

## POTENTIAL TOURISM IN THOOTHUKUDI DISTRICT

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### **Abstract**

*Tuticorin District is a Tamil Nadu state in southern India. Thoothukudi (Tuticorin) is the district headquarters. It is also known for Pearl cultivation with abundance of pearls found in the seas of Thoothukudi. It is known as the gate way of Tamil Nadu. It is ruled by one of the oldest Kingdom the Pandas'. The Port of Korkai, Kulasekerapattinam are famous in ancient world with the fame reaching as far as Roman Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Adichanallur contains the key to ancient Tamil Civilization and is under archaeology study.*

*Keywords: Thoothukudi, Korkai, Kulasekerapattinam, Adichanallur, Ayyanarsunai, Tiruchendur*

### **Ayyanarsunai**

It is 10 kms from Tiruchendur on the way to Tirunelveli. Natural water gushes out from this spring throughout the year. A temple is dedicated to the village deity Ayyanar. It has now been developed into a beautiful picnic centre. Nearby this spring one can admire the forest with sand dunes.

### **Tiruchendur**

The sea-shore temple dedicated to Lord Muruga is one of the six abodes of Lord Muruga. The nine storied temple tower (157 feet) belongs to 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. visiting Valli Cave, taking sea-bath and bathing in Naazhikkinaru can be done here apart from visiting the main temple. It is 40 kms from Thoothukudi and 60 kms from Tirunelveli is well connected by bus and train to all major towns. Their forests are located in various suburban villages surrounding the town. These red soil forests are densely planted with palm trees, cashew plantations and other crops typical of the region. The seashore Murugan temple at Tiruchendur is one the delightful spots sanctified and venerated by every Hindu<sup>2</sup>. As one of the first spiritual centers for the salvation of man, His shrine has been an attraction for Hindus for ages. This sacred house of God is in the extreme southwest of the Indian peninsula. The rising sun bows in adoration of it each morning as he rises from the rippling expanse of the ocean, and spreads light and life over every living object. Bordered by the sea on the East and North, the temple walls on these sides are washed by the foaming waves of the Gulf of Mannar. The date of the temple is hidden in the paranoiac past. The nucleus of the structure however has been here for more than 2,000 years as the Tamil Classics inform us. Lord Muruga's association with Tiruchendur is highly significant. It is described in extenso in his epic, the skanda Puranam. The young Muruga as the Devasenapati vanquishes evil in the form of surapatuma. The Tamils have ever since been celebrating the event as an annual festival during Skanda Sashti. Tiruchendur means as it

does, the house of Victory. It borders the sea and has all the natural charm of a hero's fortress. It is verily a haven of peace and Bliss.<sup>3</sup> The Tamils in this part of the peninsula have such an attraction for the place and its presiding Lord Arumuga Nayinar.

#### **Kulasekarapattinam**

Kulasekarapattinam is situated on the way to Kanniyakumari from Tiruchendur. This village is famous for Mutharamman Temple, which is located on the shore of Bay of Bengal. This temple is nearly 150 years old. The Dhasara Festival is celebrated in a grand manner every year in October. Folk artists from throughout Tamil Nadu perform variety of cultural programmes during the Dhasara Festival. Kulasekarapattinam is 20 kms from Tiruchendu. Formerly there was a port and an ancient Siva temple here belongs to 16<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Kazhugumalai**

It is 21 kms from Kovilpatti in Sankarakovil bus route. Cave temple of Lord Muruga is worth seeing. A shrine for lord Shiva belongs to 13<sup>th</sup> Century is also here Ancient jain panel carvings are worth visiting. Vettuvan koil of 8<sup>th</sup> century, fine rock-cut carvings on a rock are also worth visiting.

#### **Sinthalakkurai**

Sinthalakkurai one such pilgrim centres with Goddess Sri Vekkiamman of 42 feet height. It is Madurai - Thoothukudi route. The statue of Mahavishnu of 72 feet long in Rajasayanam on the snake in Thiruparkadal is also there.

#### **Nava Thirupathi**

These are nine Vishnu temples on either side of Tamirabarani River of the Tirunelveli - Tiruchendur state highway. Nammazhvar is the only Azhvaar to have sung at the Nava Thirupathi temples. One can start the Nava - Thirupathi trip from Sri Vaikuntam and end with Azhvaar Tirunagari.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Adichanallur**

It is 20 kms from Tirunelveli on the way to Tiruchendur From and Archaeological point of view, this place has glorious past and it is located on the banks of river Tamirabarani. It is assumed that, in ancient times a civilized habitation flourished here. Some monuments i.e., Urns (burnt-clay vessels which were used for burying dead bodies during ancient day) small mud vessels were found near the river Tamirabarani and they are supportive evidence, for the civilization.<sup>6</sup> This place is now under the control of Tamil Nadu State Archaeological Department.

