

VILLAGE TOURISM IN KERALA

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I. INTRODUCTION

Kerala as a destination has a great tourism potential. Village Tourism is accepted as a sector with a high potential for economic development and employment generation. Village tourism is travelling backwards in time to places where the way of life has not changed and everything is still built by hand, made by hand and created by hand. People in villages are untouched by western principles, computers or modern necessities. Village tourism has wider possibility in Kerala which is a cluster of many villages and they remain the most excellent spot to enjoy the amazing splendor of nature. Apart from beaches and backwaters; verdant hill stations, wildlife sanctuaries, various plantations, temples, forts, palaces etc are also very popular attractions of Kerala. So Kerala can be called as an all season destination, which provides tourism activities in summer, winter and monsoon seasons. The art forms of Kerala are embodiments of Kerala's culture. Beaches, backwaters, hill stations, waterfalls, wild life, Ayurveda, year round festivals and the diverse flora and fauna make Kerala quite distinct from the other Indian States. The pleasant climate is also a positive factor. Village Tourism is a non seasonal product that can be enjoyed any time of the year. The prominence of village tourism in Kerala is recognized with many positive impacts for host, tourist and environments including protection, promotion of positive environmental and cultural aspects, sustainable development and also employment opportunities for locals.

II. OBJECTIVES

- To discuss the significance of Village Tourism in Kerala
- To understand the positive impacts of Village Tourism

III. METHODOLOGY

Secondary data were used which include journals, magazines, books and websites

Significance of Village Tourism

The natural beauty of Kerala is the main feature which makes it a special tourist destination. The beauty of rivers and lakes, coconut trees standing on line, green valley, paddy fields, gazing cattle, small huts, small stream etc are some of the rarest attraction a tourist can see in villages. The different types of tourism which attract tourist most in Kerala are Agritourism, Backwater tourism, Spice tourism, Kettuvallam tourism, handicrafts tourism, farm tourism etc which can be seen mainly in villages. So it is a great experience for the tourist to enjoy the culture, tradition, food habits, costumes and festivals of villagers and various types of Tourism. The village people indulge in their activities such as jute making, fishing, handicrafts, pottery and farming. Watching activities like stone cutting, textile block printing etc. is a real treat to the eyes.

The rural life in the **villages of Kerala** is still untouched by globalization and industrialization and is a delightful experience for a tourist. The lush paddy fields, calm backwaters, coconut farms, and vast stretches of green become an enchanting site for the eyes of the onlooker. Village tourism is an amazing chance to personally witness the nuances of making of various crafts and watching the skills of the craftsmen of Kerala and indulge in various activities such as watching coir making, traditional canoe fishing in the backwaters, toddy tapping, paddy field walk, cycling and country boat cruise. The villages in Kerala propose a feast to the eyes of the travelers by way of its panoramic sight of the fields,

farms, hillsides, rivers and lakes. The locals employ in fishing, farming, pottery, jute making and handicrafts. The guests are taken on a visit around the village and can see many artisans at job. Stone cutting, carpentry, inlay work, textile block printing, and potters at their wheels – such rare sights offer joy and relief to the travellers. Some of Kerala's most interesting features can be seen during these tours. These tours can also be combined with visits to tribal villages and to major places of tourist interest. Such village tours are not only informative but also enjoyable and relaxing. Problems of overcrowding and environmental threats can be solved better by the dispersion of tourists far and wide in rural tourism. Village tourism programme is an effective measure for rural development and raising the standard of living of the rural folk. Tourism in villages needs a social harmony of host culture and visitor culture. Rural tourism too must be limited to carrying capacity levels. Kerala Village Fair is set up at the Kovalam Beach and also at the Marine drive in Ernakulam. These recreated Gramam or villages include the Nalukettu, which is the homestead of the traditional upper class, the village teashop or the Chayakada and the Kalagramam or the artisans' enclave.

The intension of Village tourism is social and economic benefit to local community in a sustainable manner. Positive ecological balance can also be maintained with the help of Village Tourism. The destinations can be promoted in such a way that it should be beneficial to the guest as well as host. Some of the popular tourist villages in Kerala are Vavanoor, Udayagiri, Aranmula, Cheppad, Teekoy etc.

