



**Report on Bharat Darshan – cum- Study Tour
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of

FTP for ASO DRs 2023 Batch

Report on Tour of Kerala

Presented By-

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MINISTRY OF FINANCE

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Objectives

The primary objective of our study tour was to delve into the rich cultural heritage and natural beauty of Kerala, with a focus on understanding the socio-economic significance of its landmarks.

Through visits to diverse destinations such as Thiruvananthapuram, Alleppey, Munnar, Thekkady and Kochi, we aimed to examine the interplay between history, culture, economy, and society in shaping Kerala's identity. By engaging with local communities, institutions, and experts, our goal was to unravel the complexities of Kerala's socio-cultural fabric and discern the factors contributing to its resilience and vibrancy.



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Thiruvananthapuram: A Cultural Journey through Kerala's Capital

We landed in Thiruvananthapuram as a part of our Bharat Darshan trip and commenced our journey from here. Day 1 of our trip delved into three significant destinations: Padmanabhaswamy Temple, Kovalam Beach, and Veli Tourist Village. Each place we visited enriched us experiences of our unique spirituality and natural beauty.



Padmanabhaswamy Temple: Our first stop after landing was the Temple. It was in the heart of Thiruvananthapuram. Padmanabhaswamy Temple stands as a testament to the region's rich cultural heritage. Dedicated to Lord Padmanabha (an incarnation of Lord Vishnu), this grand temple is known for its architectural brilliance and

spiritual ambience. As I entered the temple, the enchanting of mantras and overall emotion attached to Arti left me speechless. The inner sanctum sanctorum was so quiet it felt like we stepped into a void where we connected with the heavenly bodies.

Economic Significance: Padmanabhaswamy Temple serves as a major pilgrimage center, attracting devotees from across the country and beyond. The temple's festivities and rituals contribute significantly to the local economy through tourism-related activities, including accommodation, transportation, and souvenir shops. Along with this the significance of gold donation towards the temple is quite known and shows the devotees strong belief towards the temple.

Cultural Significance: The temple's rituals and festivals are deeply ingrained in Kerala's cultural fabric. The annual Navaratri festival, during which the temple celebrates the grand procession of deities, highlights the vibrant traditions and customs of the region. Moreover, the temple's architectural marvels serve as a living testimony to the skilled artisanship of bygone eras, preserving Kerala's architectural heritage.

Kovalam Beach: Our next drop after that was towards Kovalam Beach where our stay was arranged greatly. Situated just a short drive from Thiruvananthapuram, Kovalam Beach is



known for its beaches with adventurous waves and picturesque view. Once a peaceful fishing village, Kovalam has transformed into a bustling tourist hotspot while retaining its natural charm.

Economic Significance: Kovalam Beach forms the backbone of the region's tourism industry, drawing sun-seekers and water enthusiasts year-round. The beachside cafes, resorts, and souvenir stalls provide employment opportunities for the local community, driving economic growth in the area. The overall economy of that region was around the hospitality sector and adventure sports people.

Veli Tourist Village: Situated amidst lush greenery, Veli Tourist Village offers a respite from the hustle and bustle of city life. The village is situated on the banks



of Veli Lake, Kerala's second-largest freshwater lake, which reflects the serene beauty of its surroundings. We spent the evening there observing the local people and the activities in which they were involved. The village focused on the rural tourism model where we got a glimpse of rural life in Kerala. Apart from that the beaches and greenery there mesmerized me.

Conclusion: The day ended on a good note with mesmerizing temple, alluring beaches and overall ecosystem of eco-tourism of the villages was observed and I was really impressed with this system. The multifaceted system was really impressive as it took us from temple to beach to village.

Alleppey: Gateway to Kerala's Backwater.

Our next day started with leaving Kovalam and reaching Alleppey. Then we embarked on a houseboat journey through the backwaters of Alleppey. As I passed through the waterways, surrounded by lush greenery and landscapes, I was immersed in the natural beauty and cultural richness of Kerala. This darshan captured the essence of my unforgettable experience exploring the backwaters of Alleppey.

Exploring the Backwaters: As our houseboat gently meanders through the complex network of canals, lakes, and lagoons, I was captivated by the enchanting scenery that unfolded before me. Coconut palms sway in the breeze, vibrant birds flit overhead, and occasional glimpses of rural life along the banks offer glimpses into the local way of life.



Economic Significance: The backwaters of Alleppey play a pivotal role in Kerala's economy, serving as a vital lifeline for the communities that inhabit its shores. The tourism industry, fuelled by houseboat cruises, homestays, and cultural experiences, generates significant revenue for the region. Additionally, the backwaters support traditional livelihoods such as fishing, coir making, and agriculture, providing employment opportunities for residents.

