



Chennai

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Sergemi/Shutterstock.com

Formerly known as Madras, Chennai has a history involving Indian, Portuguese, and Dutch settlements before becoming a significant British trading port in the 17th century. As time progressed, Chennai has grown significantly. It is now India's fourth-largest city by population and serves as the capital of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. From historical landmarks and temples to modern amenities and lively markets, this bustling and colourful Indian city is bound to have something on offer for everyone.

Featured

Fort Saint George

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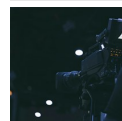
St Thomas Mount

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The Madras Crocodile Bank ...

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AVM Studios

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Santhome Cathedral Basilica

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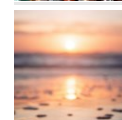
Government Museum & Nation...

The Government Museum in Chennai houses an extensive



Kapaleeshwarar Temple

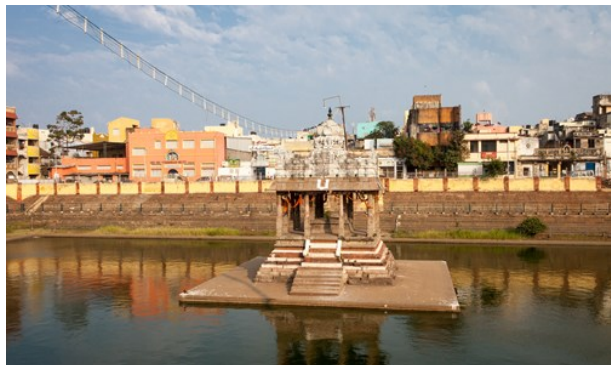
Dedicated to Lord Shiva, Kapaleeshwarar Temple is one of Chennai's oldest, w...



Marina Beach

Marina Beach is one of the longest urban beaches in the world, stretching ab...

THE CITY



Sergemi/Shutterstock.com

Chennai, or the 'Gateway to South India' as it is also called, is a city with a rich colonial past famous for its cultural events, music, literature, dance and cuisine as well as for being the home of India's second-largest film industry, known as Kollywood.

While Chennai is primarily a commercial city with automobile, technology and healthcare industries and, therefore, has fewer famous tourist attractions than many other Indian cities, it still has plenty of delightful offers for visitors.

For those with an interest in history, a visit to Fort St George - built in the 1640s by the British - is a must. Apart from the British heritage, the site also showcases the rich history of southern India throughout the centuries in the museum located on the fort's grounds.

Chennai is also home to some 75 temples, churches and mosques well worth a visit, particularly the beautiful and richly-ornamented Kapaleeswarar Temple.

The city's beach, the Marina, is one of the longest stretches of sandy beaches in the world and something visitors cannot miss.

Chennai also hosts colourful street markets

alongside luxurious shopping malls with wood and stone carvings, mats, textiles and silk being some of the most sought-after items on offer.

DO & SEE



wedschilde/Pixabay

Start your exploration in Chennai at the majestic Kapaleeshwarar Temple, a Dravidian architectural gem adorned with sculptures and ancient rituals. Nearby, the Government Museum boasts an impressive collection of South Indian bronzes and artefacts. For a mix of history and tranquillity, visit the Santhome Basilica, situated over the tomb of St Thomas the Apostle. End your journey at the Chennai Rail Museum, a hidden treasure displaying the evolution of Indian railways through charming vintage locomotives and memorabilia.

Fort St George Museum

The Fort St. George Museum is home to military memorabilia from the British colonial period. The museum showcases a variety of artefacts related to the British East India Company, the British Raj, and the military history of that era. The collection includes uniforms, weapons, and other items from the British colonial period and offers insights into Chennai's colonial history.

Address: Rajaji Road, near Legislature and Secretariat, Fort St George, Chennai

Opening hours: Sat-Thu 9am-5pm, Fri closed

Santhome Cathedral Basilica



Originally established in 1523, the San Thome Cathedral was rebuilt in Neo-Gothic style in 1896. The church is believed to be built over the shrine that holds the remains of Saint Thomas the Apostle, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. St Thomas is said to have come to India in the 1st century AD and was martyred in Chennai.

