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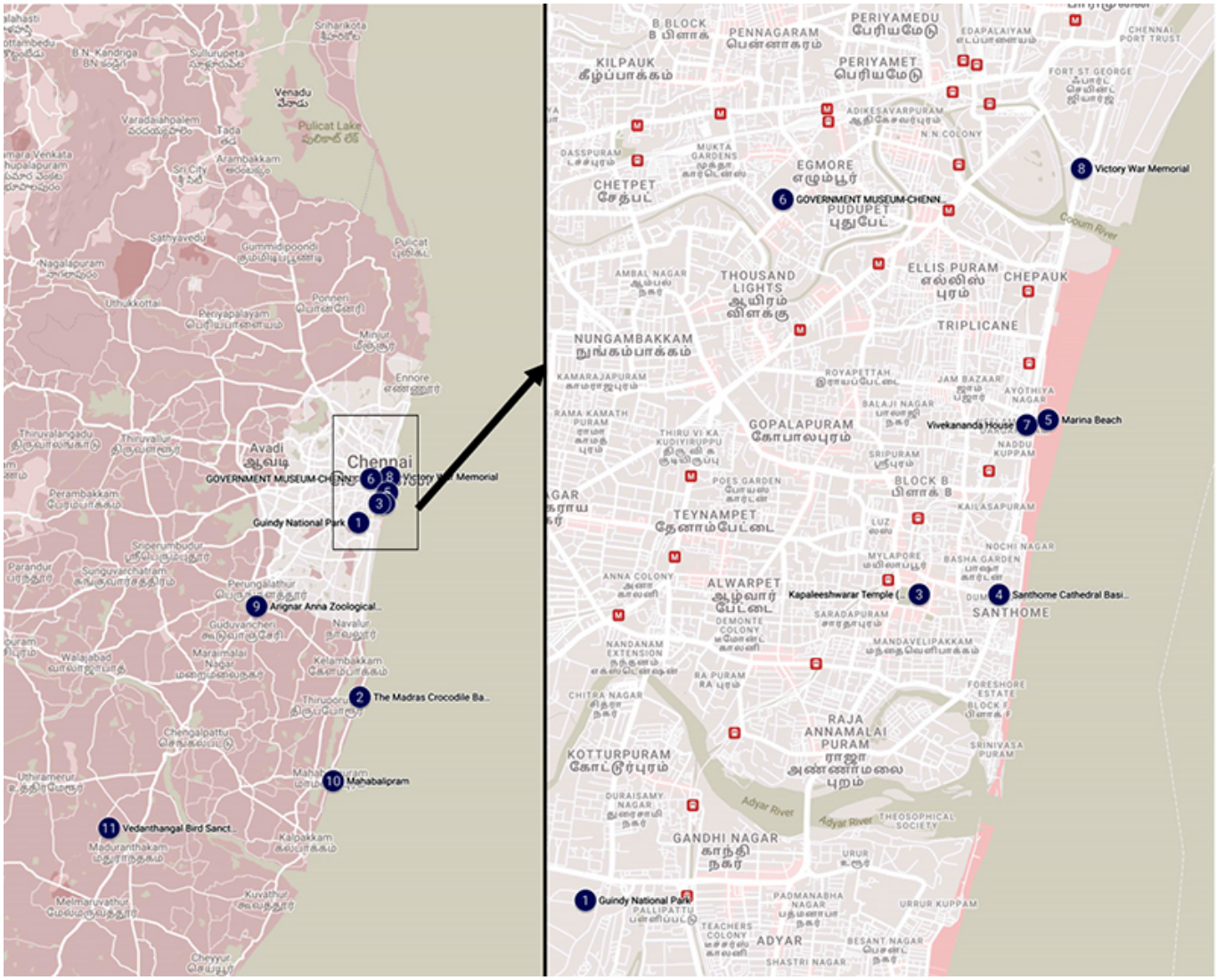
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Places of Attractions in and around Chennai [1]

There are many fascinating tourist attractions in Chennai. Chennai offers some of the most beautiful beach resorts. Marina Beach is the pride of Chennai. Visit the historical Fort St. George and travel back into time. Chennai also has many spiritual centers, Temples and Churches. The Parthsarthy Temple and Kapaleeshwar Temple were constructed in the 13th century are the example of the Dravidians architectural skills.

Santhome Cathedral was built over the tomb of apostle St. Thomas and has become an important pilgrimage centre. The Snake Park situated in the Guindy National Park in the Raj Bhavan Estate has a large collection of snakes and many other reptiles. Chennai is also the fountainhead of the Theosophical Movement with the headquarters in Adyar founded by Madam Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott in 1882.



