

Report of the National Conference on Responsible Tourism held at KITTS, Thiruvananthapuram

The Kerala Institute of Tourism and Travel Studies (KITTS), the Human Resource division of Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala organised the National Conference on Responsible Tourism Practices from 25th to 27th March 2017 at its headquarters located at Thiruvananthapuram in the backdrop of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism. The Conference was conceived in the backdrop of the experiences and achievements made by Kerala in Responsible Tourism in identified destinations during the past few years. The efforts taken at Kumarakom, a backwater destination brought out visible results and the initiative was replicated in other destinations like Thekkady and Wayanad and have been acknowledged nationally and internationally. It was also observed that good practices on sustainable tourism are in operation in different parts of the country, which are not brought into the mainstream of discussions on tourism. The conference intended to deliberate on the various aspects of Responsible Tourism initiatives in Kerala along with successful cases that are being practised across the country.

The National Conference was inaugurated by the Honourable Minister for Co-operation, Tourism and DevaswomsShri. KadakampallySurendran. The Chief Guest of the Inaugural Session was Shri. PhilippeLemaistre, Chief of Programme and Co-ordinations, UNWTO.



The Tourism Minister in his inaugural speech said that with a view to provide economic benefits to local community, the Kerala Responsible Tourism initiative was able to devise suitable programmes to promote local production particularly focusing on agriculture and traditional industries. The initiative has so far been able to generate more than 12 crores rupees in the local economy in the seven destinations where it is being practised. The project has succeeded in extending economic benefit to more than 6000 people living in 1570 families across the state. The local community members have been empowered through capacity building programmes to take a pro-active role in production and marketing of their products to tourism industry. He added that the industry plays a decisive role in strengthening and promoting RT initiative and is delighted that the Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) Society, the forum of all the tourism service providers in the state of Kerala has adopted Agenda 9, a CSR Charter adopting the principles of Responsible Tourism. He said that this National Conference would be considered to kick start the Indian celebrations on the International Year of Sustainable Tourism in the country.

Shri. Philippe Lemaistre said that he sees India as a safe country for tourists. He said that India is a diverse and big country and tourists are confused about where to go. Branding and hassle-free visa facilitation will further increase footfall. He said that UNWTO was looking into the role of tourism in climate change and how tourism could an economy adapt to climate change. Countries would be encouraged to exchange ideas and share their best tourism practices. Lauding the Responsible Tourism (RT) initiative in Kerala, the UNWTO official said the Kumarakom RT project was popular and Kerala was always seen as a green and responsible destination and UNWTO would be demonstrating such good examples to the world.



The key participants of the conference were the Secretaries and Directors of various state Governments. Delegates from Delhi and seven different states of India participated in the Conference. Representatives from Ministry of Tourism, Govt.of India also attended the conference.

The first session on day one was on Kerala model of Responsible Tourism in which the policy perspectives on Kerala Responsible Tourism was shared by Dr. Venu V IAS Principal Secretary on Tourism. He said that clarity is needed on the difference between Sustainable Tourism and Responsible Tourism as sustainable tourism is an ideal situation and Responsible Tourism is an approach towards attaining sustainable tourism.



This was followed by the sharing of experiences from the field by community members of Kerala RT initiative led by Shri. Rupeshkumar K., State Level RT Field Co-ordinator.



In the evening, there was another session on Kerala initiatives on Responsible Tourism with the following speakers:

- Shri. Jose Dominic, MD & CEO, CGH Earth
- Shri. Abraham George, President, Kerala Travel Mart Society
- Shri. Gopinath Parayil, Founder, The Blue Yonder
- Shri. Vijayan, Secretary, Ezhikara Pokkali & Organic Farming Initiative
- Shri. Vinod Nambiar, Director, Vayali Folklore Group



