

Summary of major dynasties and empires covered on ASA's Southern India tour

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Major Tamil Dynasties (Pandyan, Chola & Chera)

Pandyan Dynasty (600 BC (Early Pandyan Kingdom) - 1650)

Ancient dynasty that ruled in Tamil Nadu until superseded by the Kalabhras dynasty (3rd – 7th c AD). After the fall of the Kalabhras they revived and ruled until 1650. They fought continuously with the Cholas, Cheras and Pallavas.

- Religion: Hinduism; Jainism
- Language: Tamil
- Capital/s we visit: Madurai (3rd c. BC – 1345 AD)
- Major monuments we see: Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam; Meenakshi Temple, Madurai

Chola Dynasty (c. 301 BC – 1279 AD)

This ancient dynasty ruled as enemies of the Pandyas and Pallavas until these dynasties, and later the obscure Kalabhras superseded them. They rose again around 1000 AD to create a huge empire stretching to the Maldives and much of what is now Indonesia.

- Religion: Hinduism
- Language: Tamil
- Capital/s, towns we visit: Kanchipuram; Thanjavur (Tanjore)
- Major monuments we see: Shaiva & Vaishnava Temples, Kanchipuram; Gangaikonda Cholapuram; Airavatesvara Temple at Darasuram; Brihadishwara Temple, Thanjavur; Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam
- Artworks we see: Chola bronzes in Chennai Museum and Saraswati Mahal Library Museum, Thanjavur.

Chera Dynasty (c. 20 BC - 1000 AD)

In ancient times, the Cera (Chera) dynasty reigned over a small section of the southwestern coast of India known as the kingdom of Kerala, one of the three Tamil states. From the mid-sixth century to the ninth century the Chalukya, Pallava, and Pandya dynasties fought a long series of wars in southwestern India. Nonetheless, the period was marked in Kerala by a revival of Hinduism and the advance of the fine arts. The great Hindu philosopher and religious reformer, Shankar (Shankaracharya), was born in Kerala around 790 AD. He simplified Brahmanic Hinduism and reestablished the values of the old Hindu religion. From about 850 AD, the southern area of Kerala was taken from the Ceras, first by the Cholas and later by the Chalukyas of the Deccan region. By about 1000 AD, the Cera dynasty was present only in the form of local chieftains.

Pallava Dynasty (6th – 9th century AD)

This was a Tamil dynasty that existed between the 6th and 9th centuries, ruling a portion of southern India. The Pallavas rose after the eclipse of the Satavahana dynasty whom they had formerly served as feudatories. They were enemies of the Chola and Pandyan dynasties.

- Religion: Hinduism
- Language: Tamil, Sanskrit, Prakrit
- Capital/s, towns we visit: Kanchipuram
- Major monuments we see: Shaiva & Vaishnava Temples, Kanchipuram; Rock cut temples, Mahabalipuram; Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram
- Artworks we see: Arjuna's Penance, Mahabalipuram

Gupta Empire (220 AD – 550 AD)

This was an ancient Northern kingdom that under Samudragupta (c.335 – c. 375 AD) came to control the territories of the Pallava. We see little of their monuments, etc, but they will figure in the story of Tamil Nadu.

- Religion: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism
- Language: Sanskrit (official); Prakrit (vernacular)

Later South Indian Dynasties

Western Ganga Dynasty (c. 350 – 1000 AD)

The Western Ganga rose to rule Karnataka when native clans asserted their independence when Samudragupta (c.335 – c. 375AD). Invaded and weakened the Pallava empire. They initially ruled from Kolar and later from Talakadu in the Mysore district.

- Religion: Hinduism; Jainism
- Language: Kannada, Sanskrit
- Capital/s we visit: Mysore district
- Major monuments we see: Jain pilgrimage centre of Sravana Belagola
- Artworks we see: Colossal monolith of the Jain saint Bahubali-Gommateshvara, Sravana Belagola

Chalukya Dynasty (c. 543 – 757 AD & c. 975 - 1189 AD)

The Chalukya dynasty ruled large parts of southern and central India between the 6th and the 12th centuries as three related yet individual dynasties. The earliest dynasty, known as the Badami Chalukyas, ruled from Vatapi (modern Badami); they brought about a change in Southern India from smaller kingdoms to large empires.

- Religion: Hinduism
- Language: Kannada, Sanskrit
- Capital/s we visit: Badami, Pattadakal
- Major monuments we see: Badami Cave Temples; Pattadakal Mallikarjuna, Virupaksha & other temples
- Artworks we see: Rock carvings

Kingdom of Kochi (c. 12th c. – 1949)

The kingdom of Kochi (Cochin) began as a medieval Hindu state that came under the control of a number of powers (eg Zamorin of Calicut) until it came to be protected by the Portuguese. We concentrate on the state under Portuguese, Dutch and English protection.

- Religion: Hinduism
- Language: Malayalam, English
- Capital/s we visit: Cochin
- Major monuments we see: Mattancherry Palace, Cochin.

Hoysala Empire (c. 1006–1343 AD)

The Hoysala empire was a prominent Southern Indian Kannadiga empire that ruled most of the modern-day state of Karnataka. They are known particularly for the large number (c. 100) temples they built in their lands.