1.Guindy National Park

Right in the midst of a metropolitan urban settlement lies a serene strip of land, so relaxing and comforting. Living in its heart are a variety of species that are well protected and looked after. Guindy National Park is a wonder that Chennai has for the world.The Guindy National Park is spread over an area of just 2.70 sq.km.. Despite being of a relatively smaller size, it doesn’t cease to amaze the visitors in a big way. The park is home to a remarkable assortment of flora and fauna. Some of the species of animals protected here include Blackbuck, Jackal, Spotted Deer, Snake, Tortoise and so on. The Blackbuck population is around 400 and there are also around 200 Spotted Deers. Over 130 species of local and migratory birds have been found in the park. Some of these include Crow Pheasant, Shrike, Tailor Bird, Garganey, Pariah Kate, Pond Heron, Medium Egret and so goes the list. Apart from the amazing fauna, the park is also rich in flora. Thorn Forest, Dry Evergreen Scrub, Grasslands etc. are a part of the park and offer a visual treat to the visitors.For more info.. [2]



2. Crocodile Park

Crocodiles are among the most spectacular species on the Earth. Whether in the wild or in protected sanctuaries, these imposing creatures never fail to fascinate the spectators. However hunting, along with the loss of habitat and forest land has to a great extent affected their numbers and some species of them have become endangered. Located just 40 kms to the south of Chennai, the park commenced its operations with a mission to protect three endangered species of crocodiles – the saltwater crocodile, the mugger crocodile and the gharial. These species were nearing extinction at that point and the work of the Crocodile Park was crucial to their survival. With 8.5 acres of land, the Crocodile Park is the largest crocodile sanctuary in India and includes one of the world's largest assortment of crocodiles and alligators. The centre has the distinction of having bred over 5000 crocodiles and alligators to date. 14 of the 23 existing species of alligators and crocodiles are represented in the park. Apart from crocodiles and alligators, the park is also home to 12 endangered species of tortoises and turtles, 5 snake species like King Cobra and a variety of lizards. Apart from these, over 60 species of birds have been identified in the crocodile park, making it a blissfullocation to visit and spend time.For more info.. [3]



3. Kapaleeshwarar Temple

The temple is also known as Vedapuri as the four Vedas are worshipped at this auspicious place.The other name given to the religious site is Sukrapuri as Sage Sukracharya offered his prayers to Lord Shiva at this location to regain his eyesight.The word ‘Kapaleeswarar’ is a combination of two words Kapalam which means “head'' and eswarar which means “Lord Shiva”.For more info.. [4]



4. Santhome Cathedral and Basilica

In 1893, the British rebuilt it as a church with the status of a cathedral. The building we see today is the British version. The British architects adopted a Neo-Gothic style for the construction. The church is one of the only three known churches in the world built over the tomb of an apostle of Jesus, the other two being St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City and Santiago de Compostela Cathedral at Galicia in Spain.

With its white texture and spires, the Santhome Church stands majestically tall and makes you pause and appreciate its beauty. Built in neo-Gothic style, the church delights every visitor with its naturally lit interiors, rows of wooden pews and striking windows with colored panes. The main area that is called the nave is quite impressive and holds awe-inspiring chandeliers. Behind the main altar there are stained glass windows depicting St Thomas and other apostles of Jesus Christ.There are two chapels. The main is above the ground and the other is built under the ground. We can find a statue of the revered saint inside a glass case at his final resting place. Every day, pilgrims in large numbers visit the tomb which is decorated with flowers and candles.

A museum with important artifacts is a must-visit for the tourists visiting the church. The museum houses the spear or the lance head that was used to kill St Thomas, the great apostle's fingerprint, an Episcopal chair, two postage stamps, inscriptions of his deeds on

stones, the remains of his bones and wall paintings portraying St Thomas's life and death. The mini theatre airs a short film on the life of St Thomas. At the rear end of the basilica is an old sundial.For more info.. [5]