#### **Manapad**

It is in Tiruchendur to Kanyakumari road 18 kms. An ancient Holy Cross Church associated with St. Francis Xavier is located here. The small village is having many beautiful

churches. Hence it is called as little Jerusalem. Unpolluted Beach attracts large number of tourists.

#### **Ettaiyapuram**

This is the birth place of the revolutionary poet Subramaniya Bharathiyar. Umaru Pulavar Dharga is also located here. Ettayapuram is located 76 kms from Tirunelveli. 22 kms from Kovilpatti and 35 kms from Thoothukudi. In memory of National Poet Subramania Bharathiyar, a memorial was built by Kalki Krishna Moorthy in 1945 and Mahatma Gandhi showered his blessings on the occasion of the opening.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Srivaikundam**

Srivaikuntam is about 30 kms from Tirunelveli on the Tiruchendur road. The story goes that the Lord, disguised as a thief, presented himself before the king of save the (real) thief. Hence, the Lord here is also known. From Srivaikuntam, one can take an auto/taxi to go around the other eight temples. Every year in the month of September or October (Tamil month Purattasi) all Saturdays the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation operate special buses to these Nava - Thirupathi. Thirupathi Temples from Tirunelveli New Bus-stand. Advance booking.

A unique feature of the lord here is that Adishes has his hood above the Lord in standing posture, one of its kinds in the 108 Divya Desams. Another feature of the temple is that the sun's rays falls directly on Lord Vaikuntanathan on two day (April - may and October period) every year. It is believed that this temple was used as a fort in the fight between the legendary freedom fighter Veerapandiya Kattabomman and the British in the 1800s.<sup>8</sup> Buses ply every 10 minutes on this route from Tirunelveli new bus stand.

#### **Vanchi Maniyachi**

It is situated in the centre of Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Kovilpatti. It is 31 kms from Thoothukudi. The Maniyachi Railway Station where the British Collector "Ashe" was shot by freedom fighter Vanchinathan, one of the important events in the indian history of Independence.

#### **Vembarbeach**

Vembar is a small town on the shores of the Gulf of Mannar, in Tuticorin District. It is located near the border with Ramanathapuram District,<sup>9</sup> 13 kms South of Sayalkudi. Vembarbeach have three islands-Nalla thanni islands, Uppu Thanni Island Chali Island is located in ECR, with a fine beach.

#### **Kayalpatinam**

It is located on the main road to Tiruchendur with a beautiful beach It is 8 kms. It is on the shore of Bay of Bengal. This small village is mostly inhabited by Muslims who, it is said originally came from Arabia and worked for Pandya kings particularly in collecting

pearls and chanks. Thoothukudi is renowned for pearl fishing, Production of salt and other related business. Now Thoothukudi is a port city in the southern region of Tamil Nadu. This is a natural port. Freedom fighter V.O.Chidambaram Pillai operated ship against British supremacy from Thoothukudi.<sup>10</sup> Roche Park, 4 kms from Thoothukudi city on the way to new port is a lovely sea bore for holiday seekers.

#### **Ottapidaram**

Ottapidaram continues to be a Tourism centre for freedom fighters, since it is the birth place of the great patriot V.O. Chidamparam Pillai. His house has been converted into memorial and is preserved by the Government of Tamil Nadu from 1961.<sup>11</sup> His statue, photo galleries detailing his life history are displayed in his memorial.

#### **Ashe Memorial**

A memorial to the late Robert Ashe, the then collector of the Tirunelveli District who was sainted in 1911 at Maniyachi has been built here to perpetuate his memory. The British Government at that time built a Mandapam at the eastern end of the Great Cotton Road with the public subscription.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Vallanadu Blackbuck Sanctuary**

This Sanctruary with Black-buck (deer) is located in Vallanadu. Scrub jungle with a hill-lock is their breeding ground of the Black-buck here. It is in Tirunelveli to Thoothukudi bus route, 18 kms.

