: 0413 - 261 9100
- Salem: 0427 - 4356100

**LAICO**
- 0452 - 435 6500

**Aurolab**
- 0452 - 244 6100

**Rotary-Aravind International Eye Bank**
- 0452 - 535 6100

Quick Links

About Aravind - www.aravind.org
About LAICO - http://www.laico.org
A list of courses on the Aravind website - http://www.aravind.org/education/homepage.htm

**Travel to Madurai**
- Kingfisher - http://www.flykingfisher.com
- Paramount Airways - http://www.paramountairways.com
- Indian Airlines - http://indian-airlines.nic.in
- Air & Train travel in India - http://www.cleartrip.com
- Southern Railway timings - www.srailway.com
- Travisa India - https://indiavisa.travisaoutsourcing.com

**To find the current exchange rate**
- Current exchange rate - www.xe.com

**Hotels**
- Fortune Pandyan’s restaurant - http://www.fortunepandiyanhotel.com
- Supreme Hotel - http://www.supremehotels.com
- Park Plaza Hotel - http://www.hotelparkplaza.net

**Clothes Shopping in Madurai**

**Sightseeing Outside the City of Madurai**