

Mahabalipuram

Art & Culture



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Mahabalipuram is an enigmatic town popular for its rock-cut temples and monuments. It is also known as Mammalapuram and was one of the most flourishing port towns during the historic rule of the Pallava Dynasty. Till date one can clearly feel its historic charm and grandeur through the rich legacy that lies in its stone sculptures and temples. There are many tourist attractions in Mahabalipuram most of which are historic and dedicated mostly to the Hindu gods and goddesses. Mahabalipuram made significant development under the rule of the Pallavas in the 7th century.

The city is said to have derived its name after the Pallava king Mamalla and in the ancient times it was famous as Mamallapuram. It was after the downfall of the Guptas that Pallavas came to prominence and exercised full control over this town. They were very powerful and very astute in their perspective. The Golden Age of the rule of the Pallavas was from 650 AD to 750 AD. Many great poets, dramatists, artists, artisans, scholars and saints emerged during this period. Mahabalipuram is also referred to as the “open air museum” due to the presence of so many architectural marvels.

During the rules of Narsimha Varman I (AD 630-668) and Narsimha Varman II (AD 700-728), most of the temples and rock carvings of this place were built. Although the first kings of Pallava dynasty followed Jainism, the conversion of Mahendra Varman (AD 600-630) to Shaivism resulted in majority of the monuments to be related with Shiva or Vishnu. Mahabalipuram experiences a hot and sweltering climate all year round with a maximum temperature of 35°C and minimum temperature of 19°C.

A trip to Mahabalipuram can best be enjoyed from October to March; however the monsoons should be avoided. Mahabalipuram is not just about the temples and architecture but it is also about the natural beauty of the surroundings. The long stretch of the beaches dotted with palm-groves is ideal to spend a few moments away from the usual cacophony of the city. A visit to this place is also an educative experience, showing visitors the great architectural achievements of the ancient artisans of India.