Pondicherry 

Pondicherry /pndtri/ is a Union Territory of India formed out of four enclaves of former French India and named for the largest, Pondicherry. The name, which means ‘New Town’ in Tamil, is Putuccri or Piccri in Tamil and Pondich&egrave;ry in French. In September 2006, the territory changed its official name from Pondicherry (Piccri) to Puducherry (Putuccri). It is also known as ‘The French Riviera of the East’; (La Côte d’Azur de l’Est).

Located at a distance of 14.1 km from Pondicherry, not only is Auroville a self-sustaining microcosm, but it is the closest humanity has come to realizing the ideal of Utopia. Based on Mother’s vision to have a place on Earth that no nation could claim as its sole property, it was established in 1966 by the mutual backing of Government of India and UNESCO who considered it as a project of immense importance to the future of humanity.

This experimental town established by Mother, Auroville is a melting pot of cultures in the true sense of the word. Here you will not only witness how diversity of mankind can flourish harmoniously, without suppressing each other’s difference, but also a kaleidoscope of art and culture.

The fact that it has not only survived but flourished and grown in the past 46 years is proof enough that Mother’s idea that sustainable and harmonious society is possible.

You will find citizens to be from all over the globe, 45 countries to be precise. Amazing, isn’t it? They come from all walks of life, different cultures, religion, professions and age groups. Currently, the population stands at 2,200. Its design and architecture is a
sight in itself. Your exploration will take you through the Peace Area, Industrial zone, Residential zone, International, cultural zone and green belt. Be sure to visit the cultural and the International zone at Auroville, as at any given time, they play host to performances of artists from across the world.

At the cultural centre, do purchase some of the beautifully hand crafted creations, pottery, sculptures, paintings, etc, of the Aurovillians. It will forever be a reminder of how far idealism can take you and the rest of humanity.

2 Plage Paradiso (Paradise Beach)

If sitting on the beach-front is your idea of relaxing, then Plage Paradiso (Paradise Beach) is the perfect location for you. Located 8 km from Pondicherry, you can reach here through a house boat or a river cruise. The beach with shining golden sands is ideal for adventurous and exciting water sports which are hard to miss. If you just want to lay on a sun-bed and relax, this beach will be at your service without a moment's thought. The beach is lined with swanky, upscale resorts and several boat cruises. Even though it is crowded at times, you can always take a quiet, secluded walk and experience a blissful retreat from the usual madness of a regular city life. Add a zing to your vacation in Pondicherry!

3 Gingee Fort

With a history as rich as Pondicherry's, some of the sculptures that you may have come across in Pondicherry were actually shifted from Gingee by the French, when it was owned by them. A visit to Pondicherry, ideally, should involve a visit to the Gingee Fort. After all, how many times is it that you get to stand in a fort once described by Shivaji as the most impregnable fortress in India and was labelled by the British as the Troy of East. Built by the Cholas in the 13th century on the foundations laid down by the Kons in the 12th century, when you walk the passages of the Gingee Fort you can hear the walls telling their own tale of its antiquity and the generations that have passed it by.

4 Thirunallar Temple

Thirunallar Temple is the popular temple of Lord Shani Dev. The temple comes under the Pondicherry Union Territory jurisdiction. The temple situated between two beautiful rivers-Arasalar and Vanchai attracts lot of devotees from different parts of India. According to the legend, the famous King Nala was relieved from the adverse influence of Shani (Saturn) after worshipping here at this very temple. The other attractions of this temple are the holy chariots, marble steps for devotees to light the sesame lamps and the theertams (holy bathing places). The Nala theertam is believed to be the most sacred one. The temple is visited by people in thousands on Saturday which is believed to be the day dedicated to Lord Shanidev.

5 Sri Gokilambal Thirukameswarar Temple

Sri Gokilambal Thirukameswarar Temple is a holy place of pilgrimage importance for all the Hindus. Do stop for a moment on your way in or out to see the beautifully and intricately carved facade that provides a clue to the temple's rich past. If you are visiting Pondicherry in May or June, be sure to visit the temple. The ten-day annual festival of Brahmotsavam is celebrated here, beginning on the appearance of the full moon, to receive Lord's blessings. You will
find the temple very crowded as thousands of devotees from all over India come here for the festival. Not only will you get to see the massive 15 meter tall temple chariot, all decked up in the temple finery, being taken out in a procession, but you will also be offered curd, rice, buttermilk and sandal by the devotees. The belief here is that their wishes are fulfilled by serving the crowd of visitors.

Where To Eat

1. **West Boulevard**
   - No 80-4, Kandan Complex, Anna Salai, Opposite Vysyal Street, Puducherry Bazaar, Puducherry 605001, India
   - If your idea of fine restaurant dining is to have a variety of flavours and multiple cuisines to choose from, then West Boulevard is the place for you. Here you can choose from American, Chinese, Italian, Indian and Mexican cuisines which are prepared from the freshest and finest ingredients under expert guidance of the chefs. Talking about the decor, you will be welcomed by elegant interiors and a comfortable seating arrangement. Settle in for a delectable dining experience.

2. **Bistro Sharana**
   - 59, Muthumariamman Koil, Street, Puducherry, 605001, India
   - Enjoy a peaceful lunch and dinner on Bistro Sharana's terrace restaurant after a hectic and bone tiring day of sightseeing and vacationing. If you visit on a Wednesday or Saturday, you will have a special buffet, with a variety of dishes to choose from. But be sure to advance book. Make your way to this popular restaurant where you can enjoy a hearty breakfast, a lavish lunch or sizzling sizzlers. The prompt staff and a nice decor add charm to the whole dining experience.

3. **Don Giovanni’s Restaurant**
   - 170 Mission Street, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, 605101, India
   - +91- 413- 2225301 | +91-413-2225302
   - Head over to Don Giovanni’s Restaurant and you will get fabulous Italian cuisine and a 100% authentic one at that! You can choose from a range of pastas, lasagne and pizzas. And the proof of its authenticity? You will probably have him seated before you in the restaurant, Don Giovanni, the chef, that is. The food here will definitely leave you asking for more and trust us when we say that you will love every bite of it.

4. **Baker's Street**
   - 123, Bussy street, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, 605101, India
   - +91-413-6458888
   - Established as a concept store to be the slice of France in Pondicherry, it has on offer around 1001 breads, pizzas, quiches, etc to choose from! Whether you want to nip in for an early morning breakfast before you venture out to sightseeing or want a spur of the moment coffee break with a sandwich or two, Baker Street is a treat for all your senses, with its elegant and serene ambiance. The menu has a long list of delightful desserts including home-made ice creams and chocolates, creamy pastries and more. Step in here to spend a relaxed evening over great food.

5. **Surguru**
   - 104, Sardar Vallabhai Patel Salai, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, 605001, India
   - +91-413-2339022
   - A part of the famous Surguru Hotel, this nice restaurant with the same name is a delight for foodies. Done in an understated yet elegant decor, this multi-cuisine eating out space offers a world of delicious preparations for its guests. If you are tired after a long day of sightseeing or shopping, make your way to Surguru Restaurant and enjoy a wonderful meal amidst live music and decent setting. When we talk about the client service, you will be happy to hear that the staff is polite and attentive, ensuring that you have a memorable dining experience.