

REPORT ON BHARAT DARSHAN

By- Bharat Rangila

OT Code - B82

This is a report on Bharat Darshan-cum-Study Tour, which was organized by MCR HRD institute from 28th April to 4th May 2024. I in a group of 61 officer trainee and faculty member Sri Saka Venkateswara Rao visited many Places in Kerala.

Faculty member: Sri Saka Venkateswara Rao

Day 1- 28th April

Our group of 61 members along with the faculty member, started our journey from MCR HRD Institute of Telangana, Jubilee Hills on On 28th April at 03:00 AM. Our group boarded the Indigo flight 6E 5278, at 6:10 AM from Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad to Thiruvananthpuram. We reached Thiruvananthpuram International Airport at 07:45 hours.

- i. Padmanabhaswamy temple:



We first visited Padmanabhaswamy temple. One of the most important point that drew my attention was the dress code. Women are required to wear sarees, Mundum Neriyathum (set-mundu), skirt and blouse, or half-saree, whereaa men have to wear Dhoti.

Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple Trivandrum stands out for the detailed work in stone and bronze. The architecture is a fusion of Dravidian architectural style and Kerala style, and the temple resembles Adi Kesava Perumal temple of Thiruvattar. Even the deities look similar, lying in a reclining posture.

The magnificent seven-tier high gopuram, carved with elaborate designs, is the first structure you will notice. The large corridor inside is supported by beautifully carved stone pillars and sculptures of various Hindu deities. Beautiful murals also adorn the walls and ceilings in various parts of the temple.

Padmanabhaswamy Temple is the richest temple in the world. The Padmanabhaswamy Temple trust, headed by the royal family of Travancore, looks after the assets.

The treasure is a collection of valuable objects accumulated over several thousands of years. It includes coins, statues, ornaments and many other precious artefacts, donated by rulers and traders from around the world.

The list includes kings from South Indian kingdoms like the Cheras, the Pandyas and the Pallavas, rulers from Greece, Jerusalem, Rome and other traders who came to visit the temple. Donations also poured in from various colonial powers of Europe.

And because of its wealth, the temple has also been referred to as the Golden Temple in various literatures.

The palm leaves records tell a lot about Padmanabhaswamy Temple treasure, and the gold and precious stones donated to the temple.

ii. Veli village

Veli tourist village is kind of little away(10-12 Kms) from the Trivandrum city and located in a not so crowded area amid the backdrop of the Veli Lake. This place has an awesome all-around view from the middle of the lake with an option to use pedal boat, row boat or motor boat. It also has a nice children's park for young kids thus offering something for everyone in the family and ideal to have a daylong picnic. There are couple of food stalls and ice-cream shops priced typical of any tourist place. Overall a great experience and one of the not to miss tourist places in Trivandrum city.



Day 2

i. Kovalam beach

Kovalam is an internationally renowned beach with three adjacent crescent beaches. It has been a favourite haunt of tourists since the 1930s. A massive rocky promontory on the beach has created a beautiful bay of calm waters ideal for sea bathing.

The leisure options at this beach are plenty and diverse. Sunbathing, swimming, herbal body toning massages, special cultural programmes and catamaran cruising are some of them. The tropical sun acts so fast that one can see the faint blush of coppery tan on the skin in a matter of

minutes. Life on the beach begins late in the day and carries on well into the night. The beach complex includes a string of budget cottages, Ayurvedic health resorts, convention facilities, shopping zones, swimming pools, Yoga and Ayurvedic massage centres.

Accommodation facilities for tourists at Kovalam range from five star hotels to budget hotels and the choice of food available at restaurants and cafeterias range from Continental varieties to South Indian delicacies.

ii. Alleppey (venice of the east)



At around 9am we departed from Trivandrum to alleppey. We reached our destination at 2pm. Alleppey is famous for its canals, backwaters, beaches and lagoons. We had booked a backwater cruise to see the scenic man made islands and beautiful sights of coconut fringed backwaters and paddy fields. All the staff of the cruiseboat was local and they acted as our guide for the backwaters journey. The cruise started from pamba river and went upto vembanad lake. Total distance covered was around 15km (to and fro). The path traversed by us is part

of national waterway 3. The scope of road and railways development in alleppey is limited and that's why the development of waterway in this area has proved to be a boon for traditional industries such as coir, cashew and fishing. It is the first national waterway in the country with 24 hour navigation facilities along the entire stretch.

The economy of alleppey is based on paddy farming, tourism and coir industry. Alleppey is part of Kuttanad region, this region has the lowest altitude in India, and is one of the few places in the world where farming is carried on around 1.2 to 3.0 metres below sea level. The region is known as the rice bowl of Kerala and it is also the part of second largest Ramsar site in India. To stop the saltwater intrusion into the Kuttanad, a 1252m long saltwater barrier, Thanneermukkom has been built on Vembanad lake.

Besides its backwaters, alleppey is also famous for its coir industry. Coir is extracted from the outer husk of coconut and is used to make ropes, twine, brooms and brushes, doormats, etc.

After disembarking from the boat, we went to our hotel and later in the evening we went to some coir shops to see the coir products.

Day 3

i. Periyar National Park:



Periyar National Park is a beautiful park located in the mountains of the Western Ghats in Kerala. The scenery is wonderful and there is a large variety of flora and fauna. We stayed in KTDC's Aranya Nivas inside the forest and took two safaris - Gavi Safari and the Boating. We booked both online. For Gavi Safari, which starts early in the morning, we needed to reach the parking area outside the forest. Fortunately, we had our own car; else it would be difficult to reach there if you are staying inside the forest. There are no arrangements from the forest department. The safari itself was good and breakfast was provided at the end. Arrangements for the boating were poor. Seats were provided at random and not on the basis of the date of booking. There is only one entry point for tourists for all four boats (there were four boats for the 3.30pm safari) which makes it chaotic. The landing point is infested with monkeys which can be pretty aggressive. The ride, as such, was good and the scenery great. We could see deer, gaurs and wild boars but very few elephants. We had also seen the black langurs, which are unique to this eco system, during our walk through the park. The park is definitely worth visiting but the forest department needs to improve the arrangements for the safaris.