Photo: Arvind Balaraman/Shutterstock.com
Address: 38, Santhome High Road, Venkatesa Agraharam, Mylapore, Chennai
Opening hours: Daily 6am-9pm
Phone: +91 44 2498 5455

Government Museum & National Art Gallery



The Government Museum in Chennai houses an extensive archaeological collection that includes artefacts from South Indian dynasties dating from the 6th century to the British colonial period. The museum also features Indian art and sculpture, bronzes, anthropological exhibits, and a children's section.

The National Art Gallery, which is one of the oldest art galleries in India, is located within the Government Museum Complex. It is home to a significant collection of Indian art and historical pieces.

Photo: Sam DCruz/Shutterstock.com
Address: Government Maternity Hospital, Pantheon Road, Egmore, Chennai
Opening hours: Sat-Thu 9:30am-5pm, Fri closed
Phone: +91 44 2819 3238
Internet: <https://govtmuseumchennai.org>

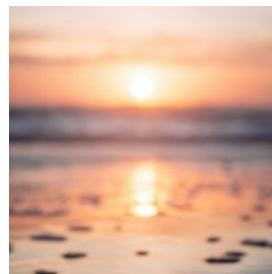
Kapaleeshwarar Temple



Dedicated to Lord Shiva, Kapaleeshwarar Temple is one of Chennai's oldest, with its origins dating back to the 8th century. The temple is renowned for its intricately detailed gopuram, or entrance tower, which stands about 37 metres high.

Photo: jorisvo/Shutterstock.com
Address: 234, Ramakrishna Mutt Road, Vinayaka Nagar Colony, Mylapore, Chennai
Opening hours: Daily 6am-noon / 4pm-9pm

Marina Beach



Marina Beach is one of the longest urban beaches in the world, stretching about 13 kilometres along the Bay of Bengal, boasting a lively atmosphere with numerous vendors selling food, refreshments, and souvenirs.

The beach is also home to the Marina Lighthouse, which offers panoramic views of the city and the sea. Nearby, you can find the Chennai Marina Aquarium, which showcases marine life, though it is more modest compared to large aquariums.

Photo: Cole Keister/Unsplash
Address: Marina Beach, Chennai

St Thomas Mount



The hill on which St Thomas Mount is perched has about 160 steps leading to the top, where the Church of Our Lady of Expectations is located.

The church, built by the Portuguese in the 16th century, is situated at the summit and is a notable pilgrimage site. The tradition holds that St Thomas the Apostle was martyred on this hill, although the exact historical details are debated.

Photo: NarayanK/Shutterstock.com

Address: St Thomas Mount, Tamil Nadu, India

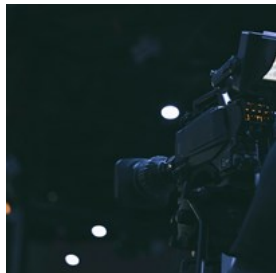
Fort Saint George

Built by the British East India Company in 1640, Fort Saint George is a historic landmark in Chennai which houses the legislative assembly of Tamil Nadu. The fort is a key site showcasing Chennai's colonial history.

The fort complex includes The Fort Museum, which displays artefacts related to Chennai's colonial past and a library, which holds historical documents and books.

Address: Fort Saint George, Chennai

AVM Studios



Chennai is a major centre for the Tamil-language film industry, known as Kollywood. AVM Productions is one of the prominent film studios in

Chennai, contributing significantly to Kollywood's success. Visitors to film studios like AVM can tour the film sets and may have the chance to see filming in progress.