Houseboat Experience: Our houseboat was a floating oasis of comfort and luxury, equipped with modern amenities yet retaining its rustic charm. As the skilled crew navigated the waterways, I relaxed on the deck observing the bustling activities of other boats and people linked to the whole backwater ecosystem. After that we got the lunch consisting of local ingredients and full of flavours of Kerala. It was a pleasant experience.



Conclusion: As the journey on the cruise ended, I got myself a lifelong memory of the hospitality of the cruise, interaction with the people and understanding the intricate economy of the backwaters closely. The day ended on a good note.

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Thekkady: A view of wildlife through Kerala's Spice Capital

Next day after the cruise journey, our journey continued with the captivating Periyar Tiger Reserve. Situated amidst the Western Ghats, this sanctuary is not only a haven for wildlife enthusiasts but also a treasure trove of cultural and educational experiences. There was a boat ride scheduled for us at the Periyar Lake.

Boat Ride Among the Forest: We started our journey by riding a boat on Periyar Lake. The lake is surrounded by lush forests full of animals. As our boat moved

quietly through the misty scenery, I felt a deep respect for the many different plants and animals that live here and are kept safe. I hoped to see some of the impressive animals, like tigers, who live in



this protected area. But we were only able to spot on group of Elephants while cruising through lake.

Economic Significance: Periyar Tiger Reserve serves as a vital economic lifeline for the local communities residing in its vicinity. The ecotourism initiatives, including boat rides and guided treks, provide sustainable livelihoods for many residents, fostering a sense of stewardship towards the conservation of their natural heritage. Additionally, the reserve's status as a premier wildlife destination attracts tourists from everywhere, bolstering the region's tourism industry and generating revenue that supports conservation efforts.

Cultural Significance: After we got off the boat and walked into the thick greenery of the reserve, I noticed how nature and culture work together here. The local tribal groups, like the Mannan and Paliyan tribes, have lived alongside the wild animals and plants for a long time. They know a lot about using plants for medicine and how to live in a way that does not harm the environment. Talking with these communities showed us their history and how they feel connected to the land spiritually. It reminded us why it is so important to protect their way of life for the people who come after us.



Educational Tour of the Spice Garden:

Continuing our exploration, we embarked on an educational tour of a nearby spice garden, where we saw a variety of spices and ayurvedic products. Amidst the gardens, we learned about the cultivation and processing of an array of aromatic spices such as

cardamom, pepper, and cinnamon, which have been integral to Kerala's cultural and culinary traditions for centuries. Our knowledgeable guide taught us with fascinating information and practical demonstrations, enriching our understanding of the region's agricultural practices and trade history.

Conclusion: As I glimpsed through the memories of Periyar Tiger Reserve, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to immerse myself in the natural and cultural wonders of this wilderness. From the boat rides on Periyar Lake to the exploration of the spice gardens, every moment reminded us of the solid foundation of conserving our planet's biodiversity and cultural heritage. Periyar Tiger Reserve stands as a beacon of hope for conservation efforts worldwide, reminding us of the profound interconnections between humans, wildlife, and the environment.

Munnar: An Exploration of Kerala's Tea Plantations



After thrilling an experience at Periyar Tiger Reserve we embarked our journey towards Munnar is also known as the Kashmir of South India. Here our first destination was Eravikulam National Park, after that we visited the Kalaripayattu arena and after that concluded our day.

Exploring Eravikulam National Park: As I ventured into the forest of Eravikulam National Park, I was mesmerized by the beauty of the place. The park's hilly terrain, adorned with a carpet of wildflowers and grasslands, provided the perfect habitat for an array of wildlife, including the iconic Nilgiri Tahr.



Encounter with the Nilgiri Tahr: I spotted a small herd of Nilgiri Tahr grazing peacefully amidst the rocky outcrops. With their distinctive curved horns and sleek, agile frames, these mountain goats epitomized the rugged beauty of the Western Ghats. As I observed them from a respectful distance, I was amazed at their resilience and adaptation to the harsh mountain

environment, It reminded us why it's so important to protect their delicate home for the people who come after us.

Economic Significance: Eravikulam National Park plays a crucial role in Kerala's tourism industry, attracting nature enthusiasts and wildlife lovers from across the globe. The park's ecotourism initiatives, including guided treks and wildlife safaris, contribute to the local economy by generating employment opportunities for guides, park rangers, and hospitality staff. Additionally, the conservation of the Nilgiri Tahr and other endemic species not only preserves biodiversity but also enhances the region's appeal as a sustainable tourism destination.



