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Chettinad – a delight for all senses

We recently hosted a leading European Tour Operator for an educational tour of South India. In response to my question about what was the highlight, I was not surprised to hear 'Chettinad'.

An infrequent stop on the classical Tamil Nadu & Kerala circuit, Chettinad in fact refers to different aspects – region, architecture, cuisine. Chettinad is the ancestral home of a prosperous banking community, Nattukottai Chettiars, that migrated out in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Chettinad boasts of a rich cultural heritage: mansions, temples, sarees, athangudi tiles, wood carving and the spicy Chettinad cuisine.

The mansions are embellished with intricate designs, marble and Burma teak, wide courtyards and spacious rooms. The outstanding 110-year-old Chettinad Palace is the oldest surviving building of this style. The temples in this region, built by the early Tamil dynasties, remain remarkable specimens of Dravidian architecture.

The capital Karaikudi is renowned for its handmade terracotta tiles – Athangudi Tiles, its hand-woven cotton sarees and exquisite wood-carving, especially the minute carvings on the doors and carving of idols on wooden blocks. The Chettinad cuisine is indulgent in its use of spices, especially for preparations of mutton, fish, and chicken dishes; the most famous being the 'chettinad chicken'.

An excellent way to experience this region is to stay in one of its fabulous mansions converted into hotels: The Bangala Mansion, Chettinadu Mansion, Visalam by CGH and Sangam Heritage.

Include this wonderful region in South India Tours while it still remains a somewhat well kept secret!

Kiran Jot
Vice President & Business Head



Air, Sea, Rail

Mumbai airport shut for 6 hours every Tuesday. For the next five months, the intersection between two cross-runways will be shut on Tuesdays from 12 noon to 6pm for repair and reconstruction work. Flight operations would be suspended during that time and departing and arriving flights prior to the closure will have to be strictly on schedule.

DGCA to map carbon airprint in Indian skies. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has asked the public sector oil companies to furnish data on the sale of jet fuel to commercial airlines so that it can estimate the "carbon footprint" of airline operations in the country for the first time.

Bundelkhand Link Express to run daily between Khajuraho & Varanasi from 01st Nov 2009. Train 1107A will depart from Khajuraho at 23:40 and arrive in Varanasi JN at 10:50. Train 1108A will departure from Varanasi JN at 17:10 and arrives in Khajuraho at 05:10. Sleepers are available in Coach Classes 01st Ac / 02nd Ac / 03rd Non Ac.

Louis Cruise Lines to commence operations from Kochi in Dec 2009. Louis Cruise Lines (LCL) will deploy a cruise-

ship in Kochi, which will commence operations from the first week of December 2009. LCL will operate three night itineraries each on Kochi – Maldives – Kochi sector and Kochi – Colombo – Kochi sector, as well as one night high sea sailing itinerary. The company is currently in the process of finalising the package cost of these itineraries.



New Hotels

Radisson to add new 162-room hotel in Chennai. This is Radisson's second hospitality venture in the city, coming up over 1.6 acres and scheduled to open by December 2010. The Chain also plans to raise its inventory by adding 30 rooms in its existing hotel near the airport before March 2010.

Courtyard-Gurgaon Opening in November'2009. The hotel will have 192 spacious well appointed rooms and 06 luxury suites. All rooms will have High Speed internet access, Flat Screen LCD Televisions, Iron and Iron Boards, Tea Coffee Makers, safety vaults. Apart from coffee shop, it will also have a bar and an Asian cuisine restaurant.

Hilton Garden Inn – New Delhi – Opening End November'2009. Located in an upmarket mall, the Hotel has 116 rooms with the Garden Sleep® System bed, enabling guests to adjust the firmness or softness of the bed; ergonomic chairs, wireless Wi-Fi with remote printing, Flat Screen LCD TV, electronic safe, tea kettle, ironing board. The hotel will have a 24-hour restaurant, a bar and a Pavilion Pantry which will offer a selection of healthy snacks, microwaveable meals and beverages.

Taj Mahal Palace and Tower Hotel in Mumbai to open the Heritage Wing. Taj is going to partially open the heritage wing on 25 November. The Hotel expects to reopen three of the restaurants - Golden Dragon, Wasabi and the Harbour Bar. The rooms and the remaining F&B outlets will open in phases, starting December until April, when the hotel expects to be completely operational.



The Old & The New

Indus Valley symbols found in Kerala. A rock engraving similar to the unique sign of the Indus Valley civilization - a man with a jar - was recently found in Kerala. This provides a significant southern link with the 600-year-old Indus Valley civilization that flourished in the northwestern part of the Indian sub-continent between 2300 BC and 1700 BC. The Dravidian or an equally vibrant civilization existed in southern India during this period, historians said. This new finding clearly establishes the fact that the Indus Valley civilization had its presence in the south.

Thai Buddha Vihar in Sarnath to have 80 ft statue of Lord Buddha by next year. According to a UNI report, an 80 ft statue of Lord Buddha will be installed at Thai Buddha Vihar premises in Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh by next year. Sarnath holds religious importance for the Buddhists as Lord Gautam Buddha had delivered his first sermon at Sarnath after gaining enlightenment at Bodh Gaya:

Dalits enter Tamil Nadu temple first time in 100 yrs. Dalits of Chettipulam village stepped inside the local Shiva temple on Tuesday, in a historic moment brought about by government and political intervention. Dressed in their best, wom-

en had brought flowers and other offerings. It was a historic moment since for generations, the dalits or low caste hindus, were barred from entering the temple and had to stand 10 feet away from the temple entrance and offer prayers.



We Celebrate

Indian Routes celebrated DIWALI, the festival of lights by holding a traditional 'puja' prayer ceremony in the office followed by a scrumptious lunch on the rooftop terrace.

WTM 2009 – Visit Indian Routes in the India Pavillion at Booth # 5.

For details get in touch with us contact@indian-routes.in