The word tour has a source from the Hebrew word ‘torah’ which means learning, studying or searching and the word tourism relates to tour, which is derived from the Latin word ‘tomes’ which means a tool for describing a circle. An overview of history of civilised world reveals that man has been fascinated by travel and had the urge to discover the unknown, to explore new and strange places, to seek changes of environment and to undergo new experiences. Travel to achieve these ends is not new, but tourism is relatively a modern concept.

Tourism has already become a flourishing industry and is the third largest export industry in India. Kerala Tourism enjoys the privilege of being the only tourism destination in the listing which is being done for the first time in the country. The rate of growth in Foreign Tourists Arrivals (FTA) and Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE) from tourism and the total revenue generated from tourism to the State of Kerala has shown an impressively higher rate than that of the national average, over the last few years. Apart from the scenic splendor, moderate climate, clean environment, a friendly and peace-loving people the eco-friendly practices, long-term approach to tourism and potential for creating unique tourism products made tourism a successful and sustainable venture in Kerala both for domestic and foreign tourists. Tourism as such is not exporting anything tangible, but is a potential source for earning foreign exchange. It provides avenues for the promotion of culture, tradition
and ancestral heritage of the country. It enabled to retain many of the vanishing arts including performing arts.

Cultural heritage tourism is concerned with identification, management and protection of the heritage values, understanding the impact of tourism on communities and regions, achieving economic and social benefits, providing financial resources for protection.

The concept of Heritage tourism is well poised to carve a niche in the world tourism market. More than a concept, heritage tourism is the realization of the value of nature’s priceless gifts bestowed upon us. Though the state of Kerala has wide range of tourism products, only a few has come to the forefront and Heritage tourism happened to acquire higher volume of business than other segments. Foreign tourists had shown a tendency to stay for longer periods and spend more money in visiting Heritage centers in Kerala. When compared to other segments of tourism, Heritage or cultural tourism account for larger share of tourism at the international and national level.

It thus calls for an assessment about the present conditions, problems, and prospects related to heritage tourism. Moreover an assessment about the commercial viability will help to identify the commercial prospects of heritage tourism in future.