

# TOURISM IN SALEM DISTRICT – AN OVERVIEW

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## 1. Introduction

There are several Mariamman temples in Salem. Mariamman is a Hindu Goddess, an incarnation of Shakti. Every year around July the, Salem city celebrates Mariamman festival for a fortnight. During this festival, Goddess Mariamman is decorated with jewellery and flower chariots and taken around the city at midnight. On the first day of the festival, people walk on fire with their prayers. The second day is colourful with parades of fancy dress. This is one of the best times to visit Salem city. This festival is celebrated at temples at Fort, Shevapet, Ammapet, Gugai, Andheripati, etc. Shevapet Mariamman temple car is the biggest one among the cars of Amman temples across the state. This festival will be celebrated for a week.

## 2. Tourism places in Salem district

**Kandashramam:** Kandashramam is small hill temple for Lord Muruga. It is situated 10 km from Salem city towards Chennai highway. In Salem city, at Nethimedu there is another hill for lord Murugan. Two more mountain temples are there in Salem for Lord Vishnu. Salem also has heritage temple called Sitthar Koil, which is located about 10 km from Salem. This is a Shiva Temple, which is located on the foot hills of Kanja Malai. Some believers say that, this temple was built by Siddhars which is believed that they still survive in the Mount of Kanja Malai.

**Kanjamalai Siddhar:** One of the legendary eighteen Tamil siddhars, a student of Thirumular, believed to have lived in the jungles of the Kanjamalai. He was also known as Kalangi, Kanjamalaiyan, and Sundharam. Some believe that the chief deity in the Siddhesvara Swamy temple represents him; others claim that it is Thirumular. Aragalur is located approximately 21 km from Attur that boast of 2 old temples and a large Buddha statue. The one day Temple Car festival in summer invites lots of people in the region.

**Temples:** Many temples with intricate sculptures and imposing towers are found in the district of Salem, built by indigenous rulers. Some of the popular temples are the Taramangalam Shivan Temple in Omalur and the Sukavaneswarar temple, Kottai Mariamman temple, Parsanna Venkatesha Perumal temple in Salem.

**Kandhasamy Kovil, Kalipatti:** A Murugan temple, also known as the Sundhara Kandhasamy Kovil one of the seven richest temples in the district. The arum sambal that is given to the devotees is believed to cure diseases and to serve as an antidote for snake poison.

**Forts:** Forts had existed in Salem town and Omalur said to have been visited by Tipu Sultan. Uncared for, not even the ruins of these monuments remain to be seen today. However, at Sankari an impressive fort is seen on a hillock, with its elaborate and massive ramparts running all the way up the hill. This fort is said to have been the holding of “Theeran Chinnamalai,” an indigenous warrior who fought against British oppression.

**The Stanley Reservoir:** An architectural marvel and important land mark in the Mettur Division of Salem, it is the heart that pumps the life giving water to the farmers of the Cauvery basin who suffer the vagaries of Indian monsoons. The sixteen gates is an engineering master-piece and regulates the flow of water released from the Mettur Dam to the lower reaches covering the paddy fields in the eight districts of Salem, Erode, Namakkal, Karur, Tiruchirapalli, Thanjavur, Thiruvarur and Nagapattinam.

**Yercaud:** Yercaud, a pleasant resort town at an attitude of 4330 on the Shervaroys Mountain. The name is derived form the picturesque yeri (lake) once surrounded by a kadu (forest). In comparison to Ooty (Uthagamandalam), a much larger and better known hill resort of the Nilgiri mountains, Yercadu is affectionately known as the “Poorman’s Ooty.” Cornish observed that “long before the discovery in 1819 of the cool and bracing climate [of the Nilgiri Mountains], the plateau of the Shervaroys had been visited by the resident officials of the Salem Collectorate and its beautiful climate had obtained a local reputation. In 1823, Richmond, Civil Surgeon of Salem, reported that the ‘Shivarai Hills’ were beginning to attract a considerable degree of notice”.

**The Kalvarayan Hills:** The Kalvarayan Hills of the Eastern Ghats spreads over two adjacent districts namely Salem and South Arcot. The Southern slopes extend into the Attur taluk. In the olden days, a large population of elephants used to roam around the hills. This place is principally inhabited by Malayalis. The history seems to be shrouded in mystery. However, we can assume that the Malayalis should have migrated from the northern plains to these inaccessible hills, so that they could have a peaceful living to avoid wars with the invaders.

**Jama Masjid:** The oldest mosque in Salem situated on the southern bank of the Thirumanimuthu Aru in the heart of the city. The Mysore ruler, Thippu Sultan, who is said to have offered prayers here, reportedly built it. The British confirmed the Masjid Inam granted to this mosque in 1862, by a special resolution in 1880.

**Fort of Attur:** It is probable that Gatti Mudaliyar of Kaveripuram, from whom Omalur was taken by Dud Deo Raj of Mysore, was identical with the Gatti Mudali mentioned elsewhere as having built the fort of Attur. The Attur Fort was built by Gatti Muthaliar, a local Chieftain. It is probable

that Gatti Muthaliar built it between the years 1559 A.D. and 1585 A.D. According to a traditional story, Gatti Muthaliar was out hunting, and seeing a hare start from a bush, when to examine the spot, where he found the neck of an iron pot protruding. He dug out seven pots full of gold pieces, with which he built the fort.

**Kailasanthar Kovil:** A Siva temple, perhaps the most beautiful of its kind in Salem district. Parts of it existed as early as the tenth century: as it stands now, it is the product of the Gatti Mudhali dynasty of the seventeenth century. Reconstruction and elaboration of the old temple was begun by Mummudi, continued by Siyazhi, and was brought near completion by Vanangamudi. This west facing temple is enclosed by a massive stone wall measuring 306' by 164' reportedly built in the thirteenth century. The main entrance tower is conceived as a chariot on wheels, drawn by elephants and horses. Twice a year, during August -September and February-March for three days in succession, the rays of the evening, Sunshine through the entrance tower, the portico, and enters the sanctum sanctorum and falls on the deity, and anionic stone. The consort of Kailasanathar is Sivakami.

**Sankari Fort:** The Sankari Fort is one of the important historic places in Salem district. This fort has been constructed on the hill of Sankari. This fort has ten compound walls having individual name for that. Inside of this fort, there are 6 platforms and 5 temples, and 2 mosques. The Weapons, Pistol and Jewels used by the emperor Tipu Sultan and Theeran Chinnamalai were found there. On the way to Sankari, there is one Christian Church in the name of St. Antony.

**Uthumalai and Poiman Karadu:** Uthumalai is situated 6 km from Salem. Viewing Salem from this point is pleasant memory. Poiman Karadu, is situated on the Salem-Namakkal national highway. Seen from the plains to the east of the hill from a particular spot, the likeness of a deer with two horns if visible in a cave between rocks on the hill. The mysterious vision disappears when one gets, nearer hence the name Poiman Karadu.

### 3. Reference

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