• Meenakshi Sundaraswarar Temple
The second edition of the Chettinad Heritage and Cultural Festival was conducted for five days in Chettinad and Madurai from September 29 to October 4, 2023, in collaboration with the Chettinad Heritage and Cultural Trust.

Chettinad, known for its lavish architecture, culture, and cuisine, was the backdrop for this festival that brought in people from across the globe. The event was held in the historic residences and grand mansions of Chettinad, which stand as a testament to the opulent history of the Nattukottai Chettiar community.

The festival comprised various activities and excursions aimed at offering a deep insight into the culture and history of the Chettiar community. It included lectures, demonstrations, and special cultural elements like "Rarattu" (lullabies) and the enactment of the "Mamiyar Sadangu" (wedding ritual).
Visitors were offered guided tours as part of the festival to explore the cultural and architectural treasures of the region. These tours covered key sites like Kanadukathan, Kothamangalam, Athangudi, Karaikudi, Lakshmi Palace, Chettinad Tiles Factory, Pothiyan Veedu, and A.M.A. House. In addition, visitors were also taken on temple tours that included Avudaiyar Kovil, Ayyanar temples in Aranthangi, Kuthadivayal, Panjati, Vijayalaya Choleeswaram, and Ayyanar Temples at Naarthamalai.
The bazaar at the festival showcased jewellery, saris and other culturally significant artworks, as well as culinary workshops, providing an opportunity to explore the nuances of Chettinad cuisine.

As a special feature of the festival’s second edition, the participants were taken on an exclusive two-day excursion to Madurai. The expedition led participants to explore iconic destinations like the Meenakshi Temple, the Keeladi excavation site and its museum, fragrant jasmine-scented trails. The trail invited enthusiasts to delve into the history and artistry of the Gandhi Museum, Nayakar Palace, and the manufacturing unit of Sungudi sari.

The event provided a comprehensive perspective on Chettinad’s abundant heritage, culture, and architectural wonders.
The designated pavilion for Tamil Nadu offered visitors an in-depth exploration of the diverse array of destinations within the State. The pavilion displayed thoughtfully planned catalogues, highlighting the region’s abundant tourism attractions including wellness, adventure, heritage, arts and crafts to a global audience.

The 46th edition of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Travel Mart was held at the International Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (IECC) in New Delhi from October 4th to 6th, 2023. PATA Travel Mart is a prominent international trade exhibition in the tourism sector, facilitating trade interactions between international buyers and sellers, especially those from the Pacific Asia region. It serves as a platform for participants and attendees from diverse sectors, offering opportunities for global networking, learning, and collaboration, with a specific focus on the Asia Pacific region.
The Tourism Expo Japan 2023 (JATA) Travel Mart was hosted at INTEX OSAKA from October 26 to October 29, 2023. JATA Travel Mart is dedicated to improving travel services to and from Japan. Information sharing, member cooperation, and advocating for advantageous business and legislative advancements are among the many endeavours of Tourism Expo Japan. This initiative provided Tamil Nadu with numerous opportunities such as business meetings, knowledge sharing, cultural exchange, discussions, and direct engagement with clientele in the Japanese market, making it an efficient platform for competitive promotion.

The Pavilion of Tamil Nadu at the Tourism Expo Japan 2023 was inaugurated by Thiru. Tejashwi Prasad Yadav, Hon'ble Deputy CM of Bihar and Tourism Minister, Thiru. H. E. Sibi George, Ambassador of India to Japan and Thiru. K. Ramachandran, Hon'ble Minister of Tourism, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, with Dr. K. Manivasan, I.A.S., Principal Secretary to Government, Tourism, Culture, and Religious Endowments Department.

The pavilion prominently presents the grand Yazhi pillar from Srirangam, along with the charming presence of Thanjavur dolls and a collection of cultural treasures bearing Geographical Indication (GI) tags.
The prestigious Executive Committee Award of the Japan Tourism Awards was awarded to the Mannar Eco-Tourism Project from Tamil Nadu at the 7th edition of the Japan Tourism EXPO held in Osaka, Japan on October 26, 2023. This international recognition threw light on the exceptional stakeholders dedicated to rejuvenating and sustaining the positive impact of travel through their exemplary initiatives.

