

Visit Pearland  
—Texas—



# SRI MEENAKSHI TEMPLE | SELF-GUIDED TOUR



**PREPEAR  
TO LOVE IT**  
Culture in Pearland





# WELCOME NAMASTE

The Sri Meenakshi Temple welcomes visitors from all over the world and is open 365 days a year.

#### TEMPLE HOURS:

Monday – Thursday: 8:30 am – 1:00 pm and 5:00 pm – 8:30 pm

Friday: 8:30 am – 1:00 pm and 5:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Weekends & National Holidays: 8:30 am – 8:30 pm

#### CAFETERIA:

The cafeteria is open to the public on weekends, serving authentic vegetarian fare.

#### TEMPLE TOURS:

Tours are offered for individuals, families or groups and may be requested online in advance of your visit.

#### PHOTOGRAPHY:

Personal photography or videography allowed for private, noncommercial use only.

#### ATTIRE:

Suitable clothing should cover the shoulders and knees. You must remove your shoes before entering the Main Temple but socks are allowed.

## PREPEAR TO LOVE IT!

Family-friendly Pearland has something for everyone, from over 540 acres of city parks to unique shopping experiences, activities, and events. With local venues, parks, and hotel meeting spaces, Pearland accommodates events of all sizes. Discover in-depth event planning, dining, shopping, and experience guides at [VisitPearland.com](http://VisitPearland.com).

## EXPLORE MORE ARTS AND CULTURE



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LAND PURCHASED  
& MASTER PLAN

INAUGURATION OF  
GANESH TEMPLE

MAIN TEMPLE  
COMPLETED

PRIEST & STAFF  
QUARTERS

COMPLETION OF  
ALL GOPURAM

PEACOCK SANCTUARY  
COMPLETED

INAUGURATION OF LARGE  
BANQUET HALL, CLASSROOMS,  
KITCHEN, CAFETERIA AND LIBRARY

1978

1979

1982

1987

1995

1999

2003

# HISTORY & INTERESTING FACTS

The Sri Meenakshi Temple is the third Hindu temple built in the United States, starting in the 1970s, which was the peak of Hindu immigration to America. Construction of the Main Temple began in 1978, and the inauguration, or Maha Kumbhabhishekam, took place in June 1982.

This Temple is unique as the only one outside India dedicated to Meenakshi, the Goddess of Marriage, and is an exact replica of the Sri Meenakshi Temple located in Madurai, India. South Indian Hindu temples share a common structural design, featuring four corner temples surrounding the main worship temple. The fronts of these temples are adorned with tall, intricately crafted main gateways or *gopurams*. The granite is imported from India, while the cement body is produced locally.

The Hindu religion, dating back to approximately 1900 to 1400 B.C.E., is considered the oldest and most tolerant religion in the world. Unlike many other religions, Hinduism does not have a single founder, a single sacred text, or a uniform set of beliefs. Instead, it is defined by a diverse array of practices, cultural values, and norms. Hinduism teaches that peace and love among individuals can lead to a better world for everyone. Worship in Hinduism is primarily an individual act, focusing on making personal offerings to deities rather than communal rituals.

There are several main traditions, or denominations, in the Hindu religion. Two of the largest are the Shivite tradition which worships Lord Shiva, and the Vaishnava tradition which worships Lord Vishnu. In Houston, the local Hindu population encompasses all of these traditions. The temple has become a confluence of these worship traditions and currently celebrates 16 gods and goddesses.

What began in 1977 as a humble dream for a small group of supporters, has gradually blossomed into a magnificent complex that meets the religious needs of the vast, growing community.