Photo: John Benitez/Unsplash

Address: 38, Ave Meiyappan Road, Ottagapalayam, Kannika Puram, Vadapalani, Chennai

Phone: +91 44 4213 6700

Internet: www.avm.in

The Madras Crocodile Bank Trust and Centre for Herpetology



The Madras Crocodile Bank, located about 40 kilometres south of Chennai, is known for its conservation efforts and educational programs

related to crocodiles and various types of reptiles. It houses a large collection of crocodiles, alligators, and other reptiles, and serves as a valuable resource for herpetology research and public education.

Photo: Balaji Malliswamy/Unsplash

Address: Post Bag No 4, Mahabalipuram

Opening hours: Tue–Sun 9am–5pm, Mon closed

Internet: <https://madrascrocodilebank.org>

DINING



ne3p/Shutterstock.com

South Indian cuisine, often reflecting Dravidian traditions, features an array of mainly vegetarian dishes typically eaten with steamed rice. Tamil cuisine, known for its bold use of spices, aims to balance all six tastes—sweet, sour, bitter, salty, astringent, and pungent—in a meal. A traditional Thali sometimes served on a banana leaf, is a feast of diverse flavours and textures, so observing local dining etiquette can be insightful.

In Chennai, the term 'hotel' frequently denotes a

restaurant, and signage will usually indicate whether meat is served.

While upscale hotels often house excellent restaurants with lavish lunch buffets, the street stalls offer an equally rich culinary experience. Be sure to explore different times of day, as some dishes are exclusive to breakfast or night-time dining.

Murugan Idli Shop (T. Nagar)



This is another chain of restaurants, with three different locations in Chennai. Famous for its idly – an Indian savoury cake, similar to semolina, served with coconut and sambar – and its dosa, a crepe, usually filled with potato curry, made from rice and lentils. This place serves some of the best South Indian food in Chennai.

Photo: Joe Gough/Shutterstock.com

Address: 2/5, Gopathi Narayanaswami Chetty Road, T. Nagar, Chennai,

Opening hours: Daily 7am-11:30pm

Phone: +91 95970 86501

Internet: <https://muruganidlishop.com>

Barbeque Nation



The restaurant is primarily known for its barbecue, but vegetarians will surely not find themselves at a loss either. Their unique live grill concept allows you to barbecue your own skewers of succulent meats, paneer, and fresh vegetables right at your table, plus a sumptuous buffet spread that includes appetisers, main courses, and desserts.

Photo: Ustynchenko Iryna/Shutterstock.com

Address: 39, Star City Serviced Apartment, Bazullah Road, near The Grand Sweets, T. Nagar, Chennai

Opening hours: Daily 11:30am-6pm / 6:30pm-11pm

Phone: +91 80 6902 8721

Ponnusamy Hotel



The obvious choice for food from India's Chettinad region, this restaurant is definitely one of the best in Chennai. It offers a great selection of meat and strictly vegetarian dishes, with its seafood specialties being a popular choice.

Photo: zhgee/Shutterstock.com

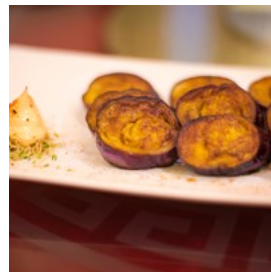
Address: 5/1 Gowdia Mutt Road, Royapettah, Chennai

Opening hours: Every day 11am - 12am

Phone: +91 44 2813 3067

Internet: www.ponnusamyhotel.com

Bayleaf



Since 1997, Bayleaf has been a cherished gem in Chennai's culinary scene, celebrated for its authentic Bengali and North Indian cuisine.

Specialising in traditional dishes such as Bengali fish curry and North Indian kebabs, the restaurant combines time-honoured recipes with a warm, inviting atmosphere. Bayleaf's carefully curated menu also features a selection of unique regional specialities and homemade sweets that provide a tasty end to your meal.

