# Chapter 4

**KERALA TOURISM – AN OBSERVATION**

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The term tourist is said to be derived from the word ‘tour’ which is meant a journey, at which one returns to the starting point, a circular trip, usually for business, pleasure or education. Tourist is a person who makes a journey for the sake of curiosity, for the fun of traveling or just to tell others that he has traveled. (Webster’s Dictionary, 19th Century)

Now tourism is considered as a composite phenomenon embracing a whole range of different relationships between travelers and host population. This new approach made possible development of traveling business as an industry.

4.1 The Concept of Tourism

Tourism means short term movement of people to destination outside the place where they normally live and work, and their activities during their stay at these destinations.

It involves the study of demand for and supply of accommodation and supportive services for the people who are staying away from home and the resultant pattern of expenditure, income creation and employment.

4.2 Basic facilities for tourism

Facilities provided for tourism fall into two main categories-

1) Facilities which are common to all types of resorts providing for general tourist needs such as accommodation, catering, entertainment, leisure, and relaxation and providing basic technical infrastructure for resort operation.

2) Facilities which are identified with particular localities, utilizing the resources of the site and surroundings for more specific pursuits in recreation which characterize the nature of the resort.

4.3 Tourism as an industry

Industries are made up of firms which produce the same products or groups of products so that the consumers regard these as ideal substitute for one another even though the products may differ slightly.
Tourism is a multi – segment industry. It is a service industry whose products are consumed on the spot forming invisible exports. Tourism is an industry because of the following reasons –

a) Products tangible or intangible serving certain needs should be considered as an industrial product.

b) An amalgamation of product characterizing their overall functions and determining their place in economic life should be considered as an industry.

c) Tourism gives rise to the development of other industries like, hospitality and transport. So we can see it as a multi – segment industry or a composite industry.

d) It is an industry whose products are consumed on the spot.

e) It is an industry with no clear boundaries.

f) The declaration of this sector as an industry envisages a package of incentives and support services to the sector.

The tourism industry in Kerala can be classified on the basis of different types of tourism.

4.3.1 Health Tourism:

Thousands of foreigners are coming to Kerala for the local concepts of rejuvenation and restoration that is embodied in the Ayurveda system of treatment. For the visitor, the holiday is a stress – buster. Although ideally the treatment last for a month, there are shorter courses meant for the tourist in hurry. Many are the visitors who patronize Ayurveda and during this holiday take up short courses that will help them run parlous abroad. Notable among the centers providing the Ayurveda package are Somatheerham Resort, Hotel Samudra, Manamtheeram, Dr. Franklin’s Panchakarma Institute and five star hotels here.
A system of medicine which goes for treating the person and not the disease cannot have a universal cure for people from all climes. The herbal oil bath is a favourite for the tourist. Structuring the treatment according to the demands from the markets some offer a body purification course, slimming programme, rejuvenation, beauty care, yoga, and stress management, dhara massage combination. The time of stay can vary one week to fourteen days for any of these courses. Many of the foreigners come here to master the Kalaripayattu – a martial art form and their exposure to the medicinal aspect opens one more avenue for misuse of the knowledge acquired.

Here the tourists need accommodation for the period of treatment. There is chance for hotel industries with professionally qualified persons. It also requires skilled persons in the field of uzhichal, pizhichal, etc, who are professionals in ayurvedic system of medicine.

4.3.2 Pilgrimage Tourism Destinations in Kerala:

One of the important pilgrim places in Kerala is Sabarimala of Lord Ayyappa. It is a day’s walk from Thekkady through picturesque forests. Every year lakhs of people visit Shabarimala for whom different kinds of services required.

Sri Padmanabha Swami Temple in the Fort area of Trivandrum will delight the tourist with brilliant specimens of Dravidian architecture. Entry is restricted to Hindus. The Attukal Devi temple in Thiruvananthapuram is famous for Ponkala Mholsavam, where the entry strictly restricted to ladies. Another pilgrim place in Kerala is Sree Narayana Religious Complex in Varkala. Sri Narayanaguru was a social reformer and religious teacher of the early years of last century.

Aranmula Parthasarathy Temple organizes a grand spectacle of snake boat races on the Pamba river on the fifth day after Thiruvonam in August/September. Thousands of people are attracted to the boat race.

