



From the MixCache.com library

SAMPLE COPY

Visiting Chennai

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1** Getting to Chennai
- **Chapter 2** Best Time to Visit
- **Chapter 3** Getting Around Chennai
- **Chapter 4** Accommodation
- **Chapter 5** Top Attractions & Things to Do
- **Chapter 6** Temples of Chennai
- **Chapter 7** Beaches of Chennai
- **Chapter 8** Historical Sites
- **Chapter 9** Museums & Art Galleries
- **Chapter 10** Nature & Parks
- **Chapter 11** Shopping in Chennai
- **Chapter 12** Culture & Entertainment
- **Chapter 13** Food & Drink
- **Chapter 14** Chennai Cuisine
- **Chapter 15** Where to Eat
- **Chapter 16** Filter Coffee Culture
- **Chapter 17** Culture & Etiquette
- **Chapter 18** Safety & Health
- **Chapter 19** Health Precautions
- **Chapter 20** Day Trips & Excursions
- **Chapter 21** Practical Information
- **Chapter 22** Currency & Connectivity
- **Chapter 23** Mobility & Infrastructure
- **Chapter 24** Language & Communication
- **Chapter 25** Chennai's Festivals and Events

Introduction

Chennai, affectionately known as the "Gateway to South India," is a mesmerizing city that gracefully blends tradition with modernity. For centuries, it has stood as a vital cultural and economic hub in southern India, offering tourists a unique tapestry of experiences woven from its rich history, vibrant culture, stunning landscapes, and warm hospitality. This book serves as a comprehensive guide to navigating the splendors of Chennai, ensuring you fully immerse yourself in all that this captivating city has to offer.

Situated on the Coromandel Coast, Chennai is the capital of the state of Tamil Nadu. It is one of India's most important metropolises, characterized by its bustling streets, dynamic arts scene, and thriving economy. Renowned for its heritage, from the awe-inspiring temples dotting the cityscape to the colonial vestiges from the British era, Chennai's past is interwoven with the emergence of a vibrant cosmopolitan city. Today, it stands tall as a testament to the harmonious coexistence of the old and the new.

But why should you choose Chennai as your next travel destination? The reasons are manifold. For those seeking spiritual solace, Chennai's temples, with their magnificent architecture and sacred rituals, offer an unparalleled sense of peace and connection. Beach lovers will be delighted by the city's sandy stretches like Marina Beach, the second longest urban beach in the world, offering serene sunrises and a lively atmosphere. For gastronomy enthusiasts, Chennai's culinary scene is a smorgasbord of flavors, particularly its famous South Indian cuisine featuring dosas, idlis, and an invigorating cup of filter coffee.

The artistic pulse of Chennai is vibrant and ever-thriving. It is home to the annual Madras Music Season, with its rich displays of traditional music and dance performances, attracting artists and audiences from around the globe. Moreover, its galleries and cultural institutions spotlight both classical and contemporary art, ensuring an enriching experience for the culturally inclined.

Chennai is not just about sights and sounds; its heartbeat is the warmth of its people. Known for their hospitality, the residents of Chennai are always ready to welcome tourists with open arms and a friendly smile. As you traverse this lively city, whether through its busy markets, tranquil parks, or historic sites, you'll find that the essence of Chennai lies in its spirit of resilience and celebration of diversity.

This book aims to provide you with all the necessary information to navigate Chennai with confidence. From practical travel tips, accommodation options, and local

etiquette, to suggested itineraries and hidden gems waiting to be discovered, we endeavor to make your journey as enlightening and enjoyable as possible. So, prepare to embark on an unforgettable adventure as we dive into the wonders and enchantments of Chennai.

SAMPLE COPY

CHAPTER ONE: Getting to Chennai

Chennai's status as the "Gateway to South India" isn't just a charming moniker; it's a practical reality rooted in its superb connectivity. Whether you're soaring in from across the globe, chugging along India's extensive railway network, or cruising down the national highways, reaching this vibrant metropolis is remarkably straightforward. The city is well-equipped to welcome visitors arriving through various means, each offering a different initial glimpse into the region's character. Understanding your options for arrival is the first step in planning your Chennai adventure, ensuring a smooth transition from traveler to explorer.

Soaring into the South: Arrival by Air

For most international visitors and many domestic travelers, the journey to Chennai begins at Chennai International Airport (MAA). Located in Meenambakkam, about 20 kilometers southwest of the city center, MAA is one of India's busiest airports, handling a significant volume of both passenger and cargo traffic. It serves as a major hub for South India, linking Chennai directly to numerous destinations across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America, as well as countless cities within India. The airport functions primarily through two main passenger terminal complexes, integrating domestic and international operations efficiently, though ongoing upgrades mean the specific terminal usage can sometimes shift.

