



Aspire students during the Chennai tour

Highlights

- Excursions
- Special courses
- Field trips
- Workshops & other programs

Excursions to Chennai and Thiruvananthapuram

48 students had the most memorable time when they visited Chennai on Jan. 3rd and 4th.

They marvelled at the Shore Temple and Tiger Caves in Mahabalipuram and the Santhome Lighthouse & Museum, which offered a splendid bird's eye view of Chennai. Star gazing at the Birla Planetarium & Science Park was fun, followed by an informative & inspiring talk & tour of the IIT Madras Campus by Selva Ganapathy, Staff at the Chemical Engineering Department. The final destination was the Snake Park at Guindy.

The highlight for children was their quality time with several patrons of Aspire Foundation, who hosted them at their homes and spent time taking them to shopping malls, the beach, the movies, library, circus and restaurants - it was an experience they will never forget.

Delicious lunch on both days was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Chennai Towers. Aspire Foundation thanks all our generous donors and hosts who made this tour possible.

Another group of 43 students spent the weekend after Christmas touring Nagercoil & Thiruvananthapuram.

They bathed in the Kovalam Beach, and spent hours gazing at wild animals in the Thiruvananthapuram Zoo. They also enjoyed looking at various artefacts of historical value in the Padmanabhapuram Palace.

What's more, they also visited Thiruparappu Waterfalls and Thottipalam. They also visited temples of ancient heritage, such as Attukkaalamman Koil, Suchindram & Nellyappar Koil.

Aspire Foundation is extremely thankful to Ms. Lakshmy Ashok for sponsoring our students' accommodation and food at the Base Camp, Alancholai. And we thank Sunil and others at Base Camp for extending their warm hospitality yet again!



Special Courses

2 special courses were conducted during the Term-1 school holidays, based on children's demand.

Beginner level chess – A 5-day basic course on chess was conducted by Mr. Pitchaimani, Chess Coach and Tamil Nadu State Chess Arbiter from Fischer Chess Academy at Gandhigram. He introduced 35 students to:

- the concept of chess, including the names of the squares, pieces and rules of movement
- basic techniques in playing chess in pairs

At the end of the course, the coach provided a list of students with aptitude for chess, based on observed criteria. We plan to conduct a second level course for these students later this year.

Introductory course on painting

Ms. Selvi, certified trainer in art & craft from Chinnalapatty conducted a 5-day course, training 45 students on techniques in cloth painting & chart painting. Children had a great time trying their creativity at various forms of painting – they traced and painted flowers, scenery & idols. They also learned to decorate sketches with sand, seeds and pulses.

The trainer identified over 20 children who were eligible to take up the next level course.



Field trips

2 field trips were conducted for students in the scholarship program between classes 9 and 12, one for the new batch and one for the old batch of students.

Field trip to Madurai

22 students participated in the field trip to Madurai.

- At the Thirumalainayakar mahal, students saw several archaeological monuments and made note of historical information.
- At the Aavin milk industry, students witnessed automated food processing and packaging of packet milk, ghee, palgova, butter and milk powder.
- Students finally visited the Azhagar Temple, a waterfall abounding in herbal plants and Pazhamuthirsolai.

This was an informative and enjoyable field trip for our students.

Field trip to Coimbatore

21 students participated in the field trip to Coimbatore.

- They visited the Bharathiyar University, which has over 14 departments including Biotechnology & Genetic Engineering, Social Sciences, English & Foreign Languages, besides Commerce, Science and Engineering. Students visited the various types of gardens set up by the Botany Department and understood the types of plants.
- The group also trekked up Marudhamalai and visited the famous temple there.

Events and workshops

Story writing contest on Children's Day

- This Children's Day, we involved our students in one of their favourite pastimes – creating their own stories! For a week leading up to the contest, 360 students from 21 villages participated in writing stories and drawing creative illustrations suited to their stories, working in pairs.
- The best story from each village was selected and the finalists participated in a workshop on creative writing and drawing, conducted by Mr. Siva, pursuing his Ph. D. at Gandhigram Rural University.
- Following this workshop, the 29 pairs of finalists created their best stories. All finalists were given dictionaries and the creators of the 2 winning entries were awarded medals.



Deepavali celebrations

This Deepavali, several patrons shared their festive joy with Aspire Foundation students by gifting new clothes for Deepavali. On Oct. 18th, 200 students received their new clothes with bright smiles and wore them happily the week after. Well-wishers such as school teachers, retired headmasters and other volunteers distributed these materials to our students.

Health awareness program - 108 students participated in a health awareness program conducted by Dr. Satish Kumar, Child Specialist from DMS Hospital, Nilakottai in September. He took our students through an overview of the brain and its functions, emphasizing the different regions responsible for different functions, cognition and abilities. He specifically counselled girls on lifestyle practices as well as nutritious diet required for them to be healthy mothers in future.

Independence Day celebrations - We celebrated India's 68th Independence Day with a difference. After the hoisting of the Indian Tricolour and a March past, followed 3 sets of programs

- Exhibition and presentation - stalls highlighting India's current status in Education, Agriculture & Sports, ISRO, Wind energy, Rubber production and Women achievers, Types of lighting & Launch of a model rocket
- Enactment of scenes related to important South Indian freedom fighters and Photo cum news exhibition
- Performance of folk arts such as Bharatham, Oyilaattam, Koothu, Devaraattam, Karakaattam and Thappaattam



We have more programs lined up through the rest of the academic year, do visit our website www.aspirefoundation.org.in and our FB page <https://www.facebook.com/AspireTamilnadu> for more details.