Kumbakonam

This well-known temple town, situated on the banks of river Cauvery in picturesque surroundings, is considered one of the seven important holy cities of India. It is 38 km from Thanjavur.

**Sri Adi Kumbeswara Temple:**

Legend has it that during Maha Pralaya after Dwapara Yuga, a Kumbam full of Amruth and seeds of creation was set afloat by Lord Siva. The Lord proclaimed that the place where the pot touched the ground would be considered the holiest of all places. When the Kumbam finally rested in this place, the Lord appeared in the guise of a hunter and broke the Kumbam with His arrow. The Amruth got split and pooled in a place, which became the famous Mahamagham Tank. The Lord then gathered the sand wet with the remaining nectar and shaped it into a Mahalingam, called Sri Adi Kumbeswara. The divine consort is Mangalambika.

The temple covers an area of more than four acres. It has a nine-tier Rajagopuram. In the Navaratri Mandapam, all the 27 stars and 12 Rasis have been artistically carved in a single block of stone.
Sri Sarangapani Temple:

Among the sacred 108 Tirupatis, this temple is given the third place next to Srirangam and Tirupati. The shrine is in the form of a chariot. A tank in panoramic settings, known as Hema Pushkarni, separates this shrine and Sri Adi Kumbeswara temple. There is a beautiful 12-storied gopuram, considered one of the largest in the South.

By the side of the temple is the Golden Lotus Tank, also known as Lakshmi Theertham. Goddess Lakshmi performed penance here and Adi Kumbeswara Temple tower Vishnu came down as Aravamudhan and married Her. Sri Sarangapani, Aravamudhan and Komalavalli are the presiding deities.

There are two entrances to the sanctum. One is kept open throughout the Uttarayan period and the other during the Dakshinayan period.

Sri Ramaswamy Temple:

Here Lord Rama gives darshan in His coronation robes. Both Sri Rama and Sita are seated on the same peeta and Hanuman is depicted as singing in praise of the Lord with the help of a
veena.
The 62 pillars in the front mandapam are great works of art. Scenes from Ramayana are painted on the walls of the prakaram.

**Sri Nageswara Temple:**

It is one of the most ancient temples in Kumbakonam. Adi Sesha and Surya had worshipped Sri Nageswara here. When Adi Sesha was groaning under the weight of the world, he came to Kuvinvanam, the present Nageswara temple, and did penance. Siva and Parvati appeared before Adi Sesha and blessed him with enough strength. A well in the temple is known as Naga Theertham.
The temple is the master creation of early Chola art. The Sun's rays fall on the Lingam in the central shrine through an opening in the eastern tower for three days in a year — on the 11th, 12th and 13th days in the month of Chitrai (April-May).

**Sri Chakrapani Temple:**

The images of Sri Chakrapani with eight arms and Sudarsanavalli Thayar with a gracious visage are inspiring. Brahma, Surya and Agni are depicted as worshipping the Lord.

According to a legend, Surya once competed with Vishnu to decide Who was brighter. Vishnu appeared in the form of a Chakra and put down the pride of Surya. Lord Chakrapani, like Siva, has a third eye on His forehead.

**Other temples in the town:**
Festivals:

Mahamagham: This festival is celebrated once in 12 years (last held in March 2004) in the month of Masi (Feb-March), when Jupiter passes through the sign of Leo. The devout believe that the nine sacred rivers of India appear in this tank on the Mahamagham day.

Darasuram (4 km from Kumbakonam):

The Siva temple here dedicated to Airavateswara. Legend has it that Airavata, the white elephant of Indra, and Yama, the God of Death, had worshipped Lord Siva here. There is a tank called Yama Theertham.

Patteeswaram (8 km):

Lord Siva was worshipped by Patti, one of the daughters of Kamadhenu. The Lord is known as Dhenupatureeswara and the Goddess is Gnanambika. Devi Vishnu Durga is enshrined on the northern side of the temple.

Here, Lord Siva gave a canopy of pearls (Muthu Pandal) to Saiv saint Sambandhar on a hot summer day and made the Nandi to be aside to see His devotee enter the shrine.
Kumbakonam

Kizhapazhayarai (5 km from Darasuram):

The Sri Somanathaswamy temple, known for beautiful sculptures, was built by Chola King Raja Raja I. The front mandapam has been designed like a car pulled by horses and elephants. The image of Ardhanaareeswara embodying the Siva-Shakti union is a sculptural masterpiece.

Thirushaktimutham (3 km from Darasuram):

Legend has it that Goddess Parvati once came here and did penance to join Lord Siva. The Lord emerged from the Lingam in the form of a Holy Fire. On seeing the Jyothiswaroopa of the Lord and attracted by its beauty, the Goddess embraced the Lord and kissed him. Hence the Lord is known as Shakti Thazhuviya Nathar or Sivakozhundeeswarar.

Swamimalai (8 km):

This beautiful hill temple is dedicated to Sri Swaminathan (Muruga). A flight of 60 steps, each representing a Tamil year, leads one to the top. The presiding deity stands six feet high. A strange feature here is the presence of an elephant in front of the Lord instead of the usual peacock. Swamimalai is one of the Aru Padai Veedu of Lord Muruga. It is here that Muruga, the son, expounded the meaning of Om, the Pranava Mantra, to Lord Siva, the father.

Thiruvalanchuzhi (8 km):
The Vinayaka temple here is noted for its architectural grandeur. The idol is white in colour and hence the name Sweta Vinnyaka. According to a legend, as the Devas ignored the worship of Vinayaka before they churned the Ocean of Milk to obtain nectar, they got poison instead of nectar. When reminded of their negligence, the Devas made an Image of Vinayaka from the foam of the sea. Hence the white colour of the deity.

Thiruneelakkudi (13 km):

The Siva temple here is dedicated to Sri Manogyanathar and His consort Amudhakujambal. An interesting feature is that the Lingam, which is about two feet in height, has its rough surface studded with square projections. During the Chitrai festival (April-May), abhishekam of the Lingam is performed with gingelly oil. This oil is mysteriously absorbed in the Lingam.

Map

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