The Pooram festival in May at Vadakkunathan temple with dazzling display of scores of caparisoned elephants in line and silken umbrellas is what
qualifies the city “Thrissur” as a must in tourism literature. It is again the railroad for a side trip to Guruvayoor, the most famous Sree Krishna temple in India.

The most important pilgrim place in Wayanad is Thirunelly temple, which attracts a large number of tourists every year. This is famous for ‘Pithritharpanam’. One of the important pilgrim places in North Kerala is the Parassinikkadavu Sree Muthappan temple, situated 14 km away from Kannur town, a pilgrim place of Hindus.

Most of the pilgrim places in Kerala are unique with their ‘prasadams’. The production of such prasadams provides employment opportunities. It requires the services of skilled persons. All these places require accommodation and transportation facilities. It also requires the services of guides, where the tourists do not know about the customs and conditions prevailing in various temples. Certain items are necessary for the operations of each temple. The sale of such items also provides employment opportunities.

4.3.3 Cultural and Heritage Tourism:

The temple of Sri.Padmanabha Swamy (Bhagwan Vishnu) which was rebuilt by Raja Marthandavarma in 1733 AD with its magnificent gopuram of seven storeyed heights was deity of the state. Its historical background also is an important factor which has given it special gravity. Besides these there are other attractions too, such as Napier Museum, Sri Chithra Art Gallery, Natural History Museum, Science and Technology Museum, Museum Art Gallery and Zoo in Thiruvananthapuram, the political capital of Kerala.

Cochin has a rich combination of Jewish Synagogue, Dutch architecture, some mosques, temples and Chinese fishing nets. All represent different culture and history. The Jewish Synagogue was built in 1568AD in Mattanchery. The Great scrolls of the old testaments, the copper plates in which the grants of privilege made by the Cochin rulers were recorded and the exquisite Chinese hand printed tiles are antiquities of interest. All tiles are unique in design no two
are similar and over 200 years old. There are five silver and gold crowns which were gifted to the synagogue by various patrons.

Mattacncherry Palace was built in 1555 AD by Portuguese and presented to the Cochin Raja. In 1663 the Dutch repaired. There is a portrait gallery of Cochin Rajas, many rooms with murals on Ramayana, made in the 17th century. The man made island Wellingdon, the Bolghatty Island with Dutch made palace and the Gundu islands are attractive for tourists.

Alleppy, 60km from Cochin, is full of canals, waterways and temples. There is famous snake temple. There are at least 4000 granite stone snake idols.

The active people of Kerala, their festivals, cultural activities, etc are also added attractions in themselves. The tourism calendar of Kerala begins with Onam, the harvest festival occurs in August – September. The state Govt. now celebrates it as tourism week. During Onam festival Kerala celebrates six months long Nrithotsavam from October. Dance programmes are organized by the Tourism Dept. The main attractions of Kerala are socio-cultural in nature. There are many important temples in Kerala of religious importance. There are about a dozen cave temples in the state. The main temples are Kaviyoor, Kottakal, Thrivikramangalam, Padmanabhaswami in Trivandrum, Bhagwati in Kodungalloor, Guruvayoor, etc. Each of these temples is maintaining their own peculiar traditions from centuries.

Different fairs and festivals attract a large number of people. The Kerala Kalamandalam in Cheruthuruthi founded and nurtured by the great poet of Kerala, Vallathol, which is one of the important places of cultural tourism. Vallathol Narayana Menon was a literary giant of great gifts and rare poetic insights. Kerala Kalamandalam is an academy to revive Kerala’s theatrical and temple arts. Kathakali, Kerala’s own dance system is taught here. Mohini Attom, another of Kerala’s native art forms can also see here.

The cultural tourism provides employment to musicians and artists which are seasonal in nature. The art galleries and museums require the services of
many professionally qualified persons. Boarding and lodging are necessary for the tourists which provide job opportunities. The manufacturing and sale of handy craft products are another area of employment related with cultural tourism. It uses the local resources like the waste of coconuts, etc. This type of industry requires less amount of capital. The tourist polices can help the tourists in these areas by providing protection and guidance.