Photo: simplemomentss/Shutterstock.com

Address: 14, 6th Street, Gopalapuram, Chennai

Opening hours: Daily noon-3pm / 7pm-11pm

Phone: +91 44 2811 4557

Cream Centre



Renowned for its eclectic and inventive menu of vegetarian fare, Cream Centre masterfully blends traditional Indian flavours with global influences,

offering a tantalising array of dishes that range from pasta and pizza to chaat and curries. The modern yet warm interior creates a welcoming atmosphere, perfect for both casual meals and special occasions. Notably, their signature dish, the 'Cream Centre Special Sizzler', is a must-try for its bold flavours and theatrical presentation.

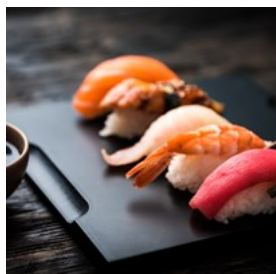
Photo: StockImageFactory.com/Shutterstock.com

Address: 2nd Main Road, Govindaswamy Nagar, Raja Annamalai Puram, Chennai

Opening hours: Daily 11am-3:30pm / 7pm-11pm

Phone: +91 44 4281 5777

Pan Asian



Pan Asian offers an upscale dining experience and is a perfect venue to go for a special occasion.

Request to be seated by the open kitchen and

observe the culinary masters in action.

Photo: In Green/Shutterstock.com

Address: Mount Road, Anna Salai, Guindy, Chennai

Phone: +91 44 4906 5271

More Info: ITC Grand Chola, 63, First Floor

Dakshin



The restaurant enjoys a spotless reputation and serves superb South Indian food. The owners have invested as much thought into the

restaurant's interior as into the constantly

updated menu.

Photo: bonchan/Shutterstock.com

Address: Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Park, Chennai

Phone: +914424994101

CAFÉS



Oliveshadow/Shutterstock.com

A number of different coffee chains have established themselves in the centre of Chennai, where one usually finds coffee, tea, sandwiches and a variety of biscuits and desserts on offer. Most of the cafés open at 10 am and close at 10 pm. Each mole, or area of the city, has a number of cafés as well.

Wild Gardencafe



If you're craving a tranquil escape from Chennai's hustle and bustle, head to this charming haven often dubbed the city's 'Quiet

Corner'. This arty haveli-style café, with its lush green garden and inviting indoor and outdoor seating, provides the perfect retreat. Enjoy mouth-watering desserts, sandwiches, toasts, and fresh salads while soaking in the serene ambience. Beyond the café, explore a delightful blend of an Indian clothing boutique and a fragrant flower shop.

Photo: Piyato/Shutterstock.com

Address: Whites Road, next to Union Bank, Express Estate, Royapettah, Chennai
Opening hours: Daily 10am-10:30pm
Phone: +91 44 4599 1633
Internet: <https://amethystchennai.com/wildgarden.html>

Writer's Cafe Gopalapuram



Writer's Cafe is located in a beautiful setting surrounded by many books to browse. The experienced barristas serve excellent hot and iced coffees, teas and light lunches as well as cakes. The perfect place to refresh and relax.

Photo: [zakalinka/Shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com/author/zakalinka)
Address: 127 Peters Road Gopalapuram, Chennai
Opening hours: Every day 9.30am - 10.30pm
Phone: +91 44 4861 1604

Tryst Cafe



Tryst Cafe is known for being one of the best cafes in Chennai. Its outdoor seating is lined along the seashore and offers a peaceful and calm setting to unwind. They serve delicious freshly baked French bread and dishes inspired by Continental, Mexican and Italian cuisines.

Photo: [immstudio/Shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com/author/immstudio)
Address: 359 East Coast Road, Chennai
Opening hours: Every day 9am - 10pm
Phone: +91 72991 55222

Chamiers Café



Cozy up in this luxurious cafe and enjoy a unique blend of coffee or their fresh fruit juice of the day. Chamires also serves a selection of fantastic dishes. Their menu includes pasta, salads and bruschetta platters. This is a great place to spend some time by yourself or with your friends and family.