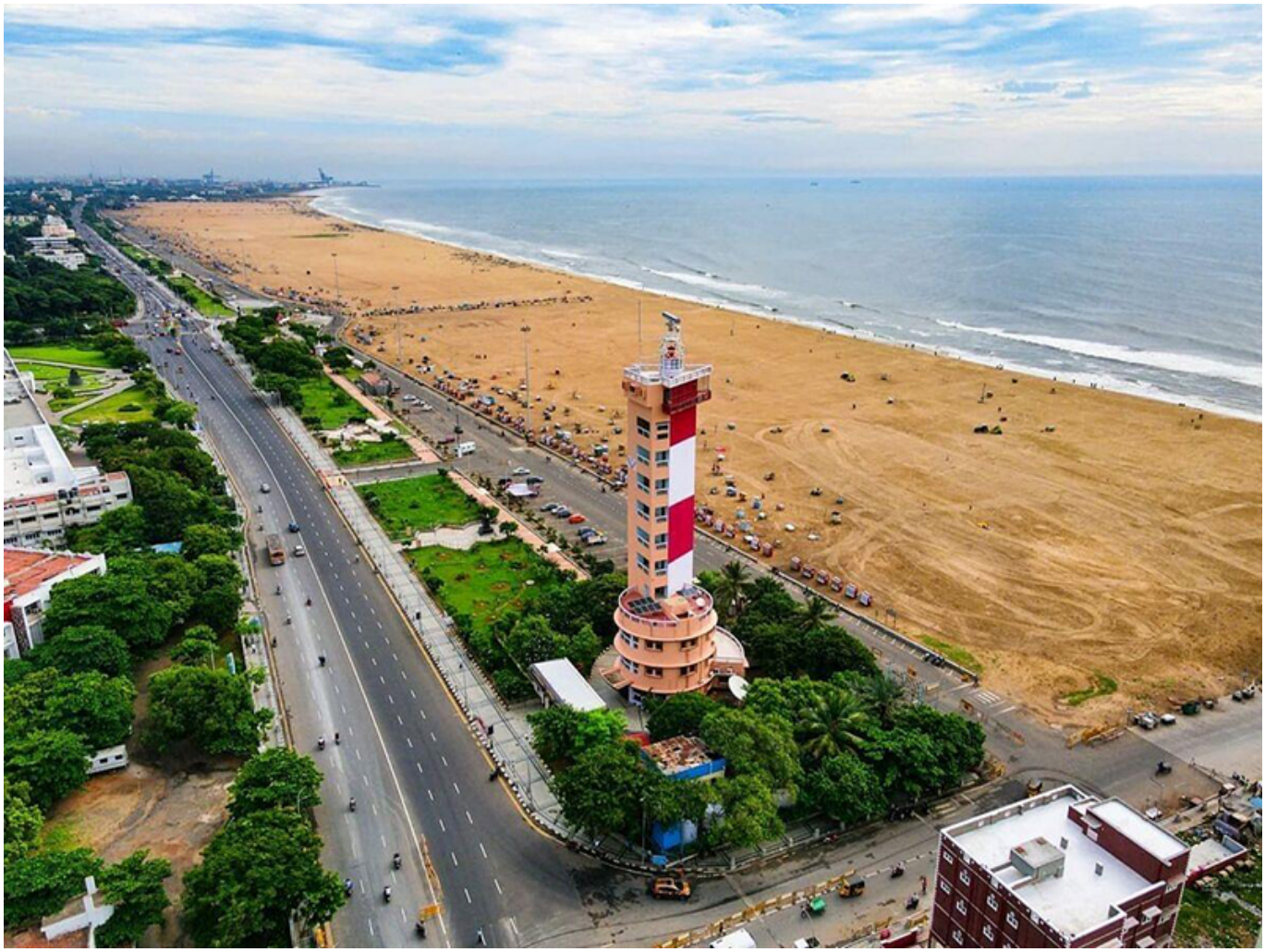
5. Marina Beach

It's a landmark that Chennai has been proudly showcasing before the world – the Marina Beach. A splendidly serene strip of coast along the Bay of Bengal, the Marina Beach is considered to be one of the finest beaches in India. No wonder the spot attracts thousands of visitors everyday from all parts of the world. The first choice of local people when it comes to spending a beautiful evening, Marina Beach is one of the largest urban beaches in the world.

Stretching across 13 kms from Fort St. George to the northern part of Besant Nagar, this beach was nothing but a stretch of mud before the construction of the Madras Port. The same was modified to form a promenade and was named the Madras Marina by the British. During the Indian freedom struggle, the Marina Beach was a centre for social gatherings and public events. With the passage of time, Marina Beach transformed itself into a locale of leisure and entertainment. It is estimated that over 30,000 people visit the beach everyday, making the entire 13 km stretch buzzing with life.

The views of the sea, the sand and the sunrise are ones to enjoy from Marina Beach. Though a popular beach destination, Marina beach isn't considered safe to swim or host water sports

due to the turbulent undercurrent. However, taking a stroll on the beach itself is an experience like few others. A 50 m high lighthouse on the beach offers a spectacular view of the city and surroundings.For more info.. [6]



6. Government Museum

Established in 1851, Government Museum of Chennai is popular as the Madras Museum. Factually being the second oldest museum of India (after Kolkata's Indian Museum), this museum is a treasure in itself! As a rich repository of finest masterpieces of art, archaeology, anthropology, numismatics and much more, the Madras Museum assures to lure one and all.For more info... [7]



7. Vivekananda House

The year 2013-14 marks the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, the saint who introduced the Indian Philosophies to the Western World. To honor the contribution of Vivekananda towards the Indian society, let me talk about a place which is very closely related to him. Vivekananda house or Vivekananda Illam is a museum in Chennai which is looked upon as an important landmark by the followers of Swami Vivekananda. It is treated as a place of pilgrimage as this is where Swami Vivekananda stayed after returning from his visit to the west in 1897. For more info.. [8]