## TEMPLE FACTS

- Architect: Sri Multhiah Sthapathi
- 90,000 square feet of buildings sit on 35 acres of land
- \$40 million raised over 40 years
- Up to 5,000 devotees attend the temple on special days like Diwali and New Year's Day

NEW STAFF  
QUARTERS COMPLETED

INAUGURATION OF  
RATHAM AND MTS  
VISITOR CENTER

GANESH TEMPLE  
RENOVATION PROJECT  
COMPLETED

MAIN TEMPLE  
RENOVATION PROJECT  
COMPLETED

CORNER TEMPLES  
RENOVATION PROJECT  
COMPLETED

COVERED ATRIUM,  
GRAND ENTRANCE ARCHWAY,  
SOLAR PANELS, FENCING AND  
TWO FOUNTAINS ADDED



2005

2009

2013

2015

2017

2023

# START YOUR TOUR & MAIN TEMPLE

**1** **START** the self-guided tour at the West Entrance at the back of the Main Temple Complex. From the parking lot follow the Walking Path west. When you reach the Covered Atrium turn right and you will see the West Entrance into the Main Temple Complex.

Upon entering, always tour the complex to the left in a clock-wise circle. The significance of always going to the left is to keep 'the god' on 'the right'.

The **MAIN TEMPLE** is in the center of the Temple Complex and is the primary worship center. You'll also see four smaller temples in each corner of the Temple Complex.

**2** Enter the Main Temple through the **MAIN TEMPLE DOORS**. Remove your shoes if you are still wearing any. Socks are accepted.

**3** **INSIDE THE MAIN TEMPLE** there are four main shrines dedicated to Shiva, Meenakshi, Vishnu, and Lakshmi. In Hinduism, a 'pantheon of gods' symbolizes various concepts such as obstacles, beauty, love, and education. Hindus pray to these gods for support and different purposes. A deity is an image consecrated with cosmic energy, serving as the focal point for honoring and communicating with God. Devotees have affinities to particular deities within the Temple, performing rituals as part of their worship. You may see people presenting a prasadam, or offering, to the shrine of their deity such as jewelry, fruit, flowers, or a sari.

In front of each deity, you will see an offering plate with a flame and a bowl of powder used for the *tilak*, or marking, that signifies which god they worship. Devotees of Shiva apply sacred ashes, while devotees of Vishnu apply sandalwood paste, and the worshippers of Shakthi apply a red turmeric powder. The tilak is applied in various patterns representing their affinity to a specific god or goddess. Traditionally, devotees will hover their hands over the flame, then apply the tilak to their forehead before praying and/or making their *prasadam*.



Each morning, the priests who live on-site, practice their worship rituals. The day begins at 8:30 a.m. with *Suprabhatam*, a collection of Hindu hymns or verses recited to awaken the deity.

Throughout the Temple, you will notice various birds or animals depicted alongside their deity. In Hinduism, these animals are symbolic of the deity's vehicle, enabling them to travel quickly.

Worshippers walk in a clockwise circular path around each deity, a prayer practice known as *Pradakshina*, an integral part of Hindu worship. This can be performed around a single deity or as a broader path around the entire main temple.



## CHALK ART

known as Kolam, is visible throughout the courtyard of the Meenakshi Temple. This South Indian style of painting uses rice flour or chalk. A Kolam is a geometrical line drawing composed of curved loops, drawn around a grid pattern of dots. During holidays and events, more complex and colorful patterns are drawn.

# EAST FACING

The building and main doors of all Hindu temples face East to honor Surya, the Sun God, allowing the gods in the Main Temple to face the morning sun. This design choice fills the inside of the temple with morning sunlight, which is seen as cleansing and energizing.



# SHRINES: INSIDE THE MAIN TEMPLE

**4** **SARASWATHI** is the goddess of knowledge, music, arts, and learning. As the patron of music, she is frequently prayed to by musicians before concerts and, as a goddess of intellectual pursuits, by students before examinations.

**5** **SHIVA, OR SUNDARESWARA (SIVA)**, is one of the principal deities of Hinduism. Shiva is the Supreme Being within Shaivism, a denomination within contemporary Hinduism. He symbolizes the creative destruction of life and represents matter and auspiciousness. Nandi, a bull, is Shiva's vehicle and represents strength.