- Religion: Hinduism
- Language: Kannada
- Capital/s towns we visit: Somanathapura
- Major monuments we see: Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam; Chennakesava Temple Somanathapura; Kedareshwara Temple, Halebid; Chennakesava Temple, Belur
- Artworks we see: Hoysala architecture and sculpture, especially ornate and intricate, are best seen at Halebid, Belur, and Somnathpur

Vijayanagara Empire (1336 – 1646 AD)

The Hindu Vijayanagara Empire on the Deccan Plateau rose to power when the southern states fought to ward off Islamic invasions. It declined after military defeat (1565) by the Deccan sultanates. It is named for its capital city of Vijayanagara, whose ruins surround present day Hampi. Previous South Indian temple

building traditions coalesced in the Vijayanagara Architecture style. Innovative temple construction developed from the mingling of faiths and vernacular styles as well as influences brought about by the Empire's substantial trade networks.

- Religion: Hinduism
- Language: Kannada, Telugu
- Capital/s towns we visit: Kanchipuram; Vijayanagara
- Major monuments we see: Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam; Virupaksha Temple, Hemakuta Hill, Nandi Statue & Vittala temple; Zenana Enclosure, Lotus Mahal, Virupaksha Temple, Queen's Bath, Hampi (Vijayanagara)
- Artworks we see: Fine temple sculpture.

Nayak Dynasty of Madurai (1529 – 1736 AD)

Nayak rule over most of Tamil Nadu is noted for the revitalization of temples previously ransacked by the Delhi Sultans, and inauguration of a unique architectural style.

- Religion: Hinduism
- Language/s: Tamil, Telugu.
- Capital/s we visit: Madurai.
- Major monuments we see: Shivappa Nayaka Palace & Saraswati Mahal Library, (Thanjavur); Thirumalai Nayak Palace & Teppakulam Tank, Madurai

(Wodeyar) Maharajas of Mysore (1399 – 1950 AD) & Haidar Ali

The Hindu Wodeyar (Wadeyer) dynasty ruled the Kingdom of Mysore from 1399 to 1761 and under British protection from 1799 to 1947 being incorporated into the Dominion of India after its independence from British rule. It evolved when the Vijayanagar Empire disintegrated.

- Religion: Hinduism; Haidar Ali, Islam
- Language: Hindi
- Capital/s we visit: Mysore
- Major monuments we see: Seringapatam Fort, Daria Daulat Bagh & Tomb of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan, Mysore; Maharaja's Palace, Mysore; Shweta Varahaswamy Temple, Mysore
- Artworks we see: Murals in Shweta Varahaswamy Temple, Mysore

Later Hindu and Islamic Dynasties, esp. in the Deccan

Mughal Dynasty (1526 – 1857 AD): Aurangzeb (1618 – 1707 AD)

The Mughals did not enter central and southern India until the reign of the Emperor Aurangzeb. Thenceforth Mughal styles of art and architecture greatly influenced local styles.

- Religion: Islam
- Language: Persian (official); Chagatid Turki; Urdu
- Artworks we see: Priceless artefacts like Aurangzeb's sword, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad.

Maratha Empire (1674 – 1818 AD)

The Marathas are credited with contributing decisively to the fall of the Mughal Empire. We do not see

much of their output, but they played a critical role in the fortunes of a number of polities we encounter.

- Religion: Hinduism
- Language: Sanskrit, Marathi
- Major monuments we see: (completed) Shivappa Nayaka Palace, Thanjavur

Qutb Shahi of Golconda (1512 – 1687 AD) & Asaf Jah Nizams of Hyderabad (1724 – 1948 AD)

The Qutb Shahi dynasty was a Twelver Shi'i Muslim Turkoman dynasty, purportedly related to the Kara Koyunlu (White Sheep) dynasty of Turkmenistan that was initially heavily influenced by Persian culture. In 1636, Shah Jahan forced the Qutb Shahis to recognize Mughal suzerainty and in 1687 the Mughal Aurangzeb conquered the Golcondan sultanate. Nizam-ul-Mulk, (Administrator of the Realm) was the title of the sovereigns of Hyderabad who were the premier princes of India. The Asaf Jah were originally from a Turkic clan from around Samarkand (Uzbekistan). Mir Qamar-ud-Din Siddiqi was a viceroy of the Deccan under the Mughal Empire and in 1724, when Mughal control lapsed, Asaf Jah declared himself independent in Hyderabad.

- Religion: Islam
- Languages: Persian (official), Telugu, Dakhni, Urdu
- Capital/s, towns we visit: Golconda, Hyderabad
- Major monuments we see: Char Minah, Mecca Masjid & Chowmahalla Palace Hyderabad; Golconda Fort; Tombs of Qutb Shahi Kings, Golconda.

Foreign Powers

Portuguese (1505 – 1961 AD)

- Religion: Christian
- Language: Portuguese
- Capital/s we visit: Kochi (Cochin)
- Major monuments we see: St Francis' Church, Cochin; Houses, Fort Kochi

Dutch East India Company (1602 – 1799 AD)

- Religion: Christian
- Language: Dutch
- Capital/s we visit: Kochi (Cochin)
- Major monuments we see: Mattancherry Palace, Cochin; Houses, Fort Kochi;
- Artworks we see: Mythological Paintings, Mattancherry Palace, Cochin

British East India Company (1612 – 1858 AD)

- Religion: Christian
- Language: English
- Capital/s we visit: Chennai (Madras)
- Major monuments we see: Fort St George and surrounds, Chennai; Houses, Fort Kochi;
- Artworks we see: Fort St George Museum

French East India Company (1664 – 1769 AD)

- Religion: Christian
- Language: French
- Capital/s we visit: Kochi (Cochin)
- Artworks we see: Fort St George Museum

British Empire in India (1858 – 1947 AD)

- Religion: Christian
- Language: English
- Capital/s we visit: Chennai (Madras); Fort St George and surrounds
- Artworks we see: Fort St George Museum

