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Press Release

Kerala Tourism makes further inroads in China

God's Own Country yet again a hit at Beijing International Tourism Expo

Thiruvananthapuram, May 24: Further capitalising on its initial forays into China, Kerala Tourism showcased the very best of 'God's Own Country' at the Beijing International Tourism Expo (BITE) 2016, one of the world's most prestigious travel and trade fairs.

It was for the second time the south Indian state was featured at the annual forum in the Chinese capital—this time held during May 20-22—which brings together major players in the hugely lucrative Chinese outbound tourism market, widely considered the world's largest by volume.

A whopping 120 million of Chinese tourists travelled worldwide in 2015, an increase of 12 per cent in comparison with the year-ago period. With most of these tourists preferring to holiday in Asian destinations, Kerala is well positioned to experience a surge in Chinese visitors.

This fact was highlighted again by the presence of a high-level Kerala delegation at BITE 2016. Led by Kerala Tourism Director Shri U.V. Jose IAS, the team saw judicious representation from the state's leading hoteliers, Ayurvedic resorts and tour operators.

According to Shri Jose, the state "aspires to augment the strong destination pull it already enjoys". "The modern traveller in general, and the Chinese visitor in particular, is always expanding his/her horizons, seeking out ever newer experiences," he said.

"The objective of such tourism facilitation initiatives and participation in such high-profile industry events is to highlight the wondrous possibilities on offer in Kerala," the official added. "In this respect, China is a top priority for us because its citizens are worldly and, more to the point, especially well-versed in Kerala and its offerings."

To this end, the expansive Kerala pavilion sought to renew the focus on the state's rich legacy of martial arts, holistic medical traditions, the beauty of its backwaters and its snakeboat races. Driving home the point were attractions from the private partners: Eastend Hotels and Resorts, Kairali Ayurvedic Health Resort, Poovar Island Resort, Somatheeram Ayurvedic Resort and Spiceland Holidays.

As was the case last year, the display was an instant hit with the hosts, resonating deeply with Chinese visitors who enjoy a similarly bountiful heritage. The stand saw an impressive number of footfalls as also inquiries – particularly about Ayurveda, underscoring the great potential of its products, therapies and wellness packages in a market welcoming to alternative medicine.



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“It speaks to the successful branding and marketing of Kerala that most of the visitors to the state pavilion knew about our Ayurveda, Kalaripayattu and our backwaters,” Shri Jose said. “That they wanted to know about our intellectual attractions like the Kochi-Muziris Biennale and our film, culture and dance festivals speak also to the worldliness of the Chinese traveller.”

The strategic presentation of Kerala through the prism of its cosmopolitanism, traditions and vistas as also its history and heritage has altered the optics of the state, per Shri Jose.

Shri Bandaru Wilsonbabu, First Secretary of the Indian Embassy in Beijing, visited the Kerala pavilion and offered the mission’s full support in helping promote the state in China.

Tourists from China are considered the highest-spending in the world. In 2014, Chinese tourists to India numbered nearly 2 lakh. The same period saw an increase of Chinese tourist inflow to Kerala.

As well, following a visit to Kochi last year by the Chinese Ambassador to India, the city became the first in India to gain membership to the Beijing-headquartered World Tourism Cities Federation Council, a 135-member league of leading tourism cities from across the globe.

An honour for the state that should pay immediate dividends: Foreign tourist arrivals to Kerala in 2015 have been provisionally tallied at nearly 9.8 lakh over the previous year’s figure of roughly 9.2 lakh.

With visitors, inquiries and interest in Kerala on the rise, the state’s star looks to soar in the Middle Kingdom.

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