**6** **MEENAKSHI** for whom the temple is named, represents energy in the female form and manifests the power of Shiva, who represents matter. Together, they embody the passive and active aspects of the Absolute Reality. Meenakshi is also known as the Goddess of Marriage and is wed to Shiva with the blessing of Vishnu. An avatar of the Hindu Goddess Parvati and consort of Shiva, Meenakshi is primarily worshipped by South Indians. She is one of the few Hindu female deities with a major temple devoted to her, including the famed Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

**7** **VISHNU, OR VENKATESWARA** is one of the principal deities of Hinduism and part of the holy trinity with Shiva and Brahma, together they are the Supreme. Vishnu is revered as the protector and sustainer of the universe. He is depicted with four hands each holding a symbolic object: a lotus (representing creation), a conch (the primordial sound of creation), a chakra (symbolizing the wheel of time), and a gada (a mace signifying the power to destroy evil). Vishnu is often shown riding a Garuda, a sacred and revered bird with eagle-like features, which serves as his vehicle, allowing him to quickly come to the aid of devotees who pray for help.

**8** **LAKSHMI** is the wife and *shakti* (energy) of Vishnu, and is the Hindu Goddess of Wealth, Fortune, and Prosperity. The marriage of Lakshmi and Vishnu serves as the ideal model for Hindu wedding ceremonies and rituals. She is depicted with four hands, symbolizing the four important goals of human life in Hinduism: *dharma* (righteousness), *kama* (desire), *artha* (wealth), and *moksha* (liberation). Lakshmi's vehicle is an owl, representing the importance of economic activity in sustaining life and her ability to guide through darkness and confusion.

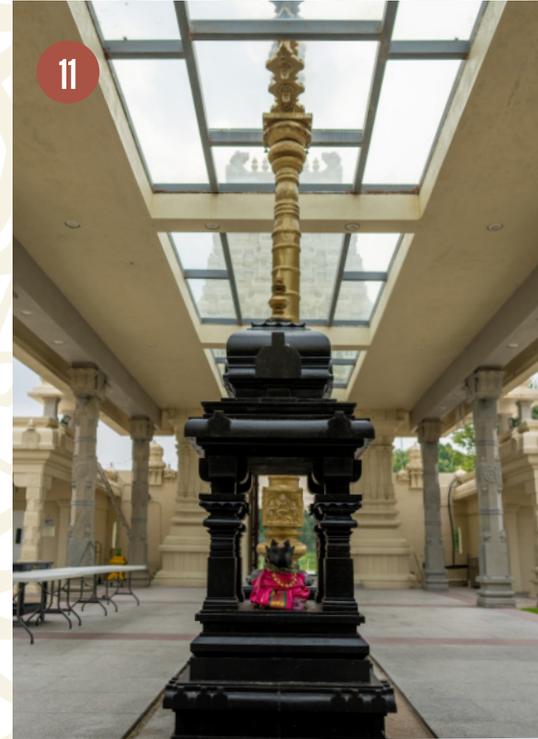
**9 & 10** On either side of the Main Doors, you will see the shrines of **NANDI**, the vehicle of Shiva and **GARUDA**, the vehicle of Vishnu.



# SHRINES: OUTSIDE THE MAIN TEMPLE

As you exit the Main Temple, you will enter the **TEMPLE COMPLEX** which includes four smaller temples in the four corners of the walled enclosure, each dedicated to different deities.

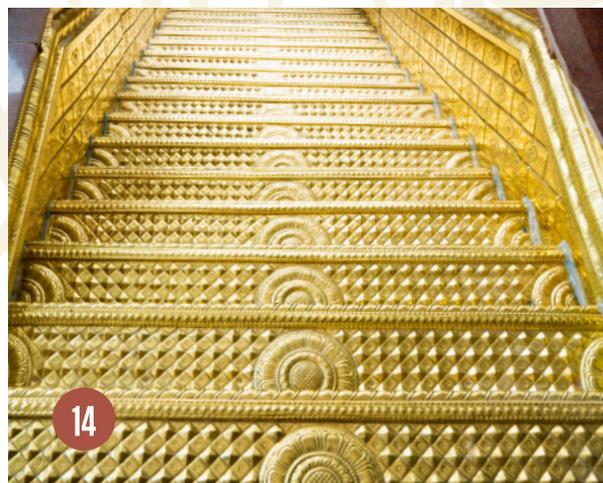
**11** First, you will enter the **RAJA VEEDHI**, the covered passage leading from the Main Complex Doors to the Main Temple. Under the passage, you will see a statue of **NANDI**, the gatekeeper of Shiva, and a **GOLDEN FLAGPOLE** that flies the Temple Flag during *Mahotsavam*, a ten-day cultural festival held every April.



