PUDUCHERRY, A UNION TERRITORY OF INDIA

The symposium will be held in Puducherry; formerly known as Pondicherry is a Union Territory of India rather a state, formed out of four enclaves of former French India and named after the largest, Pondicherry. Pondicherry is the capital city of the Union Territory of Puducherry and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in South India. Puducherry is a multidimensional place of history and preserved colonial charm. Sandy beaches, clean promenades, temples, monuments, heritage villas, quaint old-world town planning, spiritual mystique and a lingering French ambience define its unique character. It is definitely a place to unwind or just be - a great weekend getaway from Chennai (Tamil Nadu) or Bangalore (Karnataka). Further, it is in close proximity to historically renowned south Indian towns and cities known variously for their art, religious and cultural heritage as well as great natural beauty.

Puducherry has almost a hundred per cent literacy level. The official languages of Puducherry are Tamil (89%), Malayalam (4.8%) and Telugu (2.9%). The status of each language varies by district. When communicating between districts of different languages, generally English is used for convenience. French is also an official language of the territory. Many streets retain French names, and French-style villas are a common sight. The French language can still be seen and heard in Puducherry. Apart from the monuments pertaining to the French period, a French Consulate is in Puducherry along with several cultural organisations. Another important building is Le Foyer du Soldat legion hall for soldiers who served in French wars. Among the French cultural organisations, the French Institute of Pondicherry, the Puducherry Centre of the École française d'Extrême-Orient and a branch of the Alliance Française are noteworthy.

The Union Territory of Puducherry comprises of four coastal regions namely Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam. Puducherry and Karaikal are situated on the East Coast of Tamil Nadu, Yanam in Andhra Pradesh and Mahe on the West Coast in Kerala. The city of Puducherry lies on the east coast about 162 kms south of Chennai (Madras) located on the Coromandel Coast of the Bay of Bengal. There are no hills or forests in this region. The major soil types found here are red ferralitic, black clay and coastal alluvial. Although the majority of the population is Hindu, there are quite a number of Christians and Muslims, whereas Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists are few in comparison.

Quiet beaches and peaceful resorts in the north and south of the city balance the town's busy, yet easy going life. Puducherry, not only offers its own special attractions, but also doubles as the perfect base to explore the rich destinations of Tamil Nadu that surrounds it. Some destinations, namely Auroville, the international City of Unity, the imposing Gingee Fort, the holy temple towns of Kanchipuram, Thiruvannamalai and Chidambaram, the heritage sculptures and magnificent rock temples of Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) and the cool lush hill stations of Yercaud and Kodaikanal should make your to-do list.

The colonial past of Puducherry is hard to miss even by the casual walker on the promenade beach. There stands the statue of Francois Dupleix. Not too far away is one of Joan of Arc. It's a trip down France as one crosses symmetrically aligned streets in Puducherry. The Portuguese have been here, so have the Dutch, the Danes and the English. By the 18th century, this tiny fishing village had turned into a grand port city. The French first set foot here in 1670 and left a part of them when their undisturbed rule finished in 1954. Not much has changed since and the history has become punctuated.

Puducherry was the residence of Sri Aurobindo and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram still operates from Puducherry. Their writings remain a tremendous source of spiritual awakening that emphasises the progress of humanity and its spiritual brotherhood. A unique experimental city, Auroville, whose inhabitants are drawn from all parts of the world, is situated on the outskirts of the city. Puducherry, which still carries several marks of French culture and heritage, was also the place where the national poet Shri Subramania Bharathiar wrote several of his masterpieces that fanned the flames of freedom and also enriched modern Tamil literature. Bharathidasan, a staunch disciple of Subramania Bharathiar, whose poems stressed social revolution and emancipation of women, was also an eminent son of Puducherry.

Pondicherry is surely one of the choicest holiday destinations in South India, if peace and a break is the most sought after. The town offers a unique experience with its mix of modern heritage and spiritual culture. With a predominantly historical background, Pondicherry takes one centuries back in time. It is one of the most popular tourist spots for national and international tourists. There are several beaches, temples, churches, monuments, parks and mosques here which attract tourists.

