



PONDICHERRY HERITAGE FESTIVAL 2019



Coming together to celebrate the rich and diverse heritage of Pondicherry

22nd January - 11th February

Organised by

Supported by



People for Pondicherry's
Heritage



INTACH
Pondicherry Chapter

PondyCAN!
Pondy Citizens' Action Network

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Government
of Puducherry



Department of Tourism
Pondicherry



INTACH

Pondicherry heritage festival 2019 – A Brief Report

Concept of Pondicherry Heritage Festival

Popular destinations across the world such as New York, Berlin, Paris and Sydney continue to attract a wide audience from all spheres of life and are a melting pot for cross-cultural exchanges. Pondicherry also has this element of bringing together a diverse population of tourists and travellers looking for something to coax them into a new, exciting, passionate and yet peaceful lifestyle and environment. There is an unseen touch in how Pondicherry invites people of all cultures and yet retains its own, which expands beyond the exotic charm of its beautiful architectural heritage and sandy beaches.

Magical yet ordinary to the casual eye, the city harbours a deeper meaning and connection to the intangible realms of beauty, wisdom, tranquillity and harmony. This has led Pondicherry to become a universal platform for positive inner change and has inspired an inclusive, collective and inspiring evolution towards a future, long foreseen by the sages of yore. The marriage of spirituality and material research is a trademark of Pondicherry 's excellence and uniqueness.

On November 29th, 2014, the collapse of the Mairie building (Town hall) of Pondicherry, which was built in 1870 to accommodate the offices for the mayor of Pondicherry, led to the realization that the need to conserve and celebrate the heritage of Pondicherry is immense.

A group thus emerged from the civil society called "People for Pondicherry 's heritage" (PPH) and conceived the idea of the Pondicherry heritage festival, first of which was held in 2015 and became an annual event. The Pondicherry heritage festival is being organised by People for Pondicherry 's heritage (PPH), INTACH Pondicherry and PondyCAN.

The main objectives for the Pondicherry's heritage festival are:

A) to create and strengthen this distinct identity of belonging and being Pondicherrian for all its residents

B) to show its unique character in all its variety to visitors who come from all over the country and the world attracted by the idea of "Pondicherry"

C) to create a platform for experts, historians and old residents to meet and discuss what is special about Pondicherry's and how we can preserve our town.

The charm and beauty of pondicherry presents a unique challenge to the government and civil society organizations interested in protecting and restoring its built heritage. Unlike the monuments and national parks under the purview of the archaeological survey of India, the architectural heritage of pondicherry is a melange of private and government buildings. Pondicherry has two distinct parts namely, the French and Tamil quarters. The French quarter has structures built in the European classical style whereas those in Tamil quarter are built in the vernacular style of Tamil Nadu. The two construction methods have influenced one another resulting in a harmonious blend of the both styles in many buildings.

Pondicherry 's unique architectural style is an inheritance of which we are but today's custodians. it is our responsibility to preserve the essence of this built heritage for the future generations. it is with this wide vision that the pondicherry heritage festival sought to explore the various facets of the town's culture, spiritual heritage, contributions to the world of art, literature, folk and classical music and dance, traditional and contemporary crafts and the work done by many organizations, institutions and individuals towards understanding and preserving the heritage of the town.

Evolution of Pondicherry Heritage Festival:

Now in its fifth year, the pondicherry heritage festival continues to celebrate the singular character of this extraordinary town and its environs. in the first year, 2015, attention was drawn to pondicherry 's outstanding architectural legacy, its spiritual heritage and intangible heritage. The following year, 2016, the festival celebrated pondicherry 's natural heritage, explored its heritage through the written word, visual arts and performing arts. In 2017, besides celebrating architectural, intangible and natural heritage, the festival focused on one of Pondicherry's most ancient heritage, at Bahour. In 2018, the festival focused on the streetscapes of Pondicherry and expanded to explore another ancient heritage of Pondicherry, at Madagadipedu, Thirubhuvanai and Thiruvandar Kovil. The festival expanded in this year with several local organisations and individuals actively involved & organising events, under the pondicherry heritage festival banner. this overwhelming response made the heritage festival again a three weeks event from 22nd January to 11th February 2018.

“Coming together to celebrate Pondicherry 's rich & diverse heritage”

The success of the Pondicherry heritage festival is due to the active participation of our festival partners and new participants.

Events of this year

1. Student competition: Arts activities for school children creative expression for heritage preservation
2. Academic competition: Pondicherry heritage quiz.
3. Excursion: Village tour- Discovering the heritage of Bahour.
4. Photography exhibition: A walk through Pondicherry 's streetscapes.
5. Photography exhibition opening: Groves of Aiyaṅār / les bosquets sacrés d'aiyaṅār.
6. Dance: Navarasa by Unmukta Sinha
7. “Made in Pondy” A craft Bazaar expo of nationally and internationally known largely hand crafted products by local artisans and creative entrepreneurs from the Pondicherry region.