8. Victory War Memorial

Chennai or Madras (as most of us call it), is considered as the gateway to south India. Iconic Marina Beach, which is counted among the longest beaches in the world, is a part of the city. Victory War Memorial or the Cupid's Bow in Chennai is one of the two war memorials located here, Madras War Cemetery being the other one. The memorial is situated at the beginning of Marina Beach, near Fort St. George.For more info.. [9]



9. Arignar Anna Zoological Park

Arignar Anna Zoological Park of Chennai was first established in 1855. But it was shifted to the southern metropolitan area called Vandalur reserved forests in the year 1979. The Arignar Anna Zoological Park in Chennai was officially opened to public in 1985. The Chennai Arignar Anna Zoological Park covers 510 hectares of land and is one of the biggest in south-east Asia.For more info.. [10]



10. Mahabalipuram

There are certain destinations that will leave a lasting impression on you, even years after your visit; and they keep calling you back, no matter how far away you are. Mahabalipuram or Mamallapuram is one such city that you won't feel like leaving once you are here. Drenched in an enigmatic old-age charm, the city will amaze you with its rich history, thriving present and prospects of a glorious future.

Noted in history as a busy port town, Mahabalipuram rose in stature and importance during the period between 4th and 9th century when the Pallava dynasty ruled the land. The heydays of the Pallavas saw the building many impressive architectural wonders, many of which continue to fascinate visitors to this day. The temples built during this era loudly proclaim the glory of the Dravidian architectural genre. The highlight of this style can be seen in the ornate stone carvings made from uncut rocks. The splendour of sculptures that adorn these temples are simply stunning. The classic example of this is the Shore temple, one of the oldest temples in India built out of blocks of granite. These majestic structures and their relics that can be seen today, have made Mahabalipuram a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Though a destination for pilgrims and history buffs, Mahabalipuram doesn't disappoint a leisure traveler. Take a look at the fascinating beaches in the area and you will know why.

The strategic location of Mahabalipuram and its proximity to various major South Indian cities has cemented its importance as a weekend getaway.For more info... [11]



11. Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary

How many of us might not have dreamt of being a bird at least once in our lives? We might have fantasized of being able to fly around like them, finding food from the surroundings and nestling in tall trees in the middle of vast forests. However, if we were birds, then there are few better places that we would have loved to live in than Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary. A safe haven for birds of various species, Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary is a destination that can be rated among the best of its kind in India.

Spread across 74 acres of picturesque land in the Chengalpattu district of Tamil Nadu, the Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary is picture-perfect place for bird watchers and lovers to spend time, observing these flying delights. The sanctuary was established in 1798 by the British and has ever since been a spot of great fascination. The view of thousands of birds flying around the sanctuary, some at high altitudes and others at lower ones, is indeed a sight to behold. More than 4000 species of birds including migratory ones have been identified from this area. Some of the species here include Grey Wagtail, Garganey, Blue-winged Teal, Common Sandpiper, Pintail, Snake Birds, Moorhens, Darters, Spot-billed Duck, Large Egrets, Little Egrets, Painted Storks, Shovellers, Grey Pelicans, Cormorants and so goes the extensive

list. Apart from these amazing species of birds, these dry, evergreen scrub and thorn forests are also home to monkeys.It's a destination that you just cannot afford to miss on your trip to Tamil Nadu. For more info... [12]



12. Kancheepuram

One might have heard of the world-famous Kancheepuram Sarees that have been adorning South Indian brides for decades. However the destination itself is much more than these amazing sarees. Kancheepuram is such a special town that takes you back in time and drench you with its old-world charm and cultural richness. One of the most visited tourism destinations in India, Kancheepuram is a destination where history comes to life in all its glory.

What makes the town truly stand out is the architectural splendor of various structures that adorn the region. Believed to be more than a thousand years old, the city was ruled by various dynasties including Cholas, Pallavas, Vijayanagar and subsequently the British. The brilliance of Dravidian architecture and the intricate details it boasts of can be seen across the town.

Another feather that embellishes the crown of Kancheepuram is its epithet as the 'Golden City Of A Thousand Temples'. There are a number of amazing temples in and around Kancheepuram that attract pilgrims and tourists from even far away lands. These divine

places of worship are architectural wonders themselves, rich in sculptures, art and ageless elegance. Not to mention the flora and fauna present abundantly in the picturesque sanctuaries located in the outskirts of the town. The Palar river flows serenely through the western part of the city, adding to the natural bliss of the destination. A perfect getaway for history buffs, architecture admirers, pilgrims and nature lovers – that's Kancheepuram in a nutshell for you.For more info... [13]



Source:Tamil Nadu Tourism and Maps of India.

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