IV. SOME VILLAGE TOURISM DESTINATIONS

- Kumbalangi
- Kumarakom
- Kovalam
- Iringal Crafts Village
- Picnic Village in Kollam
- R.Block in Kuttanad
- Bamboo Village in Wayanad
- Veli
- Akkulam
- Thekkady

Kumbalangi

It is India's first model village Tourism destination in Ernakulam district of Kerala. Kumbalangi is sustainable, responsible, nature based, unpolluted, well planned and managed destination. It follows the principles of quality Tourism. There are many factors homestays, aquaculture, fish farming, performing arts, traditional cultivation, backwaters, migratory birds, gastronomic delights etc are to be considered the USP's of the destination. The project was set in motion in 2003 to help the local people, economy and the locality. The Kumbalangi Integrated Tourism Village project is meant to transform the tiny island into a model fishing village and tourism spot. The tourists sit with the host family and eat the same food they eat. They can walk through the village, watch fisher folk at work, fish themselves, go canoeing and visit the farms, among other things. Under the Kumbalangi project, Kalagramam, an artists' village, is also being set up. Pokkali farming, a crop pattern that alternates between rice and fish (each for six months a year), is being brought back in full form. Also, mangroves that were once in abundance in the region are being planted once again will lead to a better environment for the fish to live in. 600 biogas plants have been set up for waste management. Kumbalangi is also the first panchayat in the state to set up such a waste management system. A park has also been constructed for visitors to relax in. The most remarkable thing about this project is that what we do for the tourists also directly benefits the local population also.

Kumarakom

Kumarakom is the tourist village in Kottayam district, Kerala. Kumarakom, a cluster of little islands in Kottayam district, is one of the favourite tourist villages in Kerala. Spread on the cold water of Vembanad Lake Kumarakom is well known

for its fresh water fish species like the *Karimeen* (pearl spot), *Chemmeen* (shrimp) and prawns. The four main tourists destinations -KUMARAKOM, WAYANAD, KOVALAM and THEKKADY are now become the favorite Responsible Tourism (RT) centers in Kerala. It is the model destination in the implementation of responsible tourism. Kumarakom becomes a model for economic responsibility activities with the strong support from the Kudumbasree groups, Local Self Government, Farmers and Industry partners. To feel the unexplored village life at Kumarakom two packages are introduced. 'Village life experience in Kumarakom' and 'A day with farmers' attracts the tourists. The revenue generated from the programme is divided among the families that involved in it. Kerala was awarded for its innovative '**Responsible Tourism**' project in Kumarakom. The Kumarakom model initiative had won the National Award for **Best Rural Tourism Project** in March 2013 and also, the **PATA Grand Award for Environment**.

Kovalam

Village Life Experience packages(VLE) are intended to guide the tourists through the less-travelled but the most attractive hinterlands of villages and thus aim at distributing the benefits generated from tourism to the advantage of the community. *Beyond the beach* - full day tour and *Lake and Life*, a half-day tour are the two VLE packages in Kovalam. VLE packages are crafted and executed by the Kerala Tourism Department as part of its most innovative and far-reaching concept of Responsible Tourism .VLE aims at creating new dimensions to the existing tourism practices, and aims at a 'meaningful and mutually beneficial tourism' where the visitor and the host community are assured of a close interaction. It has been designed based on the traditional livelihoods; culture and lifestyle of the destination. The highlight of the packages is that the maximum share of the revenue generated goes to the community. VLE has been developed with the objective of encouraging the local community to continue with their traditional livelihood activities, honor local talents and reap additional income from tourism as a supplementary activity. It aims at enabling local communities to introduce visitors / tourists to experience these diverse activities in an authentic manner in rural ambience.

Iringal Crafts Village

Kerala Tourism Department has set up an exclusive crafts village near Kozhikode where traditional artisans can showcase skills and products, and sell them at fair prices. The idea for the new venture came up after many foreign tourists keenly wanted to witness in person the nuances of crafts-making and skills of traditional artisans of Kerala. And the venue of this project is also a famed destination, the land of Kunjali Marikar who is a celebrated warrior son of Kerala. The wide array of products will be crafted with different raw materials from cheap natural options to modern alloys. Thus the art pieces will be created with banana fibre, coir, bamboo, sand, coconut shells, husk, palm leaves, coconut leaves, screw-pine etc. The entrepreneurs also can utilize the facilities for crafts-making or bring finished products for sale. Sargaalaya focuses on creating a tourist destination, centered on hands-on interaction between tourists and artisans, who create, display and market their crafts on site. The strategy being, to make Kerala's traditional crafts an integral part of the tourism experience while also providing sustainable development for the artisans economically. Sargaalaya, the art & craft village at Iringal is designed as an initiative to put Kerala's traditional arts & crafts on the tourism trail.

Picnic Village

Picnic Village at Ashramom is situated in Kollam district of Kerala. Located on the backwater-front the Picnic Village is one of the main center for recreational activities. The main attraction of the village is a 200-year-old Government Guest House noted for its elegance and architectural beauty. The Paaramparya Museum in the same premises has on display paintings from different parts of the country including Warli, Kalamkari and Madhubani as well as Kerala mural art. It is located 1 km from Kollam city.

Veli Tourist Village

Veli is the picnic spot in Trivandrum, where the Veli Lake meets the Arabian Sea, offers boating facilities. Pedal boats and paddleboats can be hired to explore the charms of the lagoon in a leisurely manner. For a quick ride over the waters, speedboats are available for hire. Children enjoy climbing over the huge sculptures which dot the landscape.