Historically, Chennai Airport had distinct domestic and international terminals named Kamaraj Domestic Terminal (T1) and Anna International Terminal (T3). However, recent developments have introduced new infrastructure. The state-of-the-art New Integrated Terminal Building (NITB), also known as Terminal 2 (T2), commenced operations phase by phase starting in 2023. This impressive terminal is designed to handle both international and domestic flights, significantly boosting the airport's capacity and passenger experience with modern amenities, numerous aerobridges, and streamlined immigration and baggage processes. Alongside T2, a new domestic terminal, Terminal 4 (T4), was also inaugurated to further enhance domestic capacity. The original Kamaraj Domestic Terminal (T1) continues to operate, often handling flights from specific domestic carriers. The old Anna International Terminal (T3) is currently not used for passenger flights but forms part of the overall airport complex. It's wise to check your flight details carefully to confirm which terminal your flight will arrive at or depart from (T1, T2, or T4), as this determines your access points and facility locations. These terminals are interconnected, with walkways and complimentary shuttle services available to facilitate transfers between them, although distances can be considerable, so factor in transfer time if connecting between terminals.

Numerous international airlines connect Chennai to the world. Major carriers like Emirates, Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways, British Airways, Lufthansa, Air France, Singapore Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, Thai Airways, Cathay Pacific, and SriLankan Airlines operate frequent flights, linking Chennai directly with global hubs such as Dubai, Doha, Abu Dhabi, London, Frankfurt, Paris, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Hong Kong, and Colombo. This extensive network makes Chennai easily accessible from virtually anywhere on the globe, often with just one stop.

Domestically, Chennai boasts excellent connectivity. India's leading airlines, including IndiGo, Air India, SpiceJet, Vistara, and Akasa Air, operate a vast number of daily flights connecting Chennai to major metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Pune, as well as numerous Tier-II and Tier-III cities across the country. Whether you're flying in from the Himalayas or the beaches of Goa, you'll find convenient flight options to Chennai. The competition among domestic carriers often results in affordable fares, especially if booked in advance.

Upon arrival at MAA, you'll find the terminals equipped with essential facilities. Currency exchange counters and ATMs are readily available in the arrival halls, allowing you to get Indian Rupees (INR) soon after landing. Duty-free shops offer the usual range of goods for international passengers. Food courts and cafes provide options for refreshments, from South Indian snacks to international fast food. Airport lounges, accessible to eligible passengers (business class, frequent flyers, or through lounge access programs), offer comfortable seating, Wi-Fi, and refreshments. Free Wi-Fi is generally available throughout the terminals, although connection procedures might vary. Information desks are present to assist with queries, and basic medical facilities are available for emergencies.

Once you've cleared immigration (if arriving internationally), collected your baggage, and passed through customs, the next step is getting to your accommodation in the city. Chennai Airport offers several convenient transport options. Perhaps the most efficient, especially for avoiding road traffic, is the Chennai Metro Rail. The Airport Metro Station is strategically located and accessible from the terminals. It lies on the Blue Line, which runs north towards Washermanpet, crucially intersecting with the Green Line at Alandur (just one stop from the airport) and Chennai Central (providing access to the main railway station). This allows for seamless travel to key areas like Guindy, Saidapet, T. Nagar (via interchange), Anna Nagar, Chennai Central, and Egmore Station (via interchange). The trains are modern, air-conditioned, and relatively inexpensive. Tickets can be purchased as single-journey tokens or using a rechargeable smart card. Travel time to central locations like Chennai Central is approximately 45-50 minutes.

For those preferring a direct door-to-door service, taxis are a popular choice. Official prepaid taxi counters are located within or just outside the arrival halls. Here, you can

book a taxi (both AC and non-AC options available) at government-approved rates to various zones within the city. You pay at the counter and receive a receipt with the taxi number and destination, minimizing the chances of being overcharged. Be prepared for potential queues during peak arrival times. Alternatively, app-based ride-hailing services like Ola and Uber operate extensively in Chennai and serve the airport. You can book a ride using their respective mobile apps. Designated pick-up points are usually located slightly away from the main terminal exits; follow the signages. While fares can sometimes be competitive, be mindful of dynamic pricing (surge pricing) during periods of high demand.