#### **KorKai**

This 12<sup>th</sup> century village, recorded by foreign traveller of 18<sup>th</sup> century is located on the main road from Tiruchendur to Thoothukudi with a slight detour at Mukkani bridge road or Athoor. It is 29 kms from Tiruchendur. There is a tank Called Korkaikulam with an extent of 250 acres. It was the ancient port of Pandia dynasty. Ancient Vettrivelamman Temple is also located here. Archaeological remains kept in a museum here are worth to be seen. Korkai is recognised as an ancient Port City. An attempt is made now to locate the port based on field exploration, folk beliefs and coastal geology and geomorphology.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Panchalankurichi**

Panchalankurichi is a small historic village 25 kms from Thoothukudi. From here the Great warrior Kattabomman popularly known as “Veerapandiya Kattabomman” raised his voice against the British regime in the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The existing Memorial Fort was constructed in 1974 by the Government of Tamil Nadu. The Memorial Hall has beautiful paintings on the walls depicting the heroic deeds of the saga which give a vivid idea about the history of the period. Sri Devi Jakkammal Temple, the hereditary Goddess of Kattabomman is located near the fort. Cemetery of British soldiers are also exiting near the fort. The rest of the old fort is protected by the Department of Archaeology Government of

Tamil Nadu. The festival held in 15<sup>th</sup> January and in the second week of May every year attracts thousands of people. The entrance fee is Rs 2/- for adults and Re. 1/- for children. The rest house is also available here Kayathar. Kayathar is situated about 25 kms from Tirunelveli on the way to Madurai. Kattabomman, one of the earliest opponents of British rule in India was hanged on a Tamarind tree, by the British on 16.10.1799 at Kayathar.<sup>14</sup> A memorial has been built here by the Tamil Nadu Government for Kattabomman.

#### **Kattabomman Memorial Fort**

Kattabomman Memorial Fort is located at a mere distance of about 18 km from Thoothukudi in small and historic village of Panchalankurichi in Tamil Nadu. The place is a must visit for all the history lovers and they take great pleasure in visiting the same. Artwork done in this place is so spectacular that it takes everyone's breath away. It is a historical treasure and is stored with plenty of historical evidences of our nation under the British rule. The place depicts the heroic sagas of the earliest freedom fighters of our country.<sup>15</sup> The fort was built in the memory of veerapandiya Kattabomman, a great freedom fighter who fought against the British at a very early stage.

#### **Thiruvaraguna Mangai-(Natham)**

Thiruvaraguna Mangai temple is about two kms east of Srivaikuntam and is known to many as the Vishnu temple at Natham. True to his name, Lord Vijayaasanar is seen to be sitting majestically like a victorious king on the throne. It is believed that a visit to this temple will help one attain moksha.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Thirupauliangudi**

One km east of Natham is the Lord KaasinaVenthara temple at Thirupauliangudi. The east-facing Lord is seen in a reclining posture with a lotus stalk from his navel terminating in a flower on Brahma's image on the wall of the sanctum. The story goes that Vishnu, along with Goddess Sridevi, came down to visit this place. Angered at being ignored for the trip, Goddess Bhoodevi hid herself in the netherworld. After Vishnu pacified her, it is believed that the two goddesses came back together and gave darshan here with the Lord.<sup>17</sup> An interesting feature of the temple is that Vishnu's feet can be viewed through a small window in the passage.

#### **Erettai Thirupathi**

Erettai Thirupathi temples that lie within a 100 yards of each other in the middle of a jungle. The first of the two temples has Lord Devapiran in a standing posture facing east. Sage suprabhar who performed a yagna at this place relieved a man and a woman from Kubera's curse, which had turned them into a measuring scale (tulai) and a bow (villi). Hence this place is called Tulai villi Mangalam. At the second temple, one finds Lord Aravindalochanar in a seated posture facing east. Legend has it that Lord Vishnu was

impressed with Saga Suprabhar's daily lotus pooja and gave darshan to the sage on the northern banks of Tamirabarani.<sup>18</sup> Hence, it is believed that one who does special 'Lotus Flower' pooja at this temple will be relieved of all sins.