SYMPOSIUM VENUE: THE ACCORD HOTEL

Symposium venue, the accord hotel, is the first five star business-cum leisure hotel in the union territory of Pondicherry set in a serene, arboreal locale in the heart of the city. For further details, please visit http://pondicherry.theaccordhotels.com/

HOW TO REACH PUDUCHERRY (INDIA)

One can reach Pondicherry either by road, train or air via Chennai and Bangalore. For more information, please visit http://www.goibibo.com/travel-guide/india/destination-pondicherry/how-to-reach/

By Air
If you are planning to reach Pondicherry by air then there are scheduled flights to Pondicherry from New Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Kolkata. The closest international as well as busy domestic airport is in Chennai.
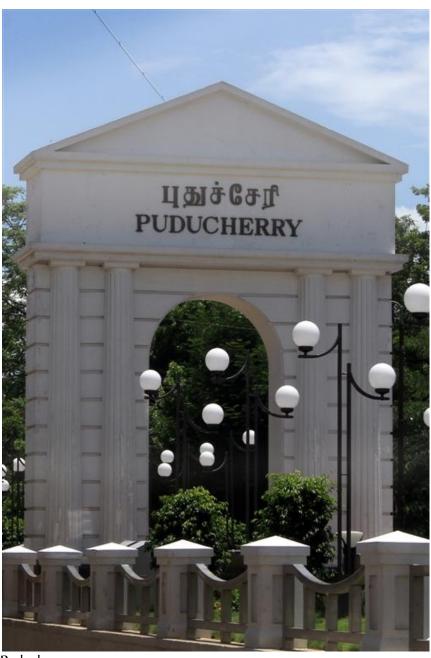
By Train
 Puducherry is connected by a broad gauge railway branch line from the five-way junction at Viluppuram and Chennai (Tamil Nadu). Several express trains come from Chennai, Bangalore, Viluppuram, Mumbai, Bhubaneswar, Howrah and other major cities of India. It takes approximately four hours to reach Puducherry from Chennai by train. As well, pondicherry hosts its own railway station that connects the city with all other major cities like Bhubaneshwar, Kolkata, New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Jaipur and Kanpur.

By Road
Puducherry is endowed with excellent infrastructure on par with India's best. A network of all weather metalled roads connecting every village exists in the territory. Puducherry has a road length of 2552 km (road length per 4.87 km^2), the highest in the country. One can reach Pondicherry by

road from Chennai, covering an approximate distance of 162 kms whereas it is just 160 kms from Vellore to Pondicherry. One travelling from Coimbatore to Pondicherry needs to cover a distance of 380kms en route Salem-Kanyakumari Highway, Salem-Ulundurpettai Highway and Tiruchi-Chennai Highway. The distance from Tirupati to Pondicherry is approximately 260kms whereas it is only 100kms from Mahabalipuram and from Madurai to Pondicherry it is 340kms approximately. The approximate distance from Kanyakumari to Pondicherry is 600kms and it takes one to drive approximately 9 hours to 10 hours. Buses ply from Bangalore to Pondicherry that takes approximately 6 to 7 hours and covers a distance of 320kms en route Hosur and Uthangarai. From Hyderabad to Pondicherry, it is approximately 790kms whereas it is just 560kms from Cochin by road.

PUDUCHERRY TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

Puducherry

Aurobindo Ashram

Pondicherry Museum

Botanical Garden

Auroville

Promenade

Church of Sacred Heart of Jesus

Paradise Beach

Statue of Dupleix

Serenity Beach

Park Monument or Aayi Mandapam

French War Memorial

To know more and to familiarize with Puducherry (India), please visit the following links:

https://www.py.gov.in/
http://tourism.pondicherry.gov.in/
http://www.pondytourism.in/
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puducherry
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_Puducherry
http://www.goibibo.com/travel-guide/india/destination-pondicherry/how-to-reach/
http://www.pondicherry.net.in/Default.aspx
http://www.lonelyplanet.com/india/tamil-nadu/puducherry-pondicherry