**12** As you continue clockwise, you will enter the shrine dedicated to **DURGA**, also known as *Devior Shakthi*, a main Hindu goddess revered as the Warrior Goddess. She is known for her role combating evil and demonic forces that threaten peace, prosperity, and the *dharma* (righteous order) of the good. Durga's vehicle is a lion.

**13** The **63 NAYANMARS** were a group of devoted followers of Lord Shiva from various social classes and origins that lived in ancient Tamil Nadu, India between the 6th and 8th centuries C.E. They composed songs called *Thevarams*, emphasizing the boundless nature of love for the divine and the universal appeal of devotion.

**14** **AYYAPPA'S** shrine is located in the southwest corner of the Temple. Ayyappa is the son of Lord Shiva and Mohini, a female form of Vishnu. The Holy 18 Steps in front of the shrine symbolize five senses, eight emotions, three natures, and the knowledge and ignorance of humans. Traditionally, after 41 days of penance, devotees walk up **THE HOLY 18 STEPS** to overcome and attain salvation, symbolized by the sacred sanctum. The Sri Meenakshi Temple has the oldest Ayyappa Sanctum in the United States.



# INCENSE

Burning incense in Hindu temples has many symbolic and practical purposes. Incense is a way to express respect and gratitude to the deity. The scent of incense fills the room, symbolizing the deity's presence. The smoke from incense is believed to purify the atmosphere and carry prayers and devotions to the divine realms.

**15 RAMA** is found in the northwest corner of the Temple. He is the seventh avatar, or descent, of the god Vishnu, and is considered the Supreme Being in Rama-centric denominations of Hinduism.

**16 THE THREE GREAT ACHARYAS** In Hinduism, an *Acharya* is a spiritual teacher or leader who imparts knowledge about religion, philosophy, and spiritual practices to their disciples or followers. Between the 8th and 12th centuries C.E. three great Acharyas from South India emerged to shape the course of Hinduism: Sri Madhvacharya, Sri Shankara and Sri Ramanujacharya. Although their views may seem opposing, the remarkable quality of Hindu philosophy lies in its capacity for assimilation.



15

16

**17 THE 12 ALVARS** The Alvars were a group

of Tamil poet-saints, including one woman, from South India who lived between the 6th and 9th centuries C.E. and are considered to be the 12 supreme devotees of Vishnu. The Alvars are known for their ecstatic hymns in praise of Vishnu and his avatars, such as Krishna. Their songs express devotion, longing, and service to Vishnu, who is considered the Ultimate Reality in Vaishnavism.

18

The nine planets, known as **NAVAGRAHA**, meaning 'nine houses' in Sanskrit, are deities in Hinduism and Vedic astrology. Represented in the temple's Northeast corner, they include the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn along with the lunar nodes, respectively known as Rahu and Ketu. In Hinduism and Vedic astrology, it is believed that a person's life and energies are determined by these planets and their positions at the time of birth.



