

Finding a foothold in the Middle East

From plans to extend financial assistance to private entrepreneurs for developing tourism products, to marketing the state as a year-round holiday destination, Kerala Tourism has roadshows planned to capture the tourism market this year.

DEVKA JEET

Even though 2011 was not a good year for the travel industry due to economic slowdown in Europe, Kerala Tourism recorded an increase of over 11 per cent. "This is a remarkable achievement and we plan to sustain this growth rate even this year," says **AP Anil Kumar**, Kerala Tourism Minister.

Apart from concentrating on their main source markets in Europe, mainly UK, France and Germany, Kerala Tourism has been making earnest efforts to increase their visibility in other European countries, especially in the Scandinavian countries and in Spain. Their plans are to increase their visibility on the international front and participate in the international trade exhibitions and travel shows.

Efforts to increase global presence and see accelerated growth figures in tourism are incomplete without the help of trade partners and private players. "It is mainly the private stakeholders who conceive and develop the products and I feel that it is the duty of the State Tourism Department to assist them to market the products.

We are actively considering to extend financial assistance to the private entrepreneurs who come up with innovative ideas and this has been included in the draft tourism policy of the state," adds Kumar.



AP Anil Kumar
Minister
Kerala Tourism

Looking beyond the European markets, Australia is also a potential market for Kerala Tourism and they have already kick-started certain activities such as organising roadshows in Melbourne and Sydney.

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Rani George
IAS
Director, Kerala Tourism

especially in Saudi Arabia and UAE. "Last year, there was a tremendous increase in the arrivals from these sectors. It is because of these initiatives that tourists from the Arab countries are travelling during June-September, which is a lean season in Kerala. This would help us to make Kerala a round-the-year destination," explains Kumar.

Though the international markets are a focus for the state but they are not ignoring their domestic potential. Kerala Tourism will continue to promote the state in the domestic market as well. "In order to woo the domestic travellers, Kerala Tourism has launched several activities, such as participating in all major travel trade fairs and organising partnership meets in at least 25 cities across the country in a year. With a view to make the off-season more attractive to the domestic travellers, the tourism department has introduced 'Dream Season Campaign' with the help of stakeholders from Kerala. The campaign has recorded a remarkable growth in the past four years," says **Rani George**, IAS, Director, Kerala Tourism.

The tourism department has many initiatives, such as organising roadshows and participating in trade fairs to promote the state. But their initiatives and plans include contributions from the travel trade and also a helpful hand from the industry.

Kerala Woos Travellers

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