4.3.4 Ecotourism:

Kerala is a small state bounded by Eastern high lands and endless water body of Arabian Sea on the west. The different elements of ecological phenomena are interrelated. The ecotourism in Kerala begins with the establishment of Thenmala Ecotourism, the India’s first planned ecotourism destination. Ecotourism is tourism with a commitment to earth. Thenmala Ecotourism envisages three components, i.e, Eco-friendly general tourism, Ecotourism and Pilgrimage tourism. There are facilities for boating in wildlife sanctuary. There is a deer rehabilitation center. The National Adventure Foundation conducts soft trekking programmes and night camps for one to three days in Thenmala. An eco-pilgrimage circuit connecting three Ayyappa temples at Kualthupuzha, Aryan Kavu and Achankoil is possible from Thenmala. Now the Govt. has decided to promote ecotourism in Paithal mala of Kannur district, which is a place suitable for adventure tourism.

The services of tourist polices are most useful in the place of adventure tourism. Accommodations which do not destroy the natural beauty are one of the peculiarities of ecotourism. This requires the services of specialized persons. The security guards can play an important role in adventure tourism.

4.3.5 Coastal Tourism (Beach Tourism):

Being a coastal state with a coastline of about 575km, the sea played an important role in shaping the history of Kerala. The sea facilitates connections with many western countries. Kovalam, the celebrate beach resort, is situated in Trivandrum district. It is one of the finest beaches in the world. The sea lying at the foot of rocky promontory is like a placid pond during the season when any
one may bath in safety. Veli, near Trivandrum, is a lake ideal for boating. It is a rural area and visitors can take a good look around to Kerala life in a natural setting. The Papanasini beach in Varkala is known for its springs and rocky cliffs. Cherai beach is a lovely beach bordering Vypeen island is ideal for swimming. Dolphins are occasionally seen here. Kappad beach in Kozhikode is where Vascode Gama had landed in 1698AD. The legends woven around its historic origins and traditions cast a mystical spell on this beach. Bekal fort in Kasaragod is a classical beautiful palm fringed beach. Muzhappilangad beach is protected by black rocks and makes it swimmer’s paradise. This is Kerala’s only drive in beach where you can drive down the entire length of 4km. The payyambalam beach in Kannur also attracts many visitors.

The life guards are the persons who will help the tourists when they fall in the sea. These persons are specialized in swimming. It provides employment opportunities in beaches. Guides and tourist polices can also help the tourists in beaches. Accommodation with the facility to see sunrise and sunset are more preferable to the tourists. It will provide employment to many people in the locality.

4.3.6 Serious Tourism:

Serious tourism means making arrangements for the meeting of big business corporates. There are event management group who provide all facilities for the conduct of conferences and seminars. They arrange the meetings and conferences as per the requirements of the business units. The meetings may be at the Kettuvellam (Conference on Wave) or at the Vehicle (Conference on Wheels). Here the event management group arranges all facilities for the conferences inside the kettuvallam or vehicle. The participants of the meeting can enjoy the spirit of back water without spending more time. Many of the foreign companies prefer Kerala as destination for their conferences.

4.4 Tourism industry in Kerala – The Facilities Available

Natural beauty of Kerala is very famous in the world. Nature has endowed Kerala with a lavish decoration of all beautiful lagoons, golden beaches, backwaters, blue – green mountain ranges, wild life sanctuaries, historical
monuments, temples, churches and mosques. It is the land of Kathakali, Kalariapayattu, Elephant show, boat races, etc. everything full of action and zeal.

Tourism in Kerala is going through a significant stage of growth and development. The Department of Tourism has played a vital role in the development tourism in the state. It is working towards long-term goals of establishing tourism as a major development factor in the State. Better hotels, restaurants and other facilities alone will not develop tourism. Along with the Department of Tourism’s efforts to facilitate adequate infrastructure for the same, it is equally important that steps be taken to create and maintain a collective mind-set among the people of the State with a positive orientation towards tourism and hospitality. Our motto should be to receive a guest and to send back a friend. Tourism and the hospitality industry can develop only with the cooperation and wholehearted patronage of a friendly and hospitable host community.

