

Chennai

About

Chennai (Tamil: சென்னை), formerly known as Madras, is the capital of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Located on the Coromandel Coast of the Bay of Bengal, Chennai has an estimated population of 7.5 million (2007), making it the fourth largest metropolitan city in India.

The city was established in the 17th century by the British, who developed it into a major urban centre and naval base. By the 20th century, it had become an important administrative centre, as the capital of the Madras Presidency.

Chennai's economy has a broad industrial base in the automobile, technology, apparels, hardware manufacturing, and healthcare industries. The city is home to much of India's automobile industry and is the country's third-largest exporter of Software, information technology (IT) and information-technology-enabled services (ITES), behind Bangalore and Hyderabad.

The city is served by an international airport and two major ports; it is connected to the rest of the country by five national highways and two railway terminals. Thirty-five countries have consulates in Chennai.

Chennai hosts a large cultural event, the annual Madras Music Season, which includes performances by hundreds of artists. The city has a vibrant theatre scene and is an important centre for the Bharatanatyam, a classical dance form. The Tamil film industry, known as Kollywood, is based in the city; the soundtracks of the movies dominate its music scene. Chennai is known for its sport venues and hosts an Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) event, the Chennai Open. In and Around

Chennai has an international airport and is the transport hub of South India. All international flights arrive at the Anna Terminal while the domestic flights arrive at the Kamraj terminal.

Europe and the United States: Lufthansa (Frankfurt), Air France (Paris), Jet Airways (Brussels) and British Airways (London-Heathrow), fly nonstop to Chennai with connecting service from their European hubs to points in the United States. Air India offers direct (as opposed to nonstop) flights to Europe and the US but be aware that these direct flights often involve a change of plane in Mumbai or Delhi. Jet Airways flies to Toronto, Newark and JFK via Brussels.

South-East Asia: Thai Airways offers nonstop service to Bangkok from where it is easy to get connections to almost anywhere in South-East Asia. Singapore Airlines and Malaysian offer nonstop service to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur respectively. Jet Airways flies non-stop to both Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Middle East: Nonstop services are available from Chennai to Dubai, Kuwait, Muscat, Ra's al Khaymah and Sharjah on Air India, Oman Air, Emirates and Gulf Air.

Sri-Lanka: Chennai is a hub for flights to Colombo with SriLankan Airlines, Jet Airways and Indian Airlines serving the route.

Domestic: All the major Indian domestic carriers (Jet Airways, Kingfisher, Spice, Go Air, Indigo, Air Deccan) connect Chennai with multiple flights to points all over India and most use Chennai as a hub for flights to smaller cities in South India. Paramount Airways is a low cost all business class airline that offers flights from Chennai to points in South India. Chennai is also a staging point for flights to Port Blair in the Andaman Islands. Important phone numbers

- * Indian Airlines General Enquiry 140
- * Indian Airlines Arrivals and Departures (Recorded) 142
- * Indian Airlines Reservations 141/+91 44 22561971
- * Jet Airways +91 44 2841 4141
- * Jet Lite +91 44 5211 0202/ +91 44 2498 0688
- * Air Deccan +91 9840377008Culture

Chennai being the Capital of Tamil Nadu is home to a host of Tamil Culture art forms ranging from dance, literature, sculpture, music and cinema.

The season for Bharatanatyam and Carnatic Music draws visitors and aficionados from the world over. Being the capital of Tamil Nadu, the preferred language of communication amongst the local population is Tamil. However, English is widely spoken as the language of commerce and hence visitors should have no problem getting around. The city also has a fair number of people that speak telugu, malayalam and hindi.

Mamallapuram, an extension of the city which is known for its sandy beaches, Stone Carvings, food and resorts. It also hosts the Choloamandalam artists village which is fairly well known in Art circles both in India and abroad

The city has a thriving Tamil film industry. It is also known as Kollywood. It is the second largest film industry in India. Some of the most prominent figures of Tamil Nadu like M.G. Ramachandran, M. Karunanidhi, J Jayalithaa, Rajnikanth, Kamal Hassan, AR Rahman are currently, or have at some stage of their career, been associated with Kollywood.

Amonst sports, Chennai is also a major centre for Cricket, motorsports and tennis.

Chennai like all the other metropolises in India, experienced signifant economic growth in the last 15 years. It has several options for mainstream entertainment with malls, multiplexes, restaurants and Hotels at nearly every major commerical district. Pubs and lounges however are restricted to only hotels in Chennai, due to legal restrictions on the sale of liqor.

Language

Tamil is the official language in Chennai, and is very popular. Almost all people speak Tamil, and picking up some knowledge of the language is useful to get by in Chennai. English education is widespread in Chennai, thanks to an excellent network of well-known schools throughout the city. Most educated people in Chennai can speak English. In most schools, the medium of instruction and communication is English. All important signboards are in English.

Hindi is spoken by some, but in general, not all may understand it. Other South Indian languages like Telugu and Malayalam are also widely spoken here. Now a days you can see a bit of Kannada as well.