



Department of Tourism

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Press Release

It's time Kerala Tourism focused beyond brand concept: experts

Idukki, Oct 25: Kerala Tourism must tune into the needs of the new age through upgraded products by leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics to provide an immersive experience to the travellers, experts said at a tourism seminar today.

Speakers at the 'Vision 2031' seminar, organised by Kerala Tourism, called for a fresh evolution for Kerala Tourism beyond its long-standing brand, 'God's Own Country'. Time has come to make far-reaching advancements in the domain so as to remain competitive in travel industry that is undergoing a sea change even as the state's tourism industry has initiated novel measures.

Addressing a session on 'Trends and Opportunities in Global Tourism & Marketing/Branding' at the event in picturesque Kuttikkanam, Kerala Tourism Director Smt Sikha Surendran said the department had already initiated novel measures by foraying into niche segments such as wedding and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions), besides leveraging the possibilities of cutting-edge technologies.

"Marriages in Kerala today increasingly feature the north Indian custom of Haldi. The state can bank on this trend by providing venues where turmeric can actually be plucked from the soil at the venue and prepared as a paste for the ceremony," she noted.

Smt Surendran, while moderating the session, also stressed the need for both travellers and hosts to take responsibility for cleanliness and sustainability. Kerala has the potential to brand its cities and even certain villages outside the state, she added.

Fresh Mind Ideas Founder & CEO Shri Ajay S Nair said stakeholders in the tourism sector must focus on regional specialities to attract travellers from faraway places. He also highlighted the need for the administration to partner with in-flight magazines to help travellers learn about Kerala's USPs.

Creative Travel Joint MD Shri Rajeev Kohli said Kerala's famed Ayurveda must look for novel ways to woo high-end consumers.

KTM President Shri Jose Pradeep opined that authorities should go on to provide visitors with facilities to "live like a local".

Advertising Club Bangalore President Shri Laeeq Ali demonstrated ways to brand Kerala's cities, each with a distinct character.



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In another session, on 'Exploring the Potential of Responsible Tourism/Inclusive Tourism/ Experiential Tourism/Regenerative Tourism,' Kerala Responsible Tourism (RT) Mission Society CEO Shri Rupeshkumar K delineated the holistic changes RT has brought to the grassroots-level communities.

Addressing delegates, he said around 70 per cent of the RT Mission units in the state are led by women.

Academician Smt Aditi Choudhary of IITTM Noida & ICRT India said regenerative tourism is all about transforming a destination into a positive outcome, and Kerala has the foundation and trust of the community as driving forces for it.

Speaking about inclusive tourism, Dr Peeja Rajan, State Coordinator, UN Women, highlighted the importance of safety, gender inclusivity and women empowerment in the tourism sector.

She suggested institutionalizing RT to buttress its activities, besides promotional branding featuring women's success stories, gender-inclusive zones in destinations, and assigning women as leaders in major initiatives.

Shri Shilendran N, Vice President, CGH Earth, said experiential tourism involves nature, people, and unique products such as houseboats and local experiences. According to him, the local community must be drawn into the sector as stakeholders to build community trust and collaboration.

Shri Rupeshkumar moderated the session.

In a third session on 'Beyond Design Policy,' Dr Manoj Kumar K, MD, KTIL; Shri Vinod Cyriac, Chairman, IIA Kerala Chapter; and Shri Chitra Nair, Chairperson, IIID Kerala, shared their insights. Prof KT Ravindran, Former Dean, School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi, was the moderator.

Dr Jithendran Kokkranikal, Professor of Tourism Management, IIM Sirmaur; Dr Toney K Thomas, Head of School of Tourism Studies, MG University; Shri Jackson Peter, MD, Bond Group of Companies; and Shri Amrit Jose Appaden, Adventure Sports Tourism Instructor, were the panellists in the session on 'Tourism Education & Skilling-The Way Forward in Developing Human Capital Tourism for Future'. Dr Dileep MR, Director, KITTS, was the moderator.

The session on 'Challenges & Opportunities in Designing Tourism' had the presence of Shri Rajiv Anchal, Art Director & Founder, Jatayu Earth Centre; Shri Rajendar Singh, Principal



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Urban Design Consultant, LEA Associates South Asia, New Delhi; Shri Biley Menon, Urban Designer & Founder, Idea Designs; and Smt Monika Rajiv Nair, Technical Director, Buildings Places at AECOM. It was moderated by Dr Manoj Kumar K, MD, KTIL.

Discussions were also held on 'Adaptation and Use of Technology in Tourism for Immersive Experience,' 'Future Potential of Heritage, Culture and Spiritual Tourism,' and 'Tourism Business Innovations & Investment in Adventure Tourism and Allied Products.'

Ends