

The MeenakshiSundareswarar temple (twin temples) or popularly known as *Madurai Meenakshi Temple* is one of the biggest temples in India. The original temple built by KulasekaraPandyan was in ruins. The plan for the current temple structure was laid by ViswanathNaik and was completed by TirumalaiNayakar. The Aadi, Chittirai and the Maasi, and Veli streets surround the temple. Both temples are adorned with exquisite carvings & sculptures and gold plated vimanams.



There are 12 massive gopurams in the temple, the four tallest gopurams at the outer walls (The tallest is the southern gopuram, measuring 49 metres). There are four entrances. The main entrance is to the Meenakshi Amman shrine.

AshtaShakthiMandapam is reached from the eastern gateway. It was built by ThirumalaiNayakar's wives RudrapathiAmmal and Tholimamai. The scenes from the Thiruvilayadals of the Lord and from Meenakshi Amman's life as a princess are depicted on the pillars of this mandapam.

The golden lotus pond (PotraamaraiKulam) is located to the left of the Meenakshi shrine. The Tamil Sangam used to value the literary works by placing them in the waters of this tank. Only those works which rose back to the surface were accepted as great masterpieces. Tiruvalluvar's Tirukkural was accepted at this pond.

On the western side of this tank are the OonjalMandapam with the deities and the KilikootuMandapam (hall of parrots), with parrots chanting the name of Meenakshi. Every Friday the gold idols of the Lord &Meenakshi are placed on the Oonjal (swing )& worshipped with hymns & offerings.



Sundareswarar gives darshan in the form of a linga, supported by 64 bhootaganas, 32 lions and 8 elephants. He is also known by other names such as Chokkanathar, Karpurachokkar. The stump of the Kadamba tree under which Indra worshipped the Lord can be seen in the outer corridor.

The KampathadiMandapam and VelliAmbalam are situated in the outer corridor. The scenes from the wedding ceremony of Sundareswarar&Meenakshi are depicted in the pillars of this hall. This place is one of the 5 (PanchaSabhais) sabhas of Nataraja where Siva dances. (The other dance halls are Chidambaram, Tiruvaalankadu, Tirunelveli and Kutralam). There is a unique idol of Nataraja dancing with his right leg raised to the shoulder instead of the left. The Lord is considered to have danced thus, at the request of King RajasekaraPandyan. Since the idol of Nataraja is covered with silver leaves, it is called Velli (silver) Ambalam.



The thousandpillared hall is an architectural & engineering marvel, built in the 16th century. The pillars have the Yazhi figure sculpted on them. There are musical granite pillars just outside this mandapam, which when struck yield different musical notes. On the east is the VasanthaMandapam or the PudhuMandapam. Scenes of the wedding & life-size figures of the Nayak rulers can be seen here. *Trichy temples* is considered to be one of the best Hindu Temples of Tamilnadu



There is a huge idol of Lord Ganesha as you move from the kilikoontumandapam to Lord Sundareswarar's sannadhi. This Ganesha known as Mukkuruni Vinayakar was unearthed by Tirumalainayakar while he was digging a temple tank 3 kms from the Meenakshi Amman temple. The both Meenakshi Amman Temple and *Temples in Trichy* are also the best Tourist places in Tamilnadu.