

POTENTIAL TOURISM IN TENKASI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Tenkasi District is a Tamil Nadu state in southern India. Tenkasi is the district headquarters. Tenkasidistrict is located in the foothills of the western ghats in a scenic environment. It is ruled by one of the oldest Kingdom the Pandas'. The Port of Korkai, Courtallam are famous in ancient world with the fame reaching as far as parakiramapandian Kingdom. The kasivishwanathartemple at tenkasi was built in 1467 AD by parakiramapandian,tenkasi is the last capital of the pandya dynasty. The iconic temple is situated in the banks of seevalaperi pond.

Keywords: Tenkasi, Korkai, Courtallam, Adavinainar Dam, kutralleshwarar temple.

Courtallam

It is 7 kms from Tenkasi on the way to Tirunelveli. Natural water gushes out from this spring throughout the year. A temple is dedicated to the village deity kutralleshwarar temple. It has now been developed into a beautiful picnic centre. Falls which is one of the most famous waterfalls in tamilnadu during monsoon season. The water falls of Courtallam have medicinal value as they run through forest and herbs before their decent. Courtallam is famed as the 'Spa of South'.

There are Seven different falls of Courtallam Details given below:

- ❖ Main Falls
- ❖ Small Falls (Citharuvi)
- ❖ Five Falls (Iyentharuvi)
- ❖ Tiger Falls (Puliyaruvi)
- ❖ Old Courtallam Falls (PalaiyaCourtallam)
- ❖ SenbahaDevi Falls (Senbakadavi)
- ❖ Honey Falls (Theanaruvi)

Peraruvi (main falls) the biggest falls in Courtallam, is about 60m high. The flow of water is interrupted by the Pongumakadal, a 19m deep crater and comes down with greatly reduced impact, making a bath safe. In Chitraruvi (small falls), the flow is thin. Here

naturally separate places for men and women are there to bathe. At Shenbagadevi falls, the water flows through shenbaga (*Michaelia champak*) trees. There is also a temple there, dedicated to Shenbagadevi Amman. Shenbagadevi leads to Chitraruvi. About 3 km from this is Thenaruvi (honey falls), 40m high and cascading between two large stones. In places where there is no water, one sees big honeycombs. Thenaruvi is very dangerous and it is restricted for public. But it is very common to see people visiting and bathing in Thenaruvi. Aintharuvi (five falls) has five separate cascades of water from this waterfalls. From the orchard above flows PazhathottaAruvi, the 'VIP falls'. Only VIP's are allowed in PazhathottaAruvi.

AyikudiBalasubramanya Temple

At a distance of 1 km from Ayikudi Bus Stop, 7 km Tenkasi, and 12 km from Courtallam, Sri AyikudiBalasubramanyaSwamy Temple is a small temple situated in the village of Ayikudi on the banks of Hanuman River. It is believed that Lord Hanuman had stayed on the banks of the river during his journey to Lanka.

This temple is dedicated to Murugan in the form of BalasubramanyaSwamy, also popularly known here as Rama SubramanyaSwamy. The main deity is a small idol with four hands. The three hands illustrate shaktivaram, vajram and abhaya mudra while the fourth hand holds a peacock and the lord sits on a lotus.

The Travancore Royal family took up the temple management and the temple was renovated. The shrine also houses Vishnu, Shiva, Ambikai, and Ganesha and Aditya (Surya).

ThirumalaiKovil

At a distance of 5 km from Panpoli Bus Stop, 14 km Tenkasi, and 18 km from Courtallam, ThirumalaiKovil is a Murugan temple situated at Panpoli. The temple is situated at an altitude of 400 m on a small hill surrounded by Western Ghats on the border of Kerala.

The main deity Murugan is found with four hands in the standing posture. The deity here is called ThirumalaiKumaraswamy or ThirumalaiMurugan. Lord Muruga gave darshan to sage Agasthiar at this place. This temple has 2 enclosures and two entrances. The sanctum faces the east. The temple boasts a mukha-mandapa, maha-mandapa in front of the sanctum. At the entrance of the main sanctum, there is a small idol for Lord Ganesha. A three tiered gopura covers the entrance to the inner enclosure. Much of the current structure of the temple dates back to 15th century. There are few 18th century inscriptions found in the temple.

At the entrance of the hill, there is a shrine for Lord VallabhaVinayaka. There is another Vinayaka shrine in the middle of the hill path. The sacred spring at the top of the hill is called AshtaPadmakulam. A flower called Kuvilai blossomed here. The SapthaKannikas worshipped Muruga by offering the flower. The idols of SapthaKannikas are installed on the banks of the spring.

There are 625 steps to reach the temple at the hill top. There is also a motorable road which can take you directly to the entrance of the temple. This hill temple is surrounded by lot of coconut plantations. Step festival on the first of Chithirai in April, Vaikasi Visakam in May/June, Skanda Sashti in October/November, Karthikai float festival in November/December and Thai Pooam in January/February are the festivals celebrated in the temple.

Thirumalapuram Rock-Cut Cave Temples

At a distance of 1 km from Thirumalapuram Bus Stop, and 24 km Tenkasi, The rock cut cave temples are situated on the hill of Thirumalapuram also known as Varanasimalai in Sankarankovil Taluk of Tenkasi District. These ancient Cave temples are now under the protection of Archaeological Survey of India.

There are two rock cut cave temples which are excavated by Pandyan Kings in 750 AD. Among the two caves one is finished and other is unfinished. The finished one is more significant with rectangular ardha-mandapa with a flight of steps and cells on the western walls. It contains bas-relief sculptures and two inscriptions from Pandyan period.