4.4.1 Transportation

Tourism cannot be separated from travel. The modes of travel determine the size of tourism market. In Kerala, the transport facilities include surface transport, waterways and airways. Surface transport consists of road and rail transport. Road tourism has become a way of life with middle class families in Kerala. There are private vehicles and Govt. vehicles which provide transport facilities to tourists. It includes buses, rental cars, tourist vehicles, etc. The Govt. service in this field is the buses run by Kerala State Road Transport Corporation. The rail also plays an important role in transportation. The rail transport is more suitable for long distance and it is more comfortable.

Today, there are few passengers shipping in the world offering transport on port – to – port basis. In land waterways – lakes, rivers and canals, in any country are a source of excellent water borne holiday. It can take the form of day excursion and even longer cruises on the lakes or rivers. Kerala is a land of lakes and rivers. In our state there are numbers of lakes and back waters. Veli
tourist village in Thiruvananthapuram is ideal for boating. It is rural area and visitors can take a good look around to see Kerala life in a natural setting. There is a wide range opportunity for boating. In Kerala every district has one or two backwaters and lakes which are suitable for boating. The tourists are interested in boating.

There are three airports in Kerala. There is not much scope for airways for internal transportation. So the govt. has to take essential steps to promote domestic airways which help the busy tourists to visit the important places within a short period of time. This will increase the foreign exchange earnings of the state and thereby provide employment opportunities.

Tourist movements at the destination and nearby attractions give demand to local transport needs. The demand first emerges from the very point where tourists disembarks the main transport, i.e. railway station, airport or bus stand. In Kerala the link transport is mainly provided by the private taxi operators. There is a wide scope for link transport in the state. Taxies on hire are available for local transportation. Government Transport Corporation has their buses to different routes. The local transportation in the state is mainly done by the private buses.

The taxi drivers must know the city well, should be polite, have correct meters, follow traffic rules, try to learn more languages, etc. For this purpose special training should be given to such drivers and taxi operators. Some luxury hotels prefer to run their own luxury buses or transport services.

4.4.2 Accommodation

The character and composition of tourist accommodation has changed considerably over the last 20 years as new types of accommodation have evolved to meet demands for greater economy and informality such as self catering family units, hostels and camping sites, and self ownership of holiday homes. Types of accommodation and the range of services they offer are continuously changing to reflect market needs. Boarding houses, guest houses
and pensions are generally smaller units offering inclusive accommodation and meals for residents for longer period of time. Hotels provide accommodation, meals and refreshment for irregular period of time.

The accommodation facilities in Kerala are provided mainly by private hotels and govt. guest houses. The private hotels include star hotels and unclassified hotels. The star hotels provide more facilities to tourists as per their requirements. But the number of star hotels in the state is very less as compared to unclassified hotels. The star hotels focus mainly the rich people. The unclassified hotels provide food and accommodation to the tourists at a reasonable price. The unclassified hotels affordable to the middle class people. The guest houses run by govt., P W D and KTDC provide accommodation facilities to tourists in all districts. They charge a reasonable fee for their services. The KTDC also provides beer parlor facilities in their guest houses.

4.4.3 Travel Agencies and Tour Operators

A tour operator is responsible for delivering services. He normally offers a variety of packages which collectively known as ‘tour programmes’. Packages may be for individuals or groups and may be independent or escorted. A travel agency’s functions have diversified considerably. Today, a major source of travel agent’s income is through the development of package tours, tailor made at the request of the client or sold as a ready made package. As a part of their diversification, travel agents operate their own city sightseeing tours and excursions. Some travel agents have their own tourist coaches and cars and offer regular sightseeing tours at a fixed price. Excursion tours include lunches, local entertainment and overnight accommodation where necessary.

In Kerala there are large number of travel agents and tour operators in all districts. The travel agents and tour operators in the state are mainly under private sector. They provide all service necessary for a traveler like air ticketing, passport services, etc. They arrange sight seeing and tour packages as per the requirements of the clients. In dams and backwaters they arrange boating facilities.
4.4.4 Entertainment and Recreation

Entertainment is an essential component in tourism. Mostly it is during the evening or night that tourists look for or are provided entertainment through various means. This may include dance, theatre, movie, theme dinner, musical evening, etc. At any destination this has provided employment to local artists and performers. Kerala is famous for its culture and heritage. The active people of Kerala, their festivals, cultural activities, etc. are also added attractions. The tourism calendar of Kerala begins with Onam, the harvest festival occurs in August – September. The state govt. now celebrates it as tourism week. The performing arts like, Kathakali, Mohiniyattom, Thiruvathira, etc provide many employment opportunities to the local people. There are possibilities for recreation centers attached to hotels and tourist destinations. The hotels can organize musical nights or dance performances during tourist seasons.

