

CALL OF THE SOUTH

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The Tanjore painting style dates back to 1600 AD and has its roots in Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu. PIC: ERIC PARKER/FLICKR

Sign up for an art and craft tour of Tamil Nadu organised by a city-based NGO and travel company

The last time most of us heard a mention of Chola and Pallava was in (outdated) school history textbooks. How many of us are familiar with the intricate bronze craft of the Chola period or the stunning, floral tile work of Athangudi? To introduce these heritage craft forms of South India to contemporary art and craft enthusiasts, a city-based nonprofit organisation, Heart for Art, has teamed up with Black Swan Journeys, an experiential travel company.

Together, they have curated a six-day tour — Arts, Crafts and Heritage Trails — across Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. “Participants will get a chance to explore the crafts that flourished in the region and went on to become an indelible part of our heritage.

Demonstrations and workshops will be conducted by the artisans to educate the visitors about the craft,

ethos, designs, tools and techniques that define the craft,” says Shishir Nikam, founder of Black Swan Journeys. Traditional glazed pottery of Pondicherry, Chola bronze craft, Pallava stone craft, Tanjore painting and Athangudi tile making are a few of the workshops lined up for the participants.

Apart from providing an unforgettable, informative experience for the travellers, this initiative also helps rural artisans by providing them with exposure and livelihood. “Besides giving them a platform to display their art, the artisans also get a better understanding of the market when they interact with travellers,” says Nikam. The initiative also provides artisans with commercial viability to sustain their familial craft.

The tour will also enable the participants to take a guided heritage detour and explore the bylanes of Pondicherry, to indulge in an interactive session with the Auroville residents to understand their way of life.

The Arts, Crafts and Heritage Trails was launched in January 2017 by Padmaja Jalihal, founder of Heart

for Art and the team at Black Swan Journeys. Being an organisation that focuses on empowering rural artisans, Jalihal understands the needs to facilitate a platform of exposure for these artisans. “We have been conducting regular art and craft workshops in the city. Once this model was popularised, we realised that people were keen to meet the artisans and learn about their craft. Our collaboration with Black Swan Journeys will soon extend into various states like Gujarat, Orissa, West Bengal and Rajasthan,” says Jalihal. The next workshop that Heart for Art will organise in Pune focuses on Bidri metalware from Bidar in Karnataka.

The art and craft tour of South India kicks off next month.

WHERE: Auroville, Mahabalipuram, Pondicherry, Madurai, Brihadeshwara and Meenakshi Temple.

WHEN: July 28 to August 3 **COST:** Rs 45,000 (including taxes)

CALL: 093703 79727

GALLERIES