A more budget-friendly option is the Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) bus service. Several bus routes connect the airport to different parts of Chennai, including major hubs like Guindy, T. Nagar, Broadway Bus Stand, and Chennai Central. The bus stop is located a short walk from the terminals. While incredibly economical, buses can be crowded, especially during peak hours, and the journey time will be significantly longer due to multiple stops and road traffic. Both regular and air-conditioned buses serve the airport routes. This option is generally best suited for budget-conscious travelers with light luggage and some familiarity with the city's layout. Car rental services, offering both self-drive and chauffeur-driven vehicles, are also available at the airport counters if you prefer private transportation for your entire stay, though navigating Chennai's traffic can be challenging for newcomers.

Riding the Rails: Arrival by Train

India's railway network is legendary – a sprawling, intricate system that forms the backbone of long-distance travel for millions. Arriving in Chennai by train is an experience in itself, offering glimpses of the changing landscapes across the country and culminating at one of the city's grand colonial-era stations or modern hubs. Train travel is often more economical than flying, especially for shorter distances or when booked in lower classes, and allows you to carry more luggage without hefty fees. Chennai is exceptionally well-connected by rail, served primarily by two major terminals: Chennai Central and Chennai Egmore.

The undisputed king of Chennai's railway stations is Puratchi Thalaivar Dr. M.G. Ramachandran Central Railway Station, universally known simply as Chennai Central (station code: MAS). This iconic landmark, with its distinctive red-brick Gothic architecture, is more than just a transit point; it's a slice of Chennai's history. Opened in 1873, it stands as one of the most important railway hubs in South India. Chennai Central primarily handles long-distance trains connecting Chennai with North, East, and West India, including major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, and Lucknow. It's the terminus for several prestigious trains, such as the Chennai Rajdhani Express (to Delhi), Shatabdi Expresses (to Bengaluru and Mysuru), Duronto Expresses, and historic routes like the Grand Trunk Express. The station buzzes with activity 24/7. Inside, you'll find numerous platforms, large waiting

halls (including air-conditioned options for passengers with higher-class tickets), a wide array of food stalls and restaurants serving everything from local South Indian fare to standard railway snacks, bookshops, cloakrooms (luggage storage facilities), restrooms, and extensive booking offices for current and reservation tickets. Chennai Central is also integrated with the city's transport network; it has its own Metro station on the Blue and Green Lines, a suburban railway station nearby, a major MTC bus terminus opposite the main entrance, and readily available auto rickshaws and taxis (including prepaid counters).

The second major terminal is Chennai Egmore (station code: MS), located a few kilometers south of Central. While also housed in an impressive Indo-Saracenic style building, Egmore primarily serves as the hub for trains heading towards southern Tamil Nadu and other parts of South India, including destinations like Madurai, Tiruchirappalli (Trichy), Rameswaram, Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, and parts of Kerala. If you're traveling to Chennai from within the southern region, your train might terminate at Egmore. Key trains operating from Egmore include the popular Pandian Express (to Madurai), Vaigai Express (to Madurai), Tejas Express (to Madurai), Rockfort Express (to Trichy), and various services to Kerala like the Guruvayur Express. Facilities at Egmore are comparable to Central, albeit on a slightly smaller scale, with waiting rooms, food stalls, booking counters, and cloakrooms. Chennai Egmore is also well-connected, with the Egmore Metro Station (Green Line) located nearby and plenty of buses, autos, and taxis available outside.

Besides these two giants, Chennai has other important railway stations. Tambaram (TBM), located in the southern suburbs, has evolved into a major terminal, particularly for originating and terminating many south-bound express trains, helping to decongest Central and Egmore. It's also a crucial hub for the Chennai Suburban Railway network. Perambur (PER) is another station within the city limits where some long-distance trains halt. Always check your ticket carefully to confirm your arrival station in Chennai (MAS, MS, or TBM).

Booking train tickets in India requires some planning, especially given the high demand. It's highly recommended to book your tickets well in advance, sometimes months ahead, particularly during festival seasons (like Pongal, Diwali) or summer holidays. The official platform for online booking is the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) website (www.irctc.co.in) or their mobile app, Rail Connect. Registration is required, and payment can be made via various online methods. Alternatively, tickets can be purchased at Passenger Reservation System (PRS) counters found at major railway stations across India, though queues can be long. Authorized travel agents also offer booking services for a fee. Indian Railways offers various classes of travel catering to different budgets and comfort levels: AC First Class (1A), AC 2-Tier (2A), AC 3-Tier (3A), AC Chair Car (CC), Sleeper Class (SL), and Second Sitting (2S). AC classes provide air-conditioning and bedding (on overnight trains), while Sleeper Class is the non-AC berth option popular with budget travelers.

Ensure you understand the class code on your ticket.