Kalaripayattu: My journey through Kerala's cultural landscape continued with an immersive experience in the ancient martial art of Kalaripayattu. Originating in the region centuries ago, Kalaripayattu is more than just a physical discipline; it is a holistic practice that embodies the

principles of balance, agility, and mental focus. Under the guidance of skilled instructors, I immersed myself in the dynamic techniques of this martial art, gaining a deeper appreciation for its cultural significance and timeless relevance.

The journey of the day was an extraordinary feat as we did trek in Eravikulam National Park and after that we watched the Kalaripayattu in action as the martial artists performed and encapsulated us in this timeless tradition and providing us with the glimpses of fast.

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Munnar: Tales from Kerala's Tea Paradise

Continuing the journey through the mountains of Munnar, we embarked on the next day where we had a lot of places to visit at hand. The day began with a visit to Mattupetty Dam followed by Tata Tea Museum and Tea estates. After that we had traditional Kerala lunch sadya and the embarked on the journey towards Kochi.

Morning at Mattupetty Dam: The day commenced with an excursion to Mattupetty Dam. As we approached the dam, the sight of water shining in the morning sun was captivating. We strolled along the dam, soaking in panoramic views of the surrounding tea plantations and mist-covered peaks. The sound of the water flowing downstream made our morning in nature even better.



Visiting the Tea Museum and Estate: After the Mattupetty Das we visited the Tata Tea Museum and the beautiful tea estates of Munnar, and it was an incredible experience. As I walked through the museum, I learned all about the fascinating history of tea production in this region. The exhibits displayed the various stages of tea processing, from plucking the leaves to packaging the final product.



After exploring the museum, I ventured out into the tea estates of Munnar. The landscape was breathtaking, with endless rows of tea bushes stretching out as far as the eye could see. Walking through the estates, I was surrounded by the fresh aroma of tea leaves.

Interaction with the locals at the Tea Estate: I also had the opportunity to interact with some of the tea plantation workers, who shared their knowledge and expertise with me. They explained the intricacies of tea

cultivation and the arduous work that goes into producing each batch of tea. It was inspiring to see their dedication to their craft and the pride they took in their work.

Traditional Kerala Lunch - Sadya: After a morning of exploration, we had a feast of traditional Kerala lunch known as Sadya. Served on a fresh banana leaf,



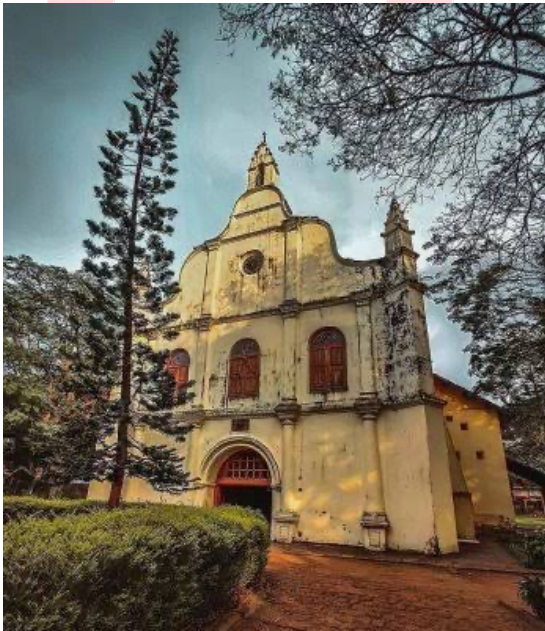
Sadya is a culinary extravaganza that celebrates the rich flavors and textures of Kerala's diverse cuisine. From fragrant rice to an array of mouthwatering curries, pickles, and desserts, each dish tantalized our taste buds with its exquisite blend of spices and aromas.

The day concluded on a good note after which we embarked on our journey to our last destination in this trip which was Kochi. In Munnar we had a wonderful time exploring the cultures of people living there. In my experience the hardships the people here faces and lack of resources there makes it tough to sustain. After this trip my respect for the people living the hilly terrain has grown a lot and hope the learnings stay with me.

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Kochi: Journey through Kerala's Historic Port City

Our last day of the trip started with the local attractions of Kochi with a captivating exploration of Fort Kochi, Mattancherry Palace, and the Jewish Synagogue. We had a learning of cultural and historical story of Kochi. From Dutch to British and Royal family of Thiruvananthapuram, everyone had influence over this city which made this city a cultural melting pot of vibrancies of different societies. After that we had an NGO attachment in which we learnt a lot about the hardships that people who are homeless faces.



the essence of Fort Kochi.