- ii. From Periyar tiger reserve, we proceeded to our next destination Munnar and reached there by 11pm. On the way from Thekkady to Munnar we witnessed many tea, spice and rubber plantations.

Day 4

Eravikulam National Park:



Eravikulam national park situated next to anaimudi peak. It is famous for Nilgiri Tahr. If you're lucky, you can see these Tahr. Please bear in mind, it is a forest and try to make a calm environment. Don't make weird noises as it will scare the wild animals. The entry ticket is 200 for an adult and they will carry you in a van to a spot midst of the mountain range. From there you can walk further to the hilltop. You will witness a beautiful landscape, clouds, tiny waterfalls.

Day 5

- i. Mattupetty Dam:

The Mattupetty Dam itself is massive, especially during the rainy season when it's filled with water. You can walk along a road that goes across the dam, with the dam gate on one side and a beautiful valley on the other. You don't need tickets to walk across; you can park nearby and stroll over for the best views. If you're planning to go, definitely bring a cap to protect yourself from the sun. The whole experience was fantastic. At the dam, you can take various boat rides like jet skis, pedal boats, and kayaks while enjoying stunning mountain views. The whole place is peaceful, and the breeze makes it even better. It's a great spot to relax, and if you're into photography or nature, you'll love it. You might even see some wildlife along the shores. Boat rides are a big draw here. You can take a bigger boat with an upper deck for a nice tour of the dam. There's also a speedboat option, but it's pricier at Rs. 750 per person. Pedal boats and kayaks are more affordable, at Rs. 200 and Rs. 400 respectively. If you're lucky, you might see elephants by the lake. The dam is located on the way to Eco Point, and parking is Rs. 20 for cars. Besides boating, you can go horseback riding or take an elephant ride. They also have snacks, tea, and coffee available, along with restrooms and a professional photoshoot set up at a nearby tea garden. Just be aware that cell service isn't great, so it's smart to bring cash.

ii. Tata tea museum:



The Tata Tea Museum provides a glimpse into the tea-making process and has a small but informative exhibit on the history of

tea production and its heritage. While the museum may be considered basic and the experience somewhat rushed, visitors can still learn about tea cultivation, harvesting, and the intricate process of making tea. A 30-minute documentary is shown to visitors, and the quality of the speakers could be improved.

The entry fee of Rs.125 per person is considered by some as slightly high, especially since there is an additional Rs.120 charge for tea tasting. However, the tea-making process demonstration is interesting, and visitors get to sample various teas, which is enjoyable for tea enthusiasts. The museum is suitable for families and kids, with ample parking space available at no extra cost.

Guided tours are available, with guides explaining the process in English, Hindi, and Malayalam. The tea museum has a variety of teas and related products available for purchase at reasonable prices. Additionally, you can find antique collections from the Munnar bungalows, including various ripple products, chocolates, saffron, and spices. The museum's surroundings feature lush tea gardens, where professional photographers offer photoshoots.

Despite its small size, the tea museum offers a decent experience for visitors interested in tea and its history. It's open from 09:00 to 16:00 hrs, but closed on Mondays, so plan your visit accordingly.

Tea estates

The tea museum is situated in the Nallathanni Estate, which is owned by Kanan Devan Hills Plantations Company Private Limited. Some of the plantations of KDHP are open to public. We visited some of the tea estates and saw how the tea workers plucked tea leaves. For plucking the pluckers take first two leaves and a bud. Plucking is a labour intensive business and hand plucking is economical than machine plucking.

Day 6

i. Cherai Beach:

It's a narrow beach but good water and waves not too rough but probably not suitable for young kids. The big problem is lack of infrastructure. Unlike Goa or Kovalam there are no resorts or



restaurants actually on the beach. They are all across a road. It's hard to get a beer although there are a couple of places. There are a lack of moderate places to stay. It's either expensive resorts or home stays.same with restaurants although the Lilliput is good and recommended. Probably good for a night or two to break a journey but not for a long stay.

ii. Fort Kochi



Fort Kochi, the western part of the Kochi city of Ernakulam district in Kerala. It is about 12 km away from Ernakulam Town. Fort Kochi has played an important role in the history of Kerala. Fort Kochi also has several attractions like the Santa Cruz Basilica. Fort Kochi also houses many historical monuments such as the St. Francis Church, the first church of Vasco da Gama, the Dutch Seminary, the China Vela and many others. The Indian Navy's ship, Dronacharya, is located in Fort Kochi.

The Mattancherry Palace is close by. Fort Kochi was the first European township in Kerala. The Fort Kochi carnival celebrates New Year's Eve every year. Thousands of people come to visit this carnival. The car rides and other festive events are also part of the carnival

iii. Mattancherry Palace

This place shows Royal Kochi culture. Their history is very well presented on different walls and ceilings of the palace with the

help of drawings and sculptures. In the center area of two or three halls, there are beautiful display of their war clothes, war arms and war heads. Also displays of Royal clothes and their Royal Family wall frame are there. It's worth place to explore Royal kochi and its history.

At the end, on 4th May 2024, we boarded our flight from Kochi Internation Airport on 11:30 PM, though it was scheduled on 10:30 pm, as our flight was delayed by 1 hour. After reaching Rajiv Gandhi international airport at 01:00 am, we headed towards MCR HRD institute of Telengana, by bus, which was provided by the institute.