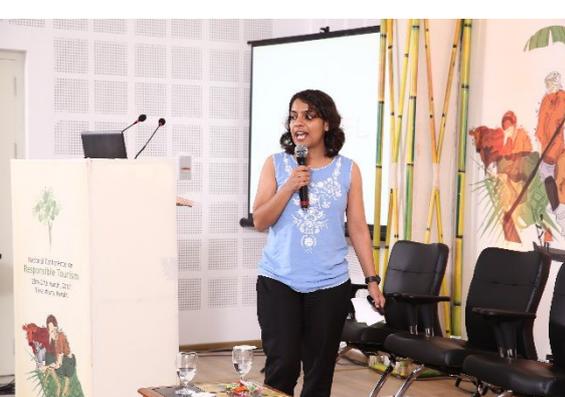
This was followed by Cultural Programmes by RT Cultural Group- Mannakoothu (Thekkady) and Thiruvahirakali(Kumarakom)





The second day focused on various Indian Initiatives on Responsible Tourism. The session had following presentations sharing sustainable models of tourism initiatives.

- Shri. Samir Sinha IFS, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & CEO Uttarakhand (CAMPA)
- Smt. Tanvi Sundriyal I.A.S. Addl. Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism
- Shri. Nimal Lila Das, Sustainability Tourism Officer, Govardhan Ecotourism Village
- Dr. Tsewang Namgail, Director, Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust
- Smt. Deepa Krishnan, Founder, Mumbai Magic
- Smt. Neha Arora, Founder, Planet Aabled
- Shri. Raj Basu, Convener, Help Tourism – Association for Conservation and Tourism
- Shri. Tejas Joseph, Associate Director – Responsible Tourism, Orange County Resorts and Hotels Ltd., Kabani



On 27th March 2017, the third day Field Visit and Village Life Experience was arranged at Kumarakom for the Government officials and invited speakers.



Academic Conference on Responsible Tourism

Academic conference was held on 27th March 2017 and was conceived in the backdrop of the experiences and achievements made by KITTS in identified Responsible Tourism destinations during the past years. This conference deliberated on various aspects of Responsible Tourism practices at state and National level. Responsible Tourism is mainly conceived with three kinds of responsibilities which is commonly known as 'Triple Bottom line" namely economic responsibility, social responsibility and environmental responsibility. The theme of the conference focused on these three major themes along with the sub themes of Linkages & Leakages Tourism and Micro enterprises, Tourism and Livelihood and Product Development & Marketing, classified under the theme, Economic Responsibility, Gender Equity in Tourism, Conserving Culture and Traditions through Tourism, Accessible Tourism, Social Entrepreneurship under Socio-cultural responsibility, Waste Management in Tourism, Energy & Water Conservation technique in Tourism, Use of appropriate Technologies in construction and Climate change and Tourism, classified under the theme environmental responsibility.

After invocation, welcome speech was delivered by Dr. B. Rajendran, Principal, KITTS.



Dr. K S Chandrasekhar, Director, IMK inaugurated the session by lighting the lamp and delivered the keynote address.



This was followed by felicitations by Dr. B. Chandra Choodan Nair, Director, Faculty of Management Studies, Noorul Islam University, Thuckulay, Tamil Nadu, Mr. Ravisankar K. V., Managing Director, Tourism India, Mr. Anil Kumar, General Manager, Cherai Beach Resort and Mr. Saroop RoyB. R., Asst. Professor & Co-ordinator Centre for Responsible Tourism @ KITTS. This was followed by the Question answer session. The inaugural session came to an end with the vote of thanks delivered by Sri. C. K. Venugopal, Asst. Professor, KITTS.

Around 40 research papers were submitted and presented in the conference and 50 delegates, both from KITTS and various other academic institutes and organizations participated in the Conference.

The first technical session was conducted with 17 presentations, and the second session with 19 presentations. Both the sessions were chaired by Dr. B. Chandrachoodan Nair, Director, Faculty of Management Studies, Noorul Islam University, Thuckulay, Tamil Nadu and Sri. Anil Kumar, Cherai Beach Resort, Kochi

Dr. V. Venu, IAS, Secretary, Principal Secretary, Kerala Tourism, Govt. of Kerala delivered the valedictory speech. Dr. V. Venu released the abstract of the conference proceedings by handing over

to Dr. K. S. Chandrasekhar, Director, IMK. Certificates were also distributed to the participants during the function.



The programme came to an end with the vote of thanks by Shri Harikrishnan P. K., Asst. Professor, KITTS. This academic endeavour enabled KITTS to gain positive feedback from the academicians and industry professionals.