#### **Thirukuzhanthai temple - (perunkulam)**

The Maayakoothan temple at Thirukuzhanthai is about 10 kms east of Srivaikuntam. Legend has it that Vishnu went on his Garuda Vaahan to rescue Goddess Lakshmi from an Asura. Hence, one finds Garuda as the Utsav deity here. In the battle that ensued, Vishnu is said to have performed his victory dance standing on Asura's body and hence the name 'Maayakoothan'.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Thenthiruperai**

On the South bank of Tamirabarani, one finds the big Nigaril Mugilvannan temple at Thenthiruperai. Where the Lord is seen in a seated posture facing east. Legend has it that Goddess Bhoodevi found two fish-shaped ear rings while performing a penance to relieve herself of Sage Durvasa's curse and offered it to the Lord. Another story is that Varuna (the rain god) performed a penance here to be relieved of his curse. As a mark of this episode, it is believed that Varuna, visits this temple, every year, on the full moon day in the month of Panguni (march-April) and worships Vishnu.

#### **Thirukkolor**

3 km south west of Thenthiruperai is the Vaitha Maa Nidhi temple at Thirukkolor, where the Lord is in a reclining posture facing east. This is the birth place of MadurakaviAzhvaar, the ardent devotee of Nammazhvaar. Legend has it that Kubera attained salvation from Goddess Parvati's curse at this place and it was here that his Nava Nidhis were restored. It is said that a visit to this temple will help one recover lost wealth.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Alwarthirunagari**

Our last halt at the Nava Tirupathi temple is the AadiNaathan temple. Lord Nambi of Thirukkurungkudi is believed to have been born here as Nammazhvaar. When born, Nammazhvaar is said to have not opened his eyes or cried. He resided under a tamarind tree within the temple for 16 years till he met Madurakavi (who was to later become his disciple) who posed some interesting questions about life. So impressed was Madurakavi (Azhvaar) with Nammazhvaar's answers, that he said "i do not need God, Nammazhvaar is enough". An important festival at this temple is the Vaikasi Utsav, when the deities from all the Nava Tirupathi temples Congregate here to listen to the paasurams with Nammazhvaar seated on the Hamsa Vaahan. This is one of the three Divya Desams in Tamilnadu where Araiyaar Sevai, the visual song and dance enactment of the paasuram is still being performed. Most of the inscriptions here date back to 1000 years.

**Nava-Kailayam**

Nine Lord Siva Shrines called as Navagrahas which gives health and wealth to the pilgrims. Among the Nine Siva Temple Five are situated in. 1. Papanasam 45 kms from Tirunelveli. The presiding deity of the temple is Pabavinasar alias Kailasanathar. A good picnic spot also. 2. Cheran Mahadevi 22 kms from Tirunelveli. The presiding deity of the temple is Sri Ammainathar alias Kailasanathar. 3. Kodaganallu 15 kms from Tirunelveli on the way to Cheranmahadevi. The temple is located near Nadukkallur. The presiding deity is Kailasanathar. 4. Kunnathur. 5. Murappanadu Thoothukudi district. The following are referred as Nava kailayam shrines. All the temples are well connected by bus service.<sup>21</sup>

**Panimayamatha Church (Our Lady of Snows)**

One famous Church named -Lady of snow” is here. It is built by Portuguese in 1711. Every year on 5<sup>th</sup> August a grand festival is celebrated here.

**Meignanapuram**

It is 13 kms from Tiruchendur fan known as ancient a famous Christian village. The Pari Pauvlin Church here was built in 1847. It is 110 feet long, 55 feet wide with steeple in the front soaring into the sky with a height of 192 feet. This is one of the biggest churches with the tallest steeple in India.

**Manal Matha Church**

Sokkankudiyiruppu is a very small village with a lot of Hindu. The 4” Church was esiting which was administered by the people of the nearby village Kanakkankudiyiruppu. As number of Catholics increased. The present church of St. James and Stanisla was started in the time of Fr. Nevis Kuschan. After him, Fr. John Mancher from Anaikarai took care of the building work. Completed it and consecrated it. Manal Matha pilgrimage center is famous substaion of this parish.<sup>22</sup>

**Punnaikayal**

Punnikayal seems to have been in portuguese possession on the southern Coast of India for a period of 500 years after their arrival from 1551. They established two hospitals a seminary and mud fort here. The first Tamil printing press was setup at Punnaikayal in 1579. The Tamil types had been made by Rr. Juan de Pereira. Fr. Anriquez himself composed the books in Tamil.

**Puliampatti**

Puliampatti is situated in the middle of Tirunelveli and Ottapidaram. The church located in the place where St. Francis Xavier is believed to have stayed for a while in the course of his missionary journey along the coastal belt of the Bay of Bengal. Every Tuesday a special Mass is conducted at St. Antony’s Church. Every year January last week a festival

is celebrated and large number of people (all religion) from all over Tamil Nadu participates in this festival.<sup>23</sup>

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