Mahabalipuram

Housing one of the oldest carvings in granite, this city close to Chennai is popular among tourists and history buffs alike. Walk between carved stones and temples and experience the open, fresh air along sprawling gardens and parks. Take home souvenirs from a multitude of shops, hawkers and roadside vendors.

Named after the cruel mythical King Mahabali who was slayed by Lord Vishnu, the city came to prominence with the Pallava dynasty in the 7th and 8th Centuries. An archaeologist's delight, this city boasts a large collection of ornate stone-carvings, made on uncut rocks, which lay scattered in the complex and make it seem like an open museum. Destroyed to a large degree by soil and wind erosion, the magnificent Shore Temple has been recognised by UNESCO for revival and restoration. The prominent carvings, carved straight out of stone are Arjuna's Penance, Varaha Caves dedicated to Lord Vishnu and Mahishamardini Cave dedicated to Lord Shiva, Parvati and Garuda from Hindu mythology. The Tsunami in 2004 exposed several submerged temples and a whole new layer to the history of Mahabalipuram. Take soothing walks amidst green, lush parks and enjoy the fresh sea-breeze coming in from the Bay of Bengal, that runs parallel to the city.

When To VISIT


Jan
Pleasant weather. Carry Light woollen.

Max: 29.79999923°C
Min: 20.70000076°C
Rain: 20.7999992370605mm

Feb
Pleasant weather. Carry Light woollen.

Max: 31.70000076°C
Min: 21.70000076°C
Rain: 15.0mm

Mar
Pleasant weather. Carry Light woollen.

Max: 33.90000152°C
Min: 23.60000038°C
Rain: 23.2999992370605mm

Apr
Pleasant weather. Carry Light woollen.

Max: 35.70000076°C
Min: 26.0°C
Rain: 23.7999992370605mm

May
Hot weather. Carry Light clothes, umbrella.

Max: 38.09999847°C
Min: 27.39999961°C
Rain: 53.0mm

Jun
Hot weather. Carry Light clothes, umbrella.

Max: 37.20000076°C
Min: 26.89999961°C
Rain: 87.300006103515mm

Jul
Pleasant weather. Carry Light woolen, umbrella.

Max: 35.70000076°C
Min: 26.0°C
Rain: 108.900001525878mm

Aug
Pleasant weather. Carry Light woolen, umbrella.

Max: 34.79999972°C
Min: 25.5°C
Rain: 136.60006103515mm

Sep
Pleasant weather. Carry Light woollen.

Max: 29.79999923°C
Min: 20.70000076°C
Rain: 20.7999992370605mm
Pleasant weather. Carry Light woollen, umbrella.

Max: 34.5°C  Min: 25.00000076  Rain: 134.300003051757

Oct
Pleasant weather. Carry Light woollen, umbrella.

Max: 32.0°C  Min: 24.29999923  Rain: 336.5mm

Nov
Pleasant weather. Carry Light woollen, umbrella.

Max: 30.10000038  Min: 22.89999961  Rain: 374.0mm

Dec
Pleasant weather. Carry Light woollen, umbrella.

Max: 29.20000076  Min: 21.29999923  Rain: 152.5mm

What To SEE

http://www.ixigo.com/places-to-visit-see-in-mahabalipuram-lp-1139151

1 Shore Temple

Built as a testament to Mamallapuram’s might as a busy port during the times of Pallava king Narasimhavarman, Shore Temple in Mahabalipuram, is one of India’s oldest structural stone temples. Built in the 8th century out of massive slabs of granite, the temple is really a religious complex housing three temples, situated on the coastline of the Bay of Bengal. Shore Temple in Mahabalipuram houses the main shrine, which is a five-storied temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. In between the main temple and the other smaller temple dedicated to Lord Shiva as well, is the shrine dedicated to Lord Vishnu, represented in his reclining form. The entire complex and the temples themselves are glorious exemplars of Dravidian architectural style and are replete with incredible ornamentation, carvings, sculptures and mythical figures. Circling the complex is a wall carved with images of Yali (mythical tiger like creature), Varahas (boar) and Nandi, the bull (Lord Shiva’s mount).

2 Pancha Rathas

Pancha Rathas in Mahabalipuram are stupendous monolith shrines dedicated to each of the Pandavas from the epic saga of Mahabharata. Created by the Pallavan kings, King Mahendravarman and King Narasimhavarman, his son, and labelled World Heritage site, each shrine here has been carved out of a single block of pink granite and intricately sculpted into existence. Standing here since the 7th century A.D., and having weathered the wrath of nature and time over the years, the Rathas, though appearing slightly unfinished, are grand exemplars of Pallavan rock-cut architectural style.

As you enter the complex of Pancha Rathas, Draupadi’s ratha is on your right. Shaped like a hut, Draupadi’s ratha is also dedicated to Goddess Durga. Next up is Arjuna’s rath, dedicated to Lord Shiva. Nakula and Sahadev’s rath, in front of Arjuna’s, has a number of beautiful, stately sculptures of elephants. Fittingly, the biggest rath is that of Bhima’s. It is humongous and has lion sculptures surrounding it and carved on its pillars. Finally, towards one end of the complex is Yudhistra’s rath, eldest of the Pandavas.

