

# Need for tourism infrastructure development in Alappuzha

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**Abstract** - This paper intends to bring about the need to bring about tourism infrastructure development in Alappuzha so as to enhance tourist arrivals and revenue there by bringing about local economic development. Strategies are proposed to enhance tourist arrivals and upgrade tourism infrastructure from the inferences arrived at from primary and secondary studies.

**Keywords** – tourism infrastructure, potentials

## I. INTRODUCTION : TOURISM IN KERALA

According to National Geographic traveller, Kerala is one of the “50 must see destinations of a lifetime”. Tourist inflow to Kerala is mainly contributed by domestic tourists. As per tourism statistics 2010, 58% of the domestic tourists are accounted by three districts namely Ernakulam, Thrissur and Thiruvananthapuram. Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam contribute to 73% of total international tourists. “Fig.1” shows that as per tourism statistics 2010, Alappuzha contributes 6.37% to the total share of tourist flow to Kerala.

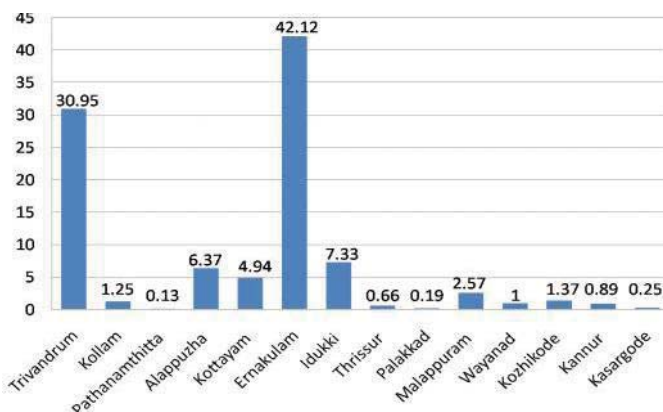


Fig 1: Percentage contribution of districts to total share of tourist flow Source: Tourism Statistics, 2010

On comparing tourism statistics over the years 2009-11, Ernakulam, Thiruvananthapuram, Idukki & Alappuzha contributes to the major share of total tourist flow. From

“Fig.2” it is clear that number of tourist arrivals to Alappuzha is not showing a positive indication to tourism in Alappuzha.

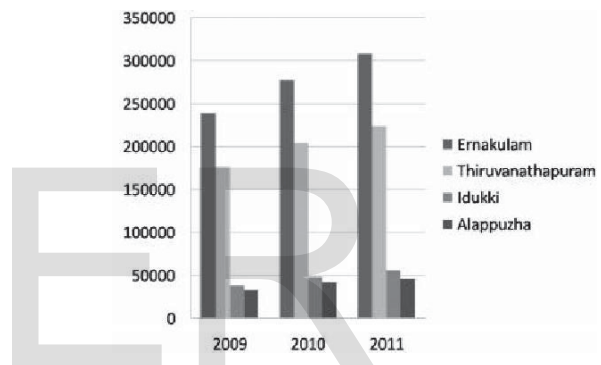


Fig 2: Tourist flow in leading tourist destinations Source: Tourism Statistics, 2011

## II. TOURISM IN ALAPPUZHA

Alappuzha is a Land Mark between the broad Arabian Sea and a net work of rivers flowing into it. In the early first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the then Viceroy of the Indian Empire, Lord Curzon made a visit in the State to **Alleppey, now Alappuzha**. Fascinated by the Scenic beauty of the place, in joy and amazement, he said, here nature has spent up on the land her richest bounties. In his exhilaration, it is said, he exclaimed, **Alleppey, the Venice of the East**. Alappuzha consists of a network of canals: Commercial canals, Vadai canal & the link between these canals. Alappuzha became the traditional home of coir industry in Kerala due to the following reasons:

- Availability of raw materials
- Presence of backwaters for wetting of coir
- Accessibility of transportation

Various tourism attractions in Alappuzha are:

- Heritage & Cultural:** Krishnapuram Palace, Punnapra Memorial, Chavara Bhavan and Karumadi.

Various Boat Races conducted in Alappuzha are: Nehru trophy boat race, Kayamkulam boat race, Champakulam boat race, Pulinkunnu Rajiv Gandhi boat race, Karuvatta, Harippad boat race, Neerattupuram boat race, Payipad boat race, Kumaranashan smaraka boat race, Karthikapalli boat race and Mannar boat race.

- b) **Religious** : Mullackal Rajarajeshwari Temple, Kottamkulangara Mahavishnu & Devi Temples, St. Mary’s Church at Champakulam , Arthunkal - St. Andrew’s Ferona Church, Kokkomangalam Church , St. George Church at Edathua , Mannarsala Sree Nagaraja Temple, Chettikulangara Bhagavathy Temple.
- c) **Natural** :
  - a. **Backwater** : Alappuzha Town, Pathiramanal, Kuttanad region / Q, S, T and R Block canals
  - b. **Beaches** : Alappuzha & Marari Beaches

### III. NEED FOR TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN ALAPPUZHA

#### A. Secondary Studies

Alappuzha urgently requires tourism infrastructure development than other tourist destinations due to the following requirements:

#### a) Accommodation & gastronomy facilities

Average duration of stay of tourists in Alappuzha is considered to be 3 days. As per Integrated District Development Plan Alappuzha 2011, the existing accommodation facilities could not be sufficient enough to satisfy the projected tourist population.