8. Art exhibition: Interpreting heritage by 19 Pondicherry artists.
9. Dance: Nrityasangeet, depicting the spiritual poetic heritage of India.
10. Wetlands tour: Exploring Oussudu lake on World Wetlands day
11. Food trail: Celebrating the local cuisine of Pondicherry.
12. Photo exhibition: Wetlands and climate change
13. Open house: Ecole Française d' Extrême-Orient, A tour to the impressive colonial building.
14. Dance: Bharatanatyam Performance by Nandhini & her students at Band stand.
15. Dance: Nrityanjali, an Odissi dance recital by Aneesh Raghavan
16. Dance/storytelling: Anita Ratnam: ma3ka
17. Book launch beyond the boulevards: a short biography of Pondicherry by Aditi Sriram
18. Discussion: Eminent scholars inside and outside Pondicherry discussed on cities and heritage.
19. Music: Carnatic students sang about natural heritage in different languages.
20. Open house: Lycee français de Pondichéry.
21. Open house: Ecole française d' Extrême-Orient
22. Community event: Reclaiming the streets for children.
23. Excursion: Storytelling, arts activities, fishing, community walk in Kanaganeri lake.
24. Music/storytelling- Shivan Mullankandy Pamban
25. Colour Pondy's beauty event for School children

The emphasis for this year's festival was on Pondicherry's splendid natural heritage, including the coast, and wetlands. The natural heritage is as much at risk as built heritage, and often gets overlooked. Hence this year the focus was on coasts and wetlands through photo exhibitions, storytelling, excursions, art activities and community events to create awareness about the deteriorating natural heritage of Pondicherry.

Art activities for school children

This year Pondicherry Heritage Festival hosted various programs for the school children to ignite the young minds about their heritage and make them participate and celebrate the heritage of their town. The program also made them understand the importance of heritage and the need to preserve them. Painting, sketching, collage, letter and poem writing, power point, photography, solo and group dance competitions were conducted under the theme cultural heritage of Pondicherry. The program was hosted by Dr. Kannan and his team with the support of INTACH Pondicherry and Department of tourism, Pondicherry. The Government of Puducherry School of Education department had accorded permission to conduct the programs and a circular to this effect was sent to nearly 500 schools by India Post and email. Invitations were sent to all Government, Govt. aided schools and private schools of Pondicherry Urban and Rural areas and to Cuddalore and Tindivanam. The entire program was made into 2 days

The first day events were held at the Art and Craft Village, a project of Tourism Department Govt of Puducherry. Below are the events that were conducted as a part of the festival.

1. Painting Competition
2. Sketching Competition
3. Collage
4. Letter Writing
5. Poem Writing
6. Powerpoint competition
7. Debate
8. Solo dance
9. Group dance
10. Photography competition

The topic for all competitions was heritage (Cultural / Spiritual / Natural) and History of Pondicherry

- Junior level entry was VI grade to VIII Grade
- Senior Level entry was IX grade to XII Grade

The schools had mailed the organizing team and there were 1100 participants on the first day

Competition	Number of participants
Painting	300
Sketching	250
Collage	40 teams (2 each)
Letter writing – Tamil and English	30
Poem Writing	40
Powerpoint	50
Photography	100
Solo dance	40
Group dance	25 teams (10 each)

It was a huge logistical nightmare but thanks to volunteers from INTACH Pondicherry – their office staff, architects, Interns and college students from Mahatma Gandhi Medical College and PHF members were in large numbers to take care of registration, Event coordination Food and Security. The government agencies like Police outpost was created. Fire equipment's kept ready and a full-fledged ambulance was also ready at the site. The Tourism Department staff were very helpful, and the Director of Tourism attended the program and gave his speech to the students. Food was arranged for all 1100 students and to all accompanying teachers also. The program commenced at 8 00am and ended by 4 00 pm.



Venue of the Program: Art and Crafts village, Muruganpakkam



Writing competition in progress



Painting competition



Sketching competition



Students trying their hand in pottery wheel



Prize distribution for the winners

Pondicherry Heritage Quiz

On the 23rd of January, an heritage quiz was organised by Dr. Kannan and Pondicherry Heritage festival organisers. Heritage Quiz was held at Alliance Francaise Campus, Pondicherry with the support of Education Department, Pondicherry. The Education Department, Pondicherry had requested all the schools of Pondicherry area to take part in the program. There were about 48 schools with 500 children taking part which included Government, private schools. There were also schools from Cuddalore, Pondicherry and Panruti. Heritage festival team coordinated the registration details. Mr. Karthik the Quiz master from Pondicherry and Ms Surya, an architect from Chennai conducted the quiz for all the students in both levels - Junior and Senior Levels. Then the Quiz was held in both levels as finals and the winning and runner up teams of both levels were felicitated by the Alliance Francaise officials and Dr. Dinkar Palande, an internationally recognised pioneer in hand surgery. The program was coordinated by Monsieur Saikat and Madame Marie Joelle of Alliance Francaise and INTACH Pondicherry.