17



18

# ANNUAL EVENTS

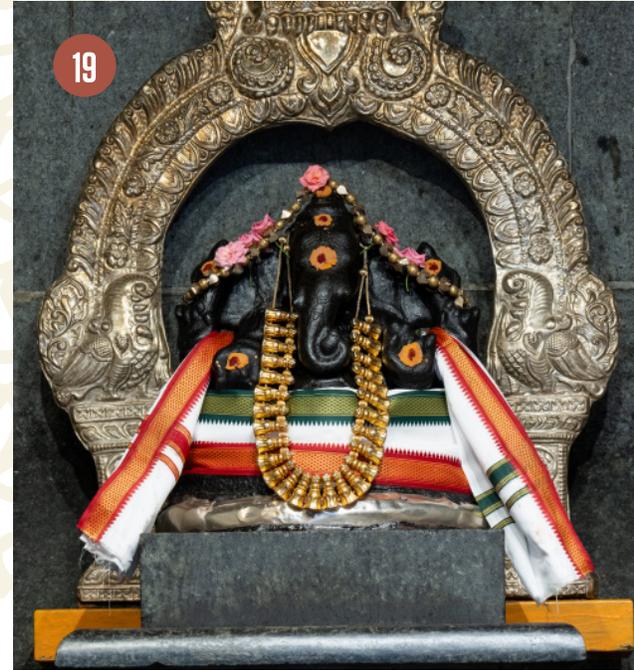
New Year's Day Celebration  
Chithirai Mahotsavam  
Diwali (October)

## THE TEMPLE COMPLEX

**19** As you exit the Main Temple Complex, you will see the **GANESH TEMPLE** toward the back of the property. This is the original temple constructed on the property and underwent renovation in 2013. It is the first traditional Hindu religious landmark in the Southwest United States. The temple is dedicated to the god Ganesha (or Ganesh) depicted with an elephant head on a human body. In Hindu tradition, Ganesh is the son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi, and is known as the remover of obstacles, the patron of arts and sciences, and the god of intellect and wisdom. He is also known as the God of New Beginnings.

**20** The **PEACOCK SANCTUARY** is located behind the Ganesh Temple. The Indian Peafowl, commonly known as the Peacock, is the national bird of India and its colors are synonymous with Indian identity.

**21** **TEMPLE PRIESTS** live on-site with their families. Each temple priest is educated and trained in India, with an affiliation with a certain deity, as indicated by the distinctive markings displayed on their foreheads. There are approximately nine practicing priests at the Temple. Priests are the only ones allowed to enter the sacred area of a deity's shrine, delivering offerings to the God or Goddess made by devotees. Puja (pooja) is the traditional, religious, ritualistic observation conducted by the priests as prescribed by the sacred scriptures of Hindu Dharma. Puja is the act of showing reverence to the God through invocations, rituals, prayers, and offerings.