Cultural Significance of Fort Kochi: I ventured into the heart of Kochi's cultural heritage with a visit to Fort Kochi. Steeped in colonial history, this charming enclave is adorned with architectural marvels that bear witness to its storied past. The iconic Chinese fishing nets lining the waterfront stand as a testament to the city's maritime legacy, while the centuries-old St. Francis Church echoes with the whispers of bygone eras. As I wandered through the narrow lanes, each step was a journey through time, revealing layers of cultural fusion and historical intrigue that define

Exploring Mattancherry Palace: Next on our itinerary was a visit to the illustrious Mattancherry Palace, also known as the Dutch Palace. Situated amidst the bustling streets of Mattancherry, this architectural gem offers a glimpse into Kerala's royal heritage and artistic legacy. The palace's exquisite murals, depicting scenes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, captivated my imagination and transported me to a bygone era of wealth and artistry. As I traced the footsteps of kings and queens through ornate chambers and verdant courtyards, I was amazed at the enduring legacy of Kerala's regal traditions.



Journey to the Jewish Synagogue: My cultural journey culminated in a visit to the historic Jewish Synagogue, a testament to Kochi's multicultural fabric. Situated amidst the vibrant lanes of Jew Town, this sacred sanctuary is a symbol of Kerala's age-old Jewish community and their contributions to the city's cultural mosaic. The synagogue's crafted interiors, adorned with sparkling chandeliers and hand-painted tiles, spoke volumes about the resilience and resilience of Kochi's diverse communities. As I offered a silent prayer of gratitude, I reflected on the profound significance of preserving and celebrating cultural heritage in an ever-changing world.



Study of Theruvorum NGO and its impact on society

Situated in Kochi, Theruvorum NGO stands as a support system in the community. Intrigued by its reputation for transformative work, we embarked on a journey to uncover the inner workings, notable achievements, and profound impact of this remarkable organization on society.

1. Finding the core of Theruvorum:

Entering Theruvorum's modest office, I was greeted by a sense purpose in the ambience. Founded with a vision to uplift members of society who are homeless or belonging to the streets, Theruvorum has become an organisation for community empowerment. Its mission is simple yet profound: to create a more equitable and inclusive world for all.

2. A list of Initiatives:

One of Theruvorum's most impactful initiatives is its comprehensive education program, which aims to provide quality schooling to children from marginalized backgrounds. Through innovative teaching methods, after-school support, and community engagement activities, the NGO has succeeded in breaking the cycle of poverty and empowering countless young minds to dream big and achieve their goals.

3. Empowering Lives, Transforming Communities:

My interaction with Murugan S, the founder of Theruvorum offered poignant insights into the profound impact of its interventions. They have provided shelters to the people who are not accepted by the society. And other than that, they served the purpose of rehabilitations of poor people. They have done the commendable job.

4. Celebrating Milestones, Sowing Seeds of Change:

As I reflected on Theruvorum's journey, I could not help but felt amazed at its remarkable achievements and unwavering commitment to social justice. From humble beginnings to becoming a driving force for positive change, the NGO's trajectory is a testament to the power of passion, perseverance, and community solidarity.

5. Conclusion:

Leaving Theruvorum, I felt inspired by their stories and their commitment to making the world a better place. In a world where things aren't always fair,

organizations like Theruvoram show us that change is possible. I'm going to carry their values with me and do my part to help others, just like they do.



Meeting with Sri Murukan S Theruvorum, Founder of the NGO at his institute.

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Conclusion of This Study Tour and Key Learnings

In wrapping up, my trip to Kerala has been wonderful and captivating. I got to explore the state's beautiful nature, learnt about its culture, and see how people there live and work. From the peaceful temples of Thiruvananthapuram to calm backwaters of Alleppey to the green tea fields of Munnar and to historical significance of Kochi, each place helped me to form a perspective of Kerala's history and traditions.

Our trip to Kerala changed me in a positive way, helping me to understand more about the people and culture there.

By talking to locals and experts, we got a real feel for what life is like in Kerala and the problems the people of Kerala faces. We also learned about cool ideas people are using to make things better. This trip wasn't just educational, it was also really meaningful, leaving us wanting to learn more about Kerala and do our part to help it grow in a fair and sustainable way.

Key Learnings and Insights Gained

1. **Time Management**: Learn to prioritize tasks, plan activities in organized way and ahead of time, and adapt to changes on the go so that we can pivot where it requires.
2. **Team Building**: Enhance communication, evoke camaraderie, foster cooperation, and resolve conflicts peacefully within your team. If the team works in cohesion, then we can better incorporate the views of team members so that whole work can be done smoothly.
3. **Leadership**: Develop quick decision-making skills, delegate tasks effectively, and maintain team motivation and positivity.

Reflecting on these aspects during our trip we can improve our time management, teamwork, and leadership skills, benefiting both our professional and personal life.