Students and teachers during break at Alliance Francais



Prize distribution for the winners



Prize winners with certificates and medals

Wetlands tour- World wetlands day Oussudu lake adventure

On the World Wetlands day, a wetlands tour was organised as a part of the Pondicherry Heritage festival. Oussudu Lake is the region's largest water-bodies and a designated protected (as opposed to actually protected) habitat for migratory birds. Raphael Mathavet, Head of the Department of Ecology at the French Institute of Pondicherry conducted the tour. The century old lake, which attracts about 20,000 migratory birds every year is around 12 kilometres from Puducherry and has been designated one of the most important wetlands in Asia by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. An enthusiastic group of locals and school children actively participated in the tour.



School students exploring the lake



Participants seeing the migratory birds with scientist Raphael Mathvet

World Wetlands and Climate Change

Our wetlands are a crucial defence against many of the ravages of climate change. This photo competition was hosted by Raphael Mathavet, Head of the Department of Ecology at IFP to create awareness among the residents about their natural heritage. The participants captured the unique importance and beauty of the imperilled ecosystem. The selected entries were displayed on the French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP) beach side façade. The Chief Secretary of Pondicherry gave away the prizes to the winners.



Scientist Raphael Mathavet with the winner



Chief Secretary Ashwani Kumar with the winners and the PHF team

Music - Songs of Nature

Carnatic music students presented folk songs on nature in several languages. The renditions were in Tamil, Malayalam, Telegu, Gujarati, Bengali, Kashmiri and Rajasthani with the accompaniment of Arumukhanam- a six faced percussion designed by S.Gopakumar, assistant professor of Bharathiar Palkalaikoodam. The event was held at INTACH Pondicherry on 8th February.



Participants singing the songs of nature



Participants performing with the instrument "Arumuganam"

Local food- The Pondicherry Culinary Trail

An exclusive food walk was conducted from Feb 7- Feb 8. The food walk explored the local cuisine of Pondicherry ranging from local road side shops to restaurants to coffee shops to ice cream bars. The tour was designed and guided by Edwin of Eat Pondy. While the tour was free, participants paid for their food. Both the days, the trail was a hit and people kept asking for more such walks.



Participants dining at one of the restaurants in the culinary trail



Participants relishing at the famous mutton soup stall near Railway station



PONDICHERRY HERITAGE FESTIVAL 2019

PONDICHERRY HERITAGE CUISINE TRAIL



ROLEX
 What not to Miss: Egg Dosa and their sahnas
 Trivia: Typical road side food

PARIS RESTAURANT (Vietnamese)
 What not to Miss: Their soups and chaयो.
 Trivia : Authentic Vietnamese and French cuisine

BAISOUP SAMOSA
 What not to Miss: Mutton samosas and Nalli soup
 Trivia : Not to miss only open in the evening 6.30 - 9.30

BILAL
 What not to Miss: Biryani and Idyappam Paaya
 Trivia : Must try place. Opened On all days from 11am to 10pm except on government holidays.

KAMARKATTU - NANARI SHARBAT (M.G. ROAD)
 What not to Miss: Kamarkat & Lassi
 Trivia : Kamarkats are made Fresh everyday!

MURUGAN CAFÉ
 What not to Miss: Idly & Sambar

ARISTO
 What not to Miss: Biryani, their gravys and falooda
 Trivia: It is closed on Fridays.

DHANALAXMI ICE-CREAM
 What not to Miss: Pista Icecream, badam and rose milk
 Trivia : Available only in the evenings from 6 to 8 based on the availability.

INDIAN COFFEE HOUSE
 What not to Miss: Bombay toast, omelette and coffee
 Trivia : Must try place. Opened on all days from 7am to 10pm

Guided Culinary Trail
 7th & 8th, Feb | 6pm-8pm

Led by **EAT PONDY**
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Heritage cuisine trail map

Reclaiming the streets for children - Street Play

On February 10, one of the streets in the historic area was pedestrianised from 10 AM – 1 PM for the children to play. The street play event was meant to revive the manner of experiencing public spaces the way it was meant to be as we transformed Eswaran Koil Street in the historic town to be free of motorised traffic and clean for children to play. Historically, as well, the streets in the Boulevard town was a place for social activity where people gathered, built relationships or shared thoughts about their world while children played in the streets without any safety concerns. Unfortunately, the streets have been lost to vehicles. Children today need the chance to be outside, active, making friends and being part of the community just as much as the previous generation did. Hence Pondicherry Heritage Festival brought this back to promote greater sense of community, overall happiness and reclaim more friendly streets for children. Like any other open streets in the world, it was a free event. Door to door campaign was done in and around Eswaran Koil Street to create awareness about the need for the children to be outside.

Residents and children in the Boulevard town actively participated in the event and made it a huge success. The event was conceptualised and hosted by Ananthi Velmurugan, Conservation Architect and Research Scholar at INTACH Heritage Academy and was largely supported by INTACH Pondicherry. Mrs. Radha of Pondicherry Heritage Festival team taught the traditional games for the children.



Children learning to play Kabbadi from Mrs. Radha of the PHF team



Children playing in groups



A group picture after the successful event