This temple has 3 sections with 3 bas-relief structures. The first one is a beautiful dancing Siva with a bhoothagana and bull on both sides. Lord Shiva is seen in dancing posture of Chatura. A dwarf near his foot plays the musical instrument. Second carving is a standing Lord Vishnu with 4 hands and 2 seated bhoothaganas on either sides with sankha and chakra on upper two hands. Seated Ganesha is seen next to him. On one side is the sanctum sanctorum with a Siva Lingam. On either sides of the entrance of sanctum sanctorum are dwarapalakas. There is another relief sculpture of Brahma with 4 hands and 3 visible heads. On the centre of the hall, facing the Siva Linga is a monolith Nandi which is in broken state. These figures in these temples are excellent examples of Pandyan art. An inscription of 12th century mentions a gift of land to the temple by a prince named Chakravartin Srivallabhadeva.

Adavinainar Dam & Park

The adavinainar reservoir is located at the foot of the western Ghats in Mekkarai Village of Shenkottai Taluk in Tenkasi District. It is located near courtallam and Achankoil in Kerala State. Courtallam visit tourist are also pay visit this dam. Here, a small falls is available.

Gadananthi Dam & Park

GadanaNathi Reservoir is located at the foot of the western Ghats in sivasailam village near Alwarkurichi which is one of the important tourist places of Tenkasi district. Now a days many tourists visit the dam and park. During the courtallam season and sabarimalai season more number of tourists are visit this place.

Gundar Reservoir and Falls

It is 14 kms from Tenkasi. The Gundar Reservoir is located at the foot of Western Ghats near the towns of Courtrallam and Senkottai. It is an important tourist place in Tenkasi District. A large number of domestic tourists on the way to Courtrallam visit this dam and park. This dam site is noted for its salubrious climate and atmosphere. Just 1 km from Gundar Dam to Western Ghats, a beautiful falls is there. To reach this particular falls, only four wheel drive vehicle is suitable

Kutralanathar Temple

At a distance of 200 m from Courtallam Bus Station, and 7 km from Tenkasi, The Kutralanathar Temple also known as Thirukkutralanathar is one of the most popular temples of Tamilnadu and is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It is one of the 275 ThevaraShivasthalas of Lord Shiva. The temple is of 2000 years old and there is lot of old Tamil inscriptions of Chola and Pandyan periods. It is situated near Courtallam Falls.

The main deity of Lord Shiva is worshipped in the form of a self-manifested Linga. This temple situated in a serene atmosphere and it occupies 3.5 acres of land at the foot hills of Trikoodamalai. This is a conch shaped temple and is referred to as Sangakkovil. In the shrine, the presiding deity Lord Shiva is called as Kuttralanathar and his consort Goddess Parvathi is called as KuzhalvoiMozhiammai. There is a separate shrine for AdiParasakthi which is very popular which is ShakthiPeetha. Nandi idol is facing the main shrine.

According to the legend, this temple was originally a Vishnu shrine. Lord Siva sent Saint Agastya to the south to avoid an imbalance due to overcrowding in the Mount Kailas on his celestial wedding. At Courtallam Saint Agastya found a Vaishnava temple and by his mystic power Agastya converted it in to a Siva Temple. Vishnu changed into a Sivalingam the conch in his hand expanded as the temple and the chakra rose as the peak. The finger prints of Sage Agastya on the Linga are still visible.

This is one of the PanchaSabhaKshetram of Lord Shiva known as ChithraSabha temple. The five dance halls of Shiva are Chidambaram, Madurai, Tiruvalankadu, Tirunelveli and Courtallam. The marvelousChithraSabha positioned here is prominent for its stunning wall painting and carvings with a close resemblance to Chidambaram. The ChitraSabha or the hall of pictures is located in a picturesque location, 500 m away from the main temple. Lord Shiva as Nataraja is brought here during festivals from the Kurumpalaveesar temple.

The initial Thirukkutralanathar temple was constructed by Raja RajaChola. During the Pandyan reign, the artha-mandapa, maha-mandapa, separate temple for the goddess and several other structures were built. At the time of Nayak rule, parasakthi temple, the compound wall, sangu street, inner street and few other shrines were built.

There are the statues of Lord Vishnu, KasiViswanathar, KasiVisalakshi, TenkasiViswanatharSwamy, UlagammaiAmbikai, NellaiyapparGandhimathiAmbal and Navagrahas. Lord VallabhaGanapathy graces this holy place. Lord Muruga in the temple enclosure appears with a bow in his hand with his consorts Valli and Devasena.

The 10-day PurattasiNavarathri for Parasakti in September/October, Brahmotsavam in Aipasi (October/November), MargazhiTiruvadhirai in December/January, Thai Float festival in January/February, PanguniUthiram in March/April are the main festivals celebrated in the temple.

KorKai

This 12th century village, recorded by foreign traveller of 18th century is located on the main road from Tiruchendur to Thoothukudi with a slight detour at Mukkani bridge road or Athoor. It is 29 kms from Tiruchendur. There is a tank Called Korkaikulam with an extent of 250 acres. It was the ancient port of Pandia dynasty. Ancient Vettrivelamman Temple is also located here. Archaeological remains kept in a museum here are worth to be seen. Korkai is recognised as an ancient Port City. An attempt is made now to locate the port based on field exploration, folk beliefs and coastal geology and geomorphology.

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