Upon arrival at Chennai Central, Egmore, or Tambaram, you'll step out into the bustling city. Similar to the airport, various transport options await. The Metro Rail provides excellent connectivity from Central and Egmore. MTC buses offer extensive routes from outside all major stations. Auto rickshaws are ubiquitous; insist on using the meter or head to the designated prepaid auto counters often found outside the stations to get a fixed-price voucher. App-based taxis like Ola and Uber are also readily available, usually offering a more comfortable and predictable fare experience compared to negotiating with individual auto drivers. Be prepared for the characteristic sounds and energy of an Indian railway station environment – it's an integral part of the arrival experience.

Hitting the Highway: Arrival by Road

For travelers journeying from nearby states or other cities within Tamil Nadu, arriving in Chennai by road is a viable and often scenic option. The city is the nodal point for several major National Highways, and a vast network of government and private bus services connects it to virtually every corner of South India and beyond.

The heart of long-distance bus travel in Chennai is the massive Chennai Mofussil Bus Terminus (CMBT) in Koyambedu, officially known as Puratchi Thalaivi Dr. J. Jayalalithaa Bus Terminus. Reputedly one of the largest bus stations in Asia, CMBT is a sprawling complex handling an immense volume of bus traffic daily. It serves as the primary hub for buses operated by the State Express Transport Corporation (SETC) of Tamil Nadu, other Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) divisions, and government buses from neighboring states like Karnataka (KSRTC), Andhra Pradesh (APSRTC), Kerala (KSRTC - Kerala), and Puducherry (PRTC). Countless private omnibus operators also run services from or near CMBT, often offering more luxurious options like AC sleeper coaches and Volvo buses. Destinations served cover the entire southern peninsula, including frequent services to Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Tirupati, Pondicherry, Madurai, Coimbatore, Trichy, and Trivandrum, among many others. Buses range from basic non-AC services to plush air-conditioned sleepers, catering to all budgets. CMBT itself is equipped with multiple platforms, designated waiting areas, extensive food courts, shops, restrooms, and booking offices for various operators. It can be crowded and chaotic, especially during weekends and holidays, but it functions as an efficient, if overwhelming, transport hub.

Getting from CMBT to other parts of Chennai is relatively easy. The terminus has its own dedicated Metro station (CMBT Metro) on the Green Line, providing direct connectivity to Egmore, Kilpauk, Anna Nagar, and interchange options for Chennai Central and the airport line. A large MTC bus stand is located adjacent to CMBT, offering local connections across the city. Auto rickshaws and app-based taxis (Ola/Uber) are readily available outside the terminal complex, providing door-to-door

transport. However, be aware that the Koyambedu area is known for traffic congestion, particularly during peak hours.

Chennai sits strategically on India's highway map. National Highway 16 (NH16), part of the Golden Quadrilateral project, connects Chennai northwards towards Nellore, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Bhubaneswar, and ultimately Kolkata. National Highway 48 (NH48), another Golden Quadrilateral component, runs westwards towards Vellore, Bengaluru, Pune, Mumbai, and eventually Delhi. National Highway 32 (NH32) runs south along the scenic East Coast Road (ECR), connecting Chennai to Pondicherry, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, and Rameswaram. These major highways are generally well-maintained toll roads, making road trips relatively comfortable and efficient.

If you're considering driving your own vehicle or a rental car to Chennai, be prepared for the typical challenges of Indian city driving. While the highways leading to the city are often good, traffic within Chennai can be dense and navigating the intricate network of roads, flyovers, and one-way streets requires patience and alertness. Parking can also be a significant challenge in many central areas and popular tourist spots. Ensure you have a valid driving license (an International Driving Permit might be required for foreign licenses), vehicle registration, insurance, and a Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificate. Familiarize yourself with local traffic rules and be prepared for somewhat assertive driving styles. Toll plazas are frequent on the highways, and using a FASTag (electronic toll collection system) is highly recommended to save time.

Another road travel option is hiring an inter-city taxi. Several operators and platforms specialize in outstation cabs, allowing you to book a car and driver for a one-way or round trip to Chennai from cities like Bengaluru, Pondicherry, Tirupati, or Vellore. This offers comfort and convenience, though it is generally more expensive than bus or train travel. Fares are usually calculated based on distance and vehicle type.

Regardless of whether you fly, take the train, or travel by road, Chennai's extensive transport infrastructure ensures that your arrival is just the beginning. The city stands ready to welcome you, offering multiple pathways into its heart, each providing a slightly different first impression of this dynamic South Indian capital. Choose the mode that best suits your budget, timeline, and travel style, and prepare to explore.

This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.

Visit MixCache.com to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY