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Press Release

Global Spice Routes Conclave to unveil Heritage Network

- **Kochi to host three-day event from Jan. 6**

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec.30: Declaration of the Spice Routes Heritage Network and Charter presentation will set the stage for engaging conversations at the three-day international Spice Routes Conference scheduled in Kochi from January 6, 2026, spotlighting on the shared maritime and cultural heritage and its continued relevance in the global narrative.

The event, organized by the Muziris Heritage Project in collaboration with Kerala Tourism Department, will be hosted at the historic Bolgatty Palace, Ernakulam, a site intrinsically linked to centuries of maritime trade and cultural encounters.

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

Besides thematic presentations, the January 6-8 conference will feature riveting technical sessions on topics including 'Governing and Sustaining Transnational Heritage Corridors,' 'Heritage Tourism: Question of Sustainability', 'Reimagining Spice Routes for Tourism', 'Digital Spice Routes', 'Muziris Re-imagined' and 'Knowledge Tradition in the Region.'

The event will explore new pathways to strengthen cultural and heritage tourism among a host of countries across continents that lay in the ambit of the famed global trade corridor.

Tourism Minister Shri Mohamed Riyas said "the International Spice Routes Conference aims to position Kerala as an attractive destination that offers in-depth experiences rooted in history, heritage and culture."

"It is a new phase in Kerala's heritage tourism journey. The conference promises strong and authentic opportunities for the state, besides marking Kerala's possibilities in leveraging the increasing global demand for experiential, high value and cultural exchange travel," he added.

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



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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, art, technology and religious traditions, together creating a lasting people-to-people bonding.

The Conference seeks to position Kerala not merely as a destination but as a living crossroad of global heritage and maritime civilization. It has been designed with multiple sites of academic and artistic expressions such as paper presentations, conversations, poster displays, art shows, film screening, performances, site visits etc.

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.

Muziris Heritage Project partners with the Kochi-based art collective Aazhi Archives, led by Riyas Komu, internationally renowned multimedia artist, for holding photographic exhibitions and art shows at various sites in Kochi. Prof. M H Ilias of Mahatma Gandhi University associates with the Conference as academic consultant, designing academic sessions.

Three photographic exhibitions, *Chavittunatakam* (K R Sunil), *Seeing is Believing* (Biju Ibrahim) and *Migrant Dreams* (Aazhi Archives), will be held at the main venue of the conference in association with Aazhi Archives. Two performances, *Kaarkuzhali* (songs of Jewess of Kochi) by Reshmi Sateesh, prominent Malayalam playback singer and *Chavittunatakam* by Thampi Asan of Gothuruth and team, will also be staged.

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 Route 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.



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

Ends