



Department of Tourism

Park View Thiruvananthapuram 695 033

Kerala India Fax: +91-471-2322279

Tel: +91-471-2326579 2321132

Email: info@keralatourism.org

marketing@keralatourism.org

www.keralatourism.org

Press Release

Kochi to host global Spice Route Conference from Jan 6 to 8

Conference opens new phase in Kerala's heritage tourism: Tourism Minister PA Mohamed Riyas

KOCHI, Dec 22: The first international Spice Route Conference will be hosted in Kochi from January 6 to 8, 2026, bringing renewed focus to the commercial and cultural link between the Kerala coast and a vast geography stretching up to the Mediterranean lands over centuries, playing a significant role in shaping history.

The event, organized by the Muziris Heritage Project in collaboration with Kerala Tourism Department, is planned as a landmark international gathering celebrating the shared maritime and cultural heritage of the world and its continued relevance in the global narrative.

The event will also explore new pathways to strengthen cultural and heritage tourism ties among a host of countries across continents that lay in the ambit of the famed Space Route.

Long before modern trade networks and political borders began to evolve, ports along the Malabar Coast, especially the legendary port of Muziris, functioned as vibrant hubs linking Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe.

The Spice Route, powered by monsoon winds, had served not just as a busy maritime commercial trail but also as a vibrant cultural corridor that carried ideas, faith, art, technology and faith systems, together creating a lasting people-to-people bonding.

The three-day event will be held at the historic Bolgatty Palace, Ernakulam, a site intrinsically linked to centuries of maritime trade and cultural encounters.

The first of its kind initiative in India, the conference is conceived as an intellectual and cultural platform that reconnects the ancient Spice Route with contemporary global discourse.

Highlighting the vision behind the initiative, Tourism Minister Shri Mohamed Riyas, said "the International Spice Route Conference marks a new phase in Kerala's heritage tourism journey." "Heritage tourism today represents a USD 600-billion global market, and the Spice Route offers Kerala a powerful and authentic story within this space," the Minister said.



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“By re-imagining these historic connections, we are positioning Kerala as a compelling destination for discerning, heritage-focused travelers from across the world, offering immersive experiences rooted in history, culture, and living traditions,” Shri Riyas added.

The Conference seeks to revive this spirit of exchange, positioning Kerala not merely as a destination but as a living crossroad of world heritage and maritime civilization.

The event will see 38 international delegates from 22 countries apart from national participants engaging in absorbing conversations. It will feature a remarkable cross-section of attendees, including academicians and historians, archaeologists, diplomats, policy-makers and tourism stakeholders, artists, cultural practitioners and performers.

The speakers will explore the Spice Routes not as a single trade corridor, but as a vast, interconnected cultural ecosystem that shaped societies across continents. Moving beyond the economics, the conference will delve into the human narratives embedded in maritime history.

Key sessions will include ‘Cultural Exchange & Diaspora: migration, linguistic fusion and shared identities shaped by maritime movement’; ‘Knowledge, Faith & Philosophy : the spread of science, medicine, belief systems, and intellectual traditions across oceans’ ; ‘Colonial Encounters & Enduring Legacies: Understanding the long-term cultural and political impacts of maritime colonialism’ and ‘Maritime Technologies & Logistics: The historical movement of goods, ideas, and innovations across sea routes.’

Complementing the thematic sessions, the event will offer delegates a deeply immersive cultural journey into Kerala’s living heritage. These include ‘The Muziris Experience’ - curated heritage trails across key Muziris sites, combined with a traditional sea voyage echoing ancient maritime routes; ‘Contemporary Art Engagement’ - a special visit to Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2025–26; ‘Performing Traditions’ - renditions of Kerala Jewish songs and a compelling performance of Chavittu Nadakam, Kerala’s unique Latin-Christian classical dance-drama. These will together turn the event from a scholarly forum into a sensory and experiential encounter with history.

The conference also signals Kerala’s intent to tap into the growing global demand for high-value, experiential and culturally immersive travel.

Scholars, heritage professionals, tourism stakeholders, cultural practitioners, students, and global heritage enthusiasts have also been invited to the event. Registration to the conference is now open and further details are available on the official Kerala Tourism portal <https://www.keralatourism.org/muziris>.



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