Akkulam Tourist Village

Akkulam Tourist village located about 10 kms from Thiruvananthapuram city is a beautiful picnic spot and well known backwater destination. Akkulam is one of the first picnic spots in the suburbs of Trivandrum City. . The village consists of the Boat Club, Swimming Pool, Children's Park, and an Anthurium Project. The southern air command of the Indian Air

Force situates near to the Akkulam Tourist Village. The calm and serene atmosphere at Akkulam and its unique beauty are a fascination for tourists.

Thekkady

As part of the Social Responsibility, the RT cell launched Village Life experience package in Thekkady. This package is fully operated by a tribal community in Thekkady. It helps the tourist to know more about the village life in the destination and it also offers the tourist to experience the traditional lifestyle of the tribes in the destination. Kerala Cafe is a snack parlor operated by the tribal communities in Thekkady. A group of five women got placed in club Mahindra Resort in Thekkady under the initiative of RT Destination Cell. The group started a Kerala Tea Shop, which prepared and provided traditional Kerala snacks to the guests.

V. R BLOCK

A private farm, spread over 850 acres, R Block is one of the best managed farms in Kuttanad region in Alappuzha. These regions are wonders of the indigenous agriculture engineering know-how of Kerala and remind the tourist of the famous dikes of Holland. Farming is the major occupation and the Kuttanad gets the sobriquet of 'rice bowl of Kerala'. Kuttanad is the region with lowest attitude and the farming is done below the sea level.

VI. POSITIVE IMPACTS OF VILLAGE TOURISM

Village or Rural tourism in Kerala has unlimited scope for developing rural tourism potential and opportunities for visitors to directly experience agricultural or natural environment Village tourism is an effective medium for rural development, alleviating rural poverty and fighting rural unemployment. Village Tourism is a form of Responsible Tourism in which economic, cultural, environmental and social sustainability is essential for the community as well as tourism development. The positive effects of tourism are production of income, occupation and new economic resource for local people, assist to reduce on social unbalanced powers, providing job opportunities for maintaining regional population and coefficient of high multiplicity, reviving local culture, enhancing of national dignity and self-confidence, preserving natural and cultural resources (Ghaderi, 2004) Another positive economic benefit of tourism is that it can provide stability in an economy.

Village Tourism provides the incentive to improve the infrastructure that can be enjoyed by residents as well as tourists. Another additional positive impact of tourism is that tourism business can be started in the form of a small business encouraging entrepreneurial activity. Kerala tourism has launched 'Green Farms Kerala'. This is an exclusive venture that enables tourists to be part of the daily activities in the farm, from showcasing and selling farm produces to offering visitors a taste of the local cuisine, the project helps investors to generate additional income from farm and plantation, thus helping to attain sustainability in villages.

Positive Social Impacts

- Need for education
- Proper understanding of both tourists and host
- Democratic movement of all levels of people
- Occupation Training
- Handicraft Promotion
- Cooperative system
- Improvement in quality of life of villagers by creating a healthy environment.
- Capability of decision making
- Community Participation
- Women Empowerment
- Eradicate Poverty

- Promotion of harmony
- Organized development

Positive Economic Impacts

- Employment Generation
- Infrastructure development
- Regional Development
- Income Generation
- Multiplier Effect
- New Economic Activities
- More Demand
- Foreign Investment
- Non Seasonal Tourism
- Value added Processing

Positive Environmental Impacts

- ⊙ Promote Eco-friendly products
- ⊙ Maintain Carrying Capacity
- ⊙ Energy, Water and Waste Management
- ⊙ Conservation of Flora and Fauna
- ⊙ Protecting National parks & Wild Life sanctuaries
- ⊙ Promote Afforestation
- ⊙ Protecting Migratory Birds, Aquatic Plants, Animals, Rare and Endangered species
- ⊙ Maintain Cultivable land and promote Organic farming
- ⊙ Caring of Kandal Kadu
- ⊙ Plastic free environment

VII. CONCLUSION

A visit to Kerala villages is a treat to eyes wherein one can admire the amazing view of lakes, fields, rivers, hillsides and farms.. Kerala Village Fair is celebrated in mid-January, and it is a combination of many cultural events, celebrated every year. A typical village in Kerala is known as ‘Grammam’, and a Grammam houses many traditional Nalukettu houses and teashops, also known as ‘Chayakkada As part of promotion of Ayurveda in the state, KINFRA proposes to set up global Ayurveda Village in 2 Phases. The land acquisition for Phase I in Thonnakkal Village in Thiruvananthapuram has been completed. The land acquisition in Varkala as part of Phase II development has been initiated. During the Twelfth Five Year Plan, the scheme of Rural Tourism is being replaced with the scheme of Rural Tourism Cluster. The Modified scheme aims at developing a cluster of villages a Tourism Product.

So Kerala can be called as an absolute destination for peaceful tourism.

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