Photo: [Rawpixel.com/Shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com/author/rawpixel)
Address: Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar Road, Chennai
Opening hours: Daily 10:30am-7:30pm
Phone: +91 44 4203 0734

BARS & NIGHTLIFE



[v.s.anandhkrishna/Shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com/author/v.s.anandhkrishna)

Chennai's nightlife scene has been expanding in recent years, but still, due to regulation, most of the bars and nightclubs are found in the top-end hotels. Some mid-range hotels also offer a drinking room where Indian beverages can be bought and consumed. Most of the bars in Chennai close at midnight.

Pasha



Residing in the elegant Park hotel, Pasha is one of Chennai's busier dance clubs. The venue's bright lights, divan-styled seating areas, candles, pillows and colored veils gives it a mystic feel. Popular with the local party crowd, the music is usually a mix of pop, R&B and rap.

Photo: Syda Productions/Shutterstock.com
Address: 601 The Park, Anna Salai, Chennai
Opening hours: Every day 7pm - 3am
Phone: +91 44 4267 6000
Internet: www.theparkhotels.com
More Info: Located at Park Hotel

The Leather Bar



If you fancy a quieter, more relaxing and intimate evening, the Leather Bar at the Park hotel is the perfect place, with 20 seats and snacks and drinks on offer. There is also an outdoor terrace where you can sip a tasty martini while enjoying the view.

Photo: Evgeny Starkov/Shutterstock.com
Address: 601 The Park, Anna Salai, Chennai
Opening hours: Every day 11am - 11pm
Phone: +91 44 4267 6000
Internet: www.theparkhotels.com
More Info: Located at Park Hotel

10 Downing Street



English-style pub that serves food in a welcoming atmosphere. This place is a popular venue for late-night hangouts in the city and a

great place where you can relax.

Photo: Ilya Zlatyev/Shutterstock.com
Address: 50, North Boag Road, T. Nagar, Chennai
Opening hours: Every day 12pm - 12am
Phone: +91 44 28152 152
Internet: www.10ds.in/chennai
Email: chennai@10ds.in

SHOPPING



Lara Jameson/Pexels

Shopping in Chennai is easy and fun and, like in any other big city in India, one can find anything from traditional handicraft to the latest digital products. Tourists mostly buy palm leaf mats, bronze and brass castings, jewellery, stone carvings from the nearby town of Mamallapuram, ready-made or tailored clothes, and last, but not least, the famous silks from Kanchipuram. Contemporary artworks or genuine antiquities as well as different musical instruments are also items strongly sought after.

There are several shopping areas, all of them located in the Egmore, Nungambakkam or T-Nagar districts. The most popular are Theagaraya Nagar, known as T-Nagar, and Anna Salai. Georgetown, which grew around the fort, is another interesting shopping area. In the mazelike streets one can find shops specialized in selling only one type of merchandise such as fireworks in Badrian Street and paperworks in Anderson Street. Even without the shopping, a

walk here is recommended to get a feel for the Indian culture and life. The best shopping malls in the city are Chennai Citi Centre and Spencer Plaza.

Chennai Citi Centre



One of the most expensive shopping malls in the city, Chennai Citi Centre offers shoppers everything they can desire in both national and international brand names, and has given older malls such as Spencer Plaza a run for their money. Spread over five floors, there is also a wide variety of restaurants serving everything from Indian to Italian to American dishes as well as a game arcade and a cinema.

Photo: aastock/Shutterstock.com

Address: 10 - 11 Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai, Chennai

Phone: +91 44 28477666

Spencer Plaza



Tracing its roots back to 1864, when Spencer and Durant opened the first department store on the Indian subcontinent, Spencer Plaza is today one of the largest malls in South Asia. The original building was destroyed in a fire in 1983, and the mall now consists of three different buildings - the third one being the newest one. Indian and international brands, clothes and jewellery can be found here.

