



Training Programme on Tourism and Technology in Kerala, India

The 12th UNWTO Asia/Pacific Executive Training Programme took place in Trivandrum, Kerala, India from March 18-23, 2018 under the theme of Tourism and Technology hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and the State Government of Kerala.

The UNWTO Asia/Pacific Executive Training Programme on Tourism Policy and Strategy, supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Korea since 2006, provides a unique platform for senior-level officials to come together and to discuss pertinent issues related to policy, strategy and development of tourism in the Asia Pacific Region.

Throughout the four-day Programme group discussions, case studies and a series of lectures integrated the 4-day training programme. The 21 participants from 16 different countries in Asia and the Pacific had the opportunity to share their experiences and best practices in fields such as destination marketing, technology's impact on human capital, tourism strategic planning and implementation.

The Opening Ceremony on March 18th featured remarks from Mr. Suman Billa IAS, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; Mr. Kadakampally Surendran, Honorable Minister of Co-operation, Tourism and Devaswoms, Government of Kerala; Mr. Xu Jing, Director, Regional Programme for Asia and Pacific, UNWTO; Mr. K.J. Alphons, Honorable Minister of State for Tourism, Government of India; Mr. Yu Byung Chae, Director, Tourism Industry Policy Division, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Republic of Korea; and Mrs. Rani George IAS, Secretary, Kerala Tourism.

Mr. K.J. Alphons, Honorable Minister of State for Tourism, Government of India highlighted that India is a leader in technology and as the numbers show, it is rapidly becoming a leader in tourism with 15% growth in international arrivals in 2017, the highest of any other country in the South Asia sub-region. He stressed the point that technology is going to drive the world in the future and transform the traveler's experience. This is already evident in India with the establishment of e-visa services for international visitors, and as of today, there are 163 countries that are eligible to apply for an e-visa.

During the UNWTO Forum on Tourism and Technology the panel session was composed of tourism leaders including Mr. Ji-Hwan Yoon, Professor Kyung Hee University, Ms. Sarah Matthews, Head of Destination Marketing APAC, TripAdvisor, and Mr. Hari Nair, Founder and CEO of Holiday IQ. The panelists addressed a series of thought-provoking questions on smart tourism, digital borders, entrepreneurship, and using technology to optimize destination marketing.

The 12th UNWTO Asia Pacific Executive Training Programme responded to the growing need of destinations in Asia and in the Pacific to address how tourism policies and strategies can support and further the intersection of tourism and technology.