The award was received by Thiru. K. Ramachandran, the Hon’ble Minister of Tourism, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, from Mr Hiroyuki Takahashi, Chairperson at the 7th Japan Tourism, Tourism EXPO Japan Executive Committee at the Awards ceremony held on October 26, 2023, in Osaka, Japan.

Mannar Eco-Tourism Project Soars Triumph at Japan Tourism Awards:

Encompassing 21 islands within the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park, the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve has been a pioneer in developing eco-tourism destinations that efficiently utilize the area’s rich natural resources. These sites are dedicated to various ecosystems, including mangroves, coral reefs, islands, dolphins, and more, with the primary aim of offering visitors a wide range of opportunities to explore and appreciate a wide range of ecological environments.

The project serves as a testament to an innovative and sustainable form of eco-tourism. It is dedicated to conserving the distinct ecosystem, promoting environmental conservation, and fostering employment opportunities.
Tamil Nadu Unveils Its Cultural Mosaic in Osaka

The Department of Tourism organized a roadshow at Hotel Granvia in Osaka on October 25, 2023, highlighting the vibrant charm of the State. Thiru. K. Ramachandran, the Hon’ble Minister of Tourism for the Government of Tamil Nadu, along with Dr. K. Manivasan, I.A.S., Principal Secretary to Government, responsible for Tourism, Culture, and Religious Endowments, Thiru. Anil Dutt Raturi, the Consul General of India in Osaka, and Thiru. Ram Kalani, President, The Indian Chamber of Commerce, Japan, were present.

The event showcased TTDC’s tour packages and tourism circuits through an engaging presentation for tour operators, travel agents, and local associations, to promote tourism in Tamil Nadu by partnering with professionals from Japan.
In the Sivaganga district of Tamil Nadu lies Chettinad, an ancient town filled with an abundance of tourist delights. The roots of Chettinad trace back to the 13th century when the Nattukottai Chettiars migrated to Karaikudi. Over time, a new settlement evolved in the Chettinad region, earning it the nickname 'Land of the Chettiars’. Chettinadu showcases its rich heritage not just in lavish palaces, but through a myriad of attractions that never cease to amaze visitors.
The Chettiar community’s cultural heritage and way of life are reflected in the traditional arts and crafts of Chettinad. The Kottan is a hand-woven basket made from palm leaves and stems. These Chettinadu Kottan baskets have a unique weaving pattern distinct from other palm-leaf crafts in Tamil Nadu. They earned the UNESCO Seal of Excellence in 2004 and received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2012 due to their exceptional style and colour.

The Kandangi saree flourishes within the Chettinad culture. These sarees feature a classic checkered pattern in earthy tones of red, orange, and subtle black, accentuated by temple-themed borders. The name 'Kandangi' draws its inspiration from this unique checkered design.

The region's cuisine is famous for its use of freshly ground Chettinad masala, which incorporates a diverse range of spices. This culinary tradition is a source of great delight, attracting both food enthusiasts and tourists. Traditional Chettinad meals are served on banana leaves, with dishes arranged in odd numbers and following a specific order. Prominent dishes in this cuisine encompass Nattukozhi Kozhambu (country chicken), Aatukari Kozhambu (lamb), Karaikudi Eral (prawn) masala, as well as a variety of vegetarian options like Panniyaram and Athirasam.
In addition to its culinary treasures, Chettinad is adorned with intricately decorated mansions. The houses in Kanadukathan are spacious and built in a distinctive Chettinad style. The main entrances of these houses resemble the grand and intricately carved gateways of Hindu temples. An interesting feature commonly found on Kanadukathan's streets is the presence of potholes designed for rainwater harvesting.

A remarkable example of Chettinad's renowned palatial mansions is the Chettinadu Palace. Most of the materials, decorative items, and furnishings used in the construction of the Chettinad Palace were imported from East Asian countries and Europe. The hall leads to a central courtyard, historically used for weddings and religious ceremonies.

Aayiram Jannal Veedu is another well-known landmark in Karaikudi, with its name meaning "the house with a thousand windows." It is a must-visit for tourists exploring Karaikudi, and upon entering, one can't help but notice the enduring authenticity of its architectural style and grandeur, which have been meticulously preserved over time. Renowned for its distinctive cuisine, vibrant handloom traditions, and rich social, cultural, historical, and architectural significance, Chettinad is a town that leaves a lasting impression.
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