


48

Hours

in chennai



Kitschy film posters, plastic water pots in a queue, the overpowering aroma of filter coffee, these are endearing images of Madras or Chennai as it is called now.

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS | KALPANA SUNDER

DAY ONE

8:00 AM BREAKFAST AT MURUGAN IDLI SHOP

Start your first day in the city with a hearty breakfast at the Murugan Idli shop situated in the T Nagar area of Chennai. The shop has many branches around town. This is the place to have fluffy *idlis* with a spread of *chutneys*. Try their sweet *pongal*, *vadais*, *masala dosa*

and onion *oobappam*. Finish your breakfast with a dose of typical 'filter coffee' to give you a caffeine high!

11:00 AM HERITAGE WALK

Take a heritage walk with Story trails (www.storytrails.in), a company specialising in themed tours of the city. Do the 'British

blueprints' - a walk through the Indo-Saracenic architecture of Chennai with its Gothic arches, minarets and stained glass domes all coming together in a pastiche of splendour. Get a glimpse of local history at the Senate House, visit the red sandstone High Court - a maze of spires and towers in the heart of one of the most crowded parts of George Town. It is said to be the second largest judicial building after



SpiceJet flies to Chennai. See schedule, page 190.



Clockwise from above: A vegetarian thali served at one of the many restaurants in Chennai; Bird's eye view of Chennai city; Kapeeshwar Temple in Mylapore

the London Courts. There is a grand central cupola – once the first lighthouse of Chennai on the premises, exquisite stained glass and intricate windows shaped like *jharokas*. Follow it with a 'Steeple chase' walk through the atmospheric churches of Chennai ranging from the historic St Mary's Church inside the Fort St George (where Robert Clive got married) to

the Armenian Church constructed in 1772, one of the oldest in the city, built by the Armenian community here.

2:30 PM RETAIL THERAPY

Head to Pondy Bazaar, the hub of street shopping in Chennai with its own lively ambience. Walk through the flower market and pavement shops filled with knick knacks - from clothes and footwear to hair accessories, the famous Ratna stores with stainless steel vessels and head to iconic Nalli Silks for those

legendary silk sarees. Round up your shopping with a south Indian lunch at Saravana Bhavan. Try a typical *thali* with *poriyal*, *koottu*, *sambar*, *rasam*, buttermilk and *appams*.

4:00 PM SPIRITUAL HIGH

Visit Kapaleeswarar Temple, a Shiva temple in Mylapore, from where this city actually started and walk the streets around, crowded with Brahmin priests, flower sellers and fruit vendors. The narrow lanes around the temple (called the Mada Streets) sell paraphernalia of *pooja* items as well as handicrafts. Check out the quaint shops selling herbal remedies and beauty products as well as Giri traders selling spiritual and religious items ranging from religious music to prayer beads and *kumkum*.

7:00 PM THALI DINNER

Have dinner at Vrindavan Multi Cuisine restaurant in Mylapore. Situated inside the New Woodlands Hotel in the heart of the city, this has a typical South Indian ambience with paintings of Lord Krishna in various poses. An ordinary *thali* costs ₹160 and a lavish Maharaja *Thali* is priced at ₹225. You can also try their

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