Photo: Alexandra Maria/Pexels

Address: 6th floor No 272, Seethakathi Business Centre, 688,

Anna Salai, Thousand Lights East, Thousand Lights, Chennai

Opening hours: Mon-Fri 10am-9pm, Sat & Sun 10am-10pm

Internet: www.spencerplaza.co.in

Victoria Technical Institute



Traditional wooden furniture, wood carvings, sandalwood items, textiles, stone carvings and bronze items awaits visitors to this arts and crafts shop, the perfect location for those wanting to lay their hands on beautiful Indian souvenirs.

Photo: oriental/Shutterstock.com

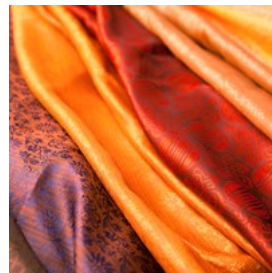
Address: 180 Anna Salai, Chennai

Opening hours: Mon - Sat 10.30am - 7pm

Phone: +91 44 285 231 41

Internet: www.vtichennai.com/

Varadarams Silks



Founded more than 90 years ago, this is one of the best places to buy silk from the Kanchipuram district, with sarees, party wear, wedding sarees and dhoti traditional men's wear being sold.

Photo: Fribus Mara/Shutterstock.com

Address: 88 Harrington Road Chetput, Chennai

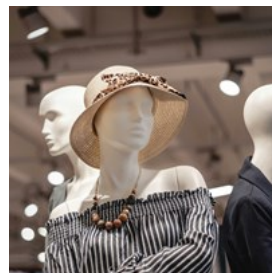
Opening hours: Every day 10am - 7:30pm

Phone: +91 44 2836 3867

Internet: www.varadarams.com

Email: varadarams@gmail.com

Phoenix Marketcity



Phoenix Marketcity is currently the largest mall in Chennai and offers the ultimate shopping and entertainment experience with local and international boutiques, a Cineplex and an impressive food court.

Photo: Sara Kurfeß/Unsplash

Address: 142 Velachery Main Road, Indira Gandhi Nagar,
Velachery, Chennai

Opening hours: Daily 10am-10pm

Phone: +91 44 6134 3008

Internet: www.phoenixmarketcity.com/chennai

Ranganathan Street

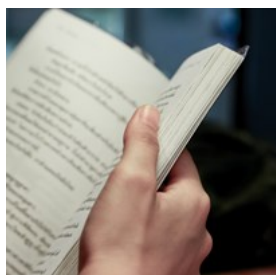


This busy shopping street offers plenty in the way of affordable items and might be a challenge to struggle through during rush hour - the deals on all sorts of items available here are worth the trouble, however.

Photo: Nishta Sharma/Unsplash

Address: T-Nagar, Ranganathan Street, Chennai

Higginbothams



Higginbothams is a bookstore located in a historic colonial building, and is a must-visit for book and history-lovers alike, as it is one of India's oldest and most iconic bookstores.

Photo: arisara/Shutterstock.com

Address: LIC Building, 116, Anna Salai, Chenna

Opening hours: Daily 10am-8pm

Phone: +91 44 2851 3519

Express Avenue Mall



This mall, along with Phoenix Market is one of the most reputable in the city and is always busy with shoppers. Unlike its closest double, Express Avenue houses many more local, Indian brand boutiques, which allows for a more authentic

shopping experience.

Photo: markusspiske/Pixabay

Address: 17, Pattulos Road, Express Estate, Thousand
Lights, Chennai

Opening hours: Daily 10am-10pm

Internet: <https://expressavenue.in>

TOURIST INFORMATION



Sam DCruz/Shutterstock.com

Passport/Visa

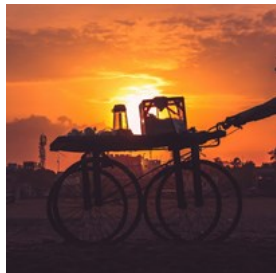


All foreign nationals entering India are required to possess a valid international travel document with a valid visa. A visa is required for most nationalities, except for Bhutan, Nepal, and the Maldives (if not arriving from mainland China).