3 Arjuna’s Penance

Quintessentially an Indian aspect, there is a 96 feet long and 43 feet wide humongous open air relief in Mahabalipuram, classified a World Heritage site, with every millimetre of the monolithic rock carved intricately with scenes and characters that no one has been able to make up their mind about. Believed by some to narrate the tale of river Ganges descent from heavens, the other interpretation leans more towards the story of Arjuna’s Penance in Mahabalipuram in order to seek a boon from Lord Shiva.

Made on a scale of grandeur and symbolic
significance that immediately points to its Pallavan origins, the relief is divided into two halves by a natural cleft. To the left is the disputed figure of a man standing on one leg, arms upraised and standing behind him is Lord Shiva. Considered to be either King Bhagiratha doing tapasya to bring River Ganges to Earth or Arjuna doing penance in order to seek Pasupata, Lord Shiva's most powerful weapon, to fight the epic war of Mahabharata. Surrounding the figure are scenes and depictions of mythological characters, creatures, celestial world with practically life-sized bas-reliefs of elephants and their calves lyrically carved into the monolithic rock in immortalized narration.

Arjuna's Penance in Mahabalipuram is considered the largest open-air bas-relief in the world. Carved on the side of a cliff is an elaborate depiction of one of the scenes from the Mahabharata — Arjuna doing penance to obtain a special weapon for the Kurukshetra war. The 30m x 12m carved area is split into two by a fissure that depicts a river. It is also believed to be Bhagirath's Penance, depicting how the sage's austerities made the divine river Ganges descend to earth. It is believed that in the Pallava times, water flowed down this crack into the tank below. Animals and supernatural creatures are carved around Arjuna, and sculptures of gods Shiva and Vishnu.

4  Thirukadalmallai

Known to its devotees as Sthalasayana Perumal Temple, Thirukadalmallai is one of the 108 Divya Desams (108 Vishnu temples that find reference in the literary works of Tamil saints, Azhvars) dedicated to Lord Vishnu in his Sthalasayana Perumal avatar as well as in his epic avatar, that of Lord Narasimha, and Mother Shakti in her Nilamangai Thayaar avatar. Yet another Pallavan architectural marvel, Thirukadalmallai has two separate shrines, one dedicated to Lord Sthalasayana Perumal and Nilamangai Thayaar and the other to Lord Narasimha. Standing on Mahabalipuram shore against the sparkling blue backdrop of the Bay of Bengal, Thirukadalmallai is also the birthplace of Bhoothathazhwar, 2nd of the Azhwars, Tamil saints. Soul of Sri Thirumangai Alvar's (last of the 12 Azhwars) pasurams (hymn compositions), Thirukadalmallai finds reference in Nalayira Divya Prabandham, a collection of tamil verses, 4000 in total, composed by the 12 Azhwars well before the 8th century. With its foundation threaded in mythological lores and tales of devotional zeal, Thirukadalmallai is mesmerizingly beautiful. Surrounded by a canopy of evergreen shrubs and trees, casuarinas, there are a number of tiny villages settled near the temple where you can pick up unique handicrafts and antiques.

5  Varaha Cave Temple

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3 **Sri Ananda Bhavan**

In a beach town expect establishments to go little overboard with the witty sea references. One such establishment is Nautilus restaurant. A fairly well known chain restaurant with branches in Goa, Hampi, etc Nautilus seems to have a knack for attracting a wide range of diners with its delightful ambience and delicious food.

A range of cuisines are served out here with a focus on seafood dishes. Run by a French couple, Nautilus offers most of the classic favourites of all the cuisines it caters in. European, Italian, to Chettinad and traditional south Indian, there is something for everyone’s palate out here. Some of the must try dishes are grilled red snapper, pasta, chicken chettinad, garlic prawns, coconut fish curry and calamari amongst many others. Do remember to get your caffeine and sugar fix out here with their coffee and chocolate cake.

4 **Nautilus**

Yet another culinary classic of the town, Sri Ananda Bhavan in Mahabalipuram restaurant is a popular dining choice of both locals and tourists alike. While Idlis at this cozy restaurant make for perfect breakfasts, for lunch indulge in their thali option, which though heavy on your stomach is surprisingly light on your pocket. Other must try dining options at the restaurant are Masala dosa, vada, Uttapam and other classic south Indian culinary options on the menu.

5 **Moonrakers**

Abuzz with the tourist crowd, particularly expats, Moonrakers is a more contemporary dining option in the heritage city of Mamallapuram. Spread over three stories, Moonrakers lures you with its snazzy ambience and culinary magic.

One of the few places in Mamallapuram where you can get alcohol, Moonrakers lays out a multi-cuisine spread with a smattering of dishes from a range of cuisines. While north and south Indian dishes are good dining options, do try out their seafood dishes with the core ingredient fresh from the sea. Other options that you will find to your liking are pasta, refreshing tropical salads and pancakes for breakfast.
Quick LOCATE


See
A: Shore Temple  
B: Pancha Rathas  
C: Arjuna's Penance  
D: Thirukadalmalai  
E: Varaha Cave Temple

Accommodation
F: Indeco Hotels Mahabalipuram  
G: Golden Sun Beach Resort  
H: Sai Baba Guest House  
I: Indeco Hotels Mahabalipuram  
J: Golden Sun Beach Resort  
K: Sai Baba Guest House  
L: Indeco Hotels Mahabalipuram  
M: Golden Sun Beach Resort  
N: Sai Baba Guest House

Food
O: L'Attitude 49  
P: Le Yogi  
Q: Sri Ananda Bhavan  
R: Nautilus  
S: Moonrakers