

Going Places

FUN THINGS TO DO AND SEE IN TEXAS AND BEYOND

IF YOU GO

Sri Meenakshi Temple
17130 McLean Road, Pearland
(281) 489-0358; www.emeenakshi.org

Visit Pearland is finalizing a guide to visiting the temple that will be available by early March: (281) 997-5970; visitpearland.com.

COURTESY SRI MEENAKSHI TEMPLE

[DEEP IN THE HEART]

A Passage to India

Walking barefoot through the **Sri Meenakshi Temple**, you hear bells ringing, priests chanting, and children laughing. Amid the scent of incense, you feel smooth tiles and prayer rugs underfoot. As your eyes travel the cream-colored, hand-carved walls, you might wonder if you're still in Texas. Indeed, you are: The 5-acre property housing the temple and related buildings is in Pearland, 25 miles south of Houston. The complex dates to the 1970s and, like other temples in the region, reflects the area's growing Hindu population. Visitors are welcome inside. They're asked to wear modest attire that covers shoulders and knees, and to remove their shoes. Inside, devotees place offerings of fruit or flowers at the shrines of 16 deities. Wicks burn next to little bowls smudged with sandalwood paste and turmeric powder. On weekends, a cafeteria serves vegetarian Indian cuisine. Consider visiting in April, during the 10-day Chithirai festival, which is dedicated to Meenakshi, the temple's namesake deity. The celebration includes a procession with a 20-foot-tall silver chariot trimmed with bells and pulled by hand. —*Cynthia J. Drake*