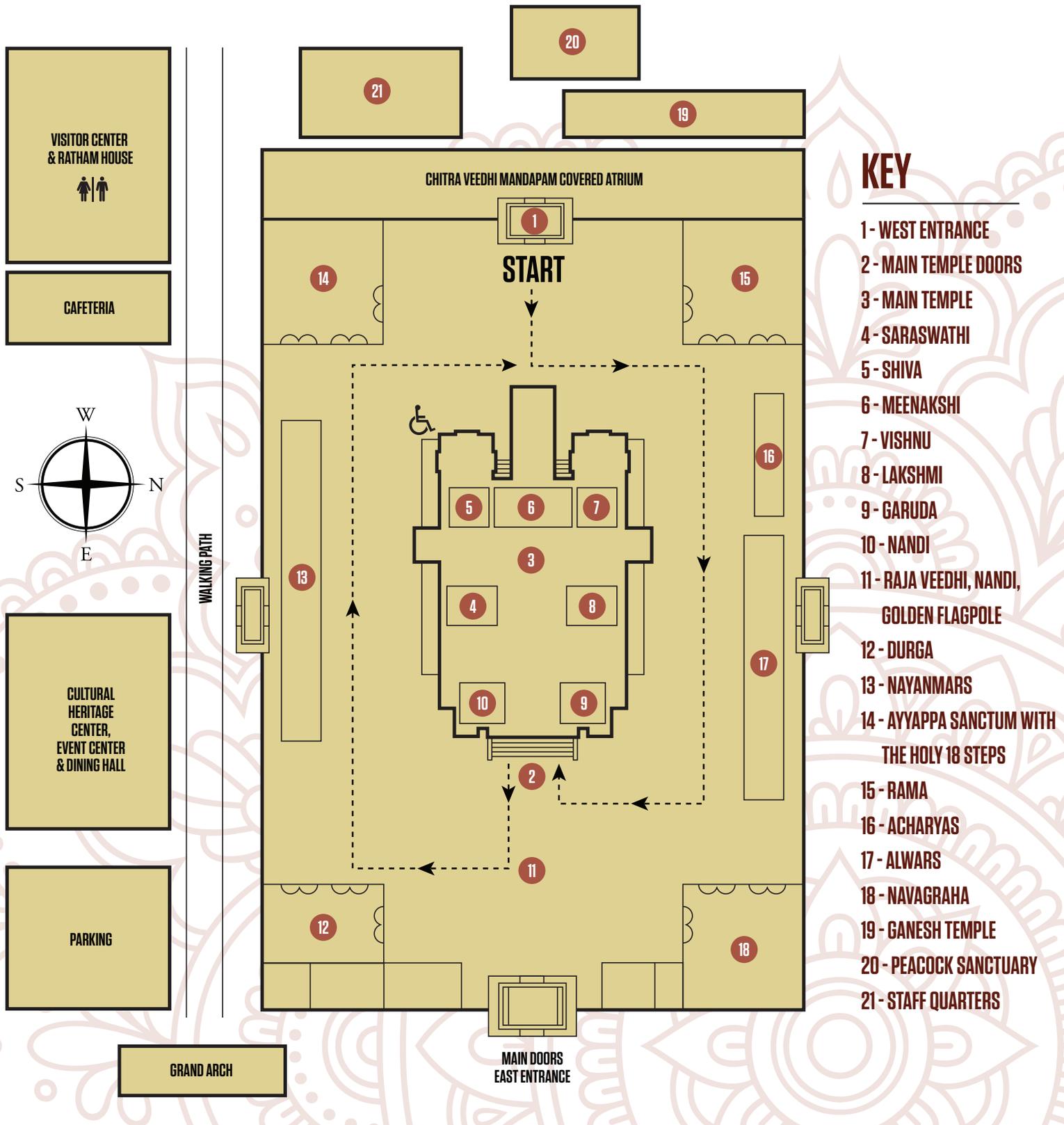
## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**THE VISITOR CENTER AND RATHAM HOUSE** feature a meditation room, academic library, gift shop, children's area, and bathrooms. Also located in this building is the **CARRIAGE HOUSE**, which holds the chariot used for the parade of gods at different celebrations throughout the year. At each celebration, the chariot is decorated with traditional jasmine flowers, roses, and carnations and features a different deity.

**THE CULTURAL HERITAGE CENTER, EVENT CENTER & DINING HALL** are available to rent for weddings, parties, anniversaries, and meetings. The space can accommodate up to 500 people for a seated event and includes an auditorium and reception area. Ample parking is available. For more information visit [www.meenakshi.org](http://www.meenakshi.org) or contact: **SRI MEENASKHI TEMPLE SOCIETY** at [temple@meenakshi.org](mailto:temple@meenakshi.org) or 281.489.0358.



# SRI MEENAKSHI TEMPLE COMPLEX



## KEY

- 1 - WEST ENTRANCE
- 2 - MAIN TEMPLE DOORS
- 3 - MAIN TEMPLE
- 4 - SARASWATHI
- 5 - SHIVA
- 6 - MEENAKSHI
- 7 - VISHNU
- 8 - LAKSHMI
- 9 - GARUDA
- 10 - NANDI
- 11 - RAJA VEEDHI, NANDI, GOLDEN FLAGPOLE
- 12 - DURGA
- 13 - NAYANMARS
- 14 - AYYAPPA SANCTUM WITH THE HOLY 18 STEPS
- 15 - RAMA
- 16 - ACHARYAS
- 17 - ALWARS
- 18 - NAVAGRAHA
- 19 - GANESH TEMPLE
- 20 - PEACOCK SANCTUARY
- 21 - STAFF QUARTERS

MCGLEAN ROAD