4.4.5 Tourist Police

In states like Kerala and Goa we now have tourist police and the idea is picking up. The concept is rather new and unusual. The nature of work does not include crime detection and traffic control. Rather a smartly attired tourist policeman is supposed to guide tourists politely regarding their needs and to answer queries. Besides he also takes care of their security needs with special concern, if needed. They need special training in hospitality and communication. In Kerala the number of tourist polices are very low. If the govt. takes necessary steps, it will provide employment opportunities to many people.

The system of tourist police was started first time at Kovalam and Kochi in 1993. During the year 2002, the govt. spreads this system in other places also. Now there are two hundred and ten tourists polices working in the state. They are working in a separate wing under the Dept. of Police. Their main duty is protection and guidance of tourists. They have been given a short term training related with tourism in collaboration with KITTS.
4.4.6 Communications

Tourism involves being away from home and work environment. But at the same time while away the tourist does want to occasionally communicate back home with family members and friends or parcel gifts. Hence communication services like Post office, Public call office, etc. should be there at the destinations or in the nearby towns. This provides employment opportunities to number of persons by starting STD/ISD booths and internet cafes.

4.4.7 Photography

One of the most popular services at destination is that of photographers. Tourists not only like to have photographs in the surroundings but also in the costume and attire of the region they visit. The local people can sell the costume of the locality to the tourists or they can provide these dresses on rent basis. Professional photographers have much wide scope in these areas, especially in the tourist seasons. The services of photographers are not much available in Kerala. So it is necessary to make aware the local people about needs of tourists and thereby many employment opportunities can be created.

4.4.8 Guides and Escorts

The guiding and escorting are highly professional business and require acquisition of special skill for successful careers. A professional guide is in varying degrees a business person – often freelance, sometimes employee, a travel industry representative, a public relations representative, for his site, city, region, and country – as well as an educator or entertainer and a public speaker among other roles. He must there fore, possess a broad based knowledge of the areas or subject being dealt with so as to be able to inform the tourists about it. An escort is supposed to perform the role of an accompanying manager to a subject expert. Unlike a guide he is not free from his responsibilities throughout the duration of the tourists stay. In fact an escort is responsible for the entire group during the journey and at the destination. In Kerala, there are lack of professional guides and escorts. The service of the guides and escorts are
essential in all destinations of our state. So the govt. and private institution should take necessary steps to provide training facilities in this area. This will provide employment opportunities to the local people.

4.4.9 Massag Centres

Thousands of foreigners are coming to Kerala for the local concepts of rejuvenation and restoration that is embodied in the Ayurveda system of treatment. For the visitors, the holiday is a stress – buster. A system of medicine which goes for treating the person and not the disease cannot have a universal cure for people from all climes. The herbal oil bath is a favourite for the tourists. There is wide scope for our ayurvedic system of treatment. Many hotels provide different programmes like Body purification course, Slimming programme, Rejuvenation, Beauty care, Yoga and stress management, Dhara massage combination, etc. Many of the foreigners come here to master the Kalaripayattu – a martial art form and their exposure to the medical aspect opens one more avenue for employment opportunities. The services provided in this area are not sufficient to meet the requirements of the tourists. So, necessary steps should be taken to improve these facilities.

4.4.10 Life Guards

The life guards provide their services in the beach areas. It is another area of service which provides employments to many people in the beach. They are expert in swimming and they are ready to take steps when tourists fall in the sea. They provide services with high risk as their lives are on dangerous stage. They get a very small amount of wages as provided by the tourists. There is no special rule for the remuneration of life guards.

In Kerala life guards are working in the beaches. They are appointed by the Dept. of Tourism on daily wages. They are expert in swimming in sea areas. They did not get a fair return as compared with their work.
Chapter 4

References