The visa can be requested through an online application process. This process is straightforward and must be done through the official Indian government visa application website. Travellers should not hire agents who claim they can expedite the process or guarantee a speedy/express grant of an e-visa.

Photo: ConvertKit/Unsplash

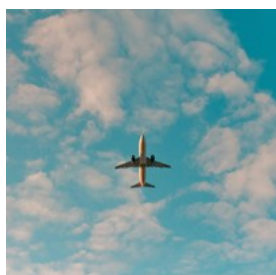
Best Time To Visit



The best time to visit Chennai is between November and February when the city basks in cooler, more comfortable temperatures, ranging from 20°C to 30°C. This period also coincides with the cultural vibrancy of the Chennai Music Season, an annual festival featuring an eclectic mix of classical music and dance performances across numerous venues. In addition, the winter months bring the Chennai International Film Festival and the festive celebrations of Pongal.

Photo: Mark Rohan/Unsplash

Chennai International Airport (MAA)



Chennai International Airport is located approximately 15 kilometres south of Chennai's city centre. Travellers can reach the city via a range of convenient options: the airport is well-served by prepaid taxis and app-based ride services. The journey to Chennais takes about 30 minutes.

For those preferring public transport, the MTC (Metropolitan Transport Corporation) buses offer frequent services, while the newly introduced Chennai Airport Metro station provides a swift and modern link to key city areas.

Photo: Philip Myrtoorp/Unsplash

Address: Chennai International Airport

Phone: +91 44 2256 0551

Internet: www.aai.aero/en/airports/chennai

Public Transport



In Chennai, the Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) operates a vast network of buses, with over 3,000 buses servicing a variety of routes across the city, making an efficient way of getting around Chennai, though services can get very crowded.

In addition to the bus network, there are also vans that are run like bus services called Maxi Cabs. They typically follow specific routes and pick up and drop off passengers at designated stops.

Chennai also has a suburban railway network, connecting the suburbs with the city centre, and the airport south of Chennai with the city.

For up-to-date information on timetables and fares, visit their official channels.

Photo: Vignesh chandran/Unsplash

Internet: <https://mtcbus.tn.gov.in>

Taxi



Traditional taxis are readily available in Chennai, though many are not metered, so it's wise to negotiate the fare beforehand to avoid surprises. A more convenient way to explore the city is with ride-sharing apps like Uber and Ola. And for a fun and unique way to experience Chennai's hustle and bustle, hop on an auto-rickshaw. They too often lack meters, so a friendly haggle over the fare will be your best bet.

Photo: Gustavo/Unsplash

Post



In Chennai, post offices typically operate from 10am to 5pm, Monday through Saturday, with a lunch break around 1pm to 2pm. Besides mailing letters and parcels, Chennai's post offices offer a range of banking services.

Photo: Ali Bakhtiari/Unsplash

Address: T Nagar Head Post Office - 2, Sivagnanam Street, Pandy Bazaar, T. Nagar, Chennai,
Opening hours: Daily 8am-9pm

Pharmacy



Some of the main pharmacy chains you'll come across in Chennai include Apollo Pharmacy and MedPlus.

Photo: Diana Polekhina/Unsplash

Address: Apollo Pharmacy - 36, N Usman Road, Parthasarathy Puram, Parthasarathi Puram, T. Nagar, Chennai
Opening hours: Open 24 hours
Phone: +91 44 2814 1040

Telephone



Country Code: +91 Area code: 044

Photo: Pawel Czerwinski/Unsplash

Electricity



In India, power plugs and sockets are of types C, D, and M, with a standard voltage of 230V and a frequency of 50Hz.

Photo: Mika Baumeister/Unsplash

Population

Metro area: 12 million (2024)

Currency

Indian rupee (INR)

Newspapers

The Hindu: [/www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)

The New Indian Express: www.newindianexpress.com

The Times of India: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>

Emergency numbers

Police: 100

Traffic Police: 103

Fire Control: 101

Ambulance: 102

Apollo Ambulance: 1066