Total number of rooms available for stay in Alappuzha: 1193 [1]. Assuming each would accommodate 2 persons, then total number of persons that could be accommodated = 1193 x 2 i.e. 2386 tourists.

Then, total number of persons that could be accommodated in a month if the average duration of stay is two will be = 1193 x 2 x 15 i.e. 35, 790 tourists / month.

Existing stay facilities in Alappuzha could accommodate tourists till 2016.

TABLE 1: PROJECTED TOURIST POPULATION FOR ALAPPUZHA SOURCE: IDDP ALAPPUZHA, 2011

Tourists	2007	2008	2009	2010	2016	2021
Domestic	170731	234700	164223	183929	317887	494473
Foreign	40463	49866	33493	38510	66557	103530
Total	211194	284566	197716	222439	384444	598004
Average/ month	17599	23713	16476	18536	32037	49834

#### b) Proposed development projects

As per the State Tourism Vision, integrated development of backwaters is one of the major tourism

projects. The following ongoing and proposed tourism related projects are expected to increase tourist flow in Alappuzha which can be met only by bringing about tourism infrastructure development only.

- a) National waterway 3
- b) Integrated backwater circuit development
- c) Development of Alappuzha marina
- d) Port revival
- e) Beach beautification & electrification project

#### c) Competitive threat

As all tourist destinations are in a competitive threat, tourism infrastructure has to be developed in Alappuzha so as to direct domestic as well as international tourists.( As Kumarakom , famous backwater Tourist destination is a competitive threat to Alappuzha)

#### d) Tourism Benefits

- i. Tourism hub: Alappuzha can be transformed to act as a major tourism hub as backwater & beach tourism shall appeal to both foreign as well as domestic tourists
- ii. Increase in stay at Alappuzha: Currently the average stay of tourists at Alappuzha is 3 days. [1] By improving tourism infrastructure, tourists are expected to extend their stay, thereby providing tourism revenues.
- iii. Increase in number of tourists: Improving tourist destination could encourage more tourists to visit Alappuzha leading to direct tourism receipts and benefits to the local economy such as local employment opportunities
- iv. Benefits to local community: Increase in standard of living/improvement in quality of life by promoting more employment generating activities for local community. “Fig.3” shows that there was a rapid change in the occupational structure of Alappuzha as tourism industry developed.

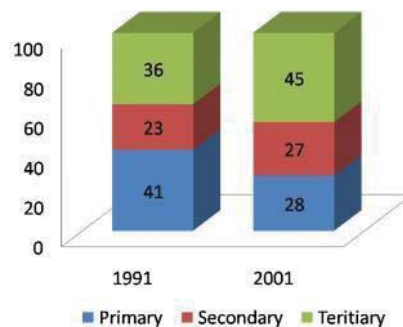


Fig 3: Transition in Occupational structure of Alappuzha

Source: IDDP Alappuzha, 2011

#### B. Primary Studies

Primary survey was through questionnaires and has been done for tourists, houseboats, resorts and home stays. Survey was conducted along beach and backwaters within the boundary of Alappuzha municipality. Primary survey was done so as to identify the gaps in existing tourism

infrastructure. Sample size for tourist was limited to 30 and 20 for houseboats and resorts due to time constraint and as it was done during off season.

*i. Tourist Survey:* From the primary survey it was found that, 70 % of tourists stay in Alappuzha for 2-3 days and 80 % of them are travelling along with their family. Likert’s scale analysis was done to understand the level of satisfaction and to calculate the average satisfaction level of destination. According to Likert Scale analysis, average value of tourism infrastructure quality in Alappuzha ranges from 7.14 % to 67.15 %.

*ii. Homestay / resort survey:* Eleven criteria were rated by the tourists on the basis of their experiences in the type of stay. These criteria were then analyzed using gap analysis model to identify the gaps in the existing accommodation facilities. The criteria selected for gap analysis are the same criteria given by tourism department for the type of rating for each category.

TABLE 2: GAP ANALYSIS SOURCE: PRIMARY SURVEY, 2014

Criteria	Mean Expectation (E)	Mean Performance (P)	Gap
a. Exterior & Grounds	8	5.6	-2.4
b. Guest Rooms & Public Areas	18	12.3	-5.7
c. Bathrooms	8	4.6	-3.4
d. Food & Kitchens	16	12.8	-3.2
e. Cleanliness & Hygiene	16	13	-3.0
f. Safety & Security	8	7.8	-0.2
g. Communications	6	4.1	-1.9
h. Guest Services	5	4.4	-0.6
i. Eco – friendly practices	5	3.5	-1.5
j. Facilities for Physically challenged persons	5	1.6	-3.4
k. Staff quality	5	4.5	-0.5

*iii. Houseboat survey:* 60 % of waste generated from houseboats is managed in unscientific way of which 30 % of waste disposal in on to open vacant land and canal water. This could pollute the canal if not controlled properly. Even though bio tanks are available in 40 % of houseboats under primary survey, there exist no proper method and treatment for waste generated from houseboats. Of the primary survey conducted, only 10 % of houseboat workers belong to Alappuzha.

From observations and expert opinion survey, the following issues should be solved to improve tourism in Alappuzha:

- a) Boat landing centers and terminals are less maintained
- b) Congestion in houseboat terminal area as a result of increase in the number of houseboats
- c) Blockage of canals due to the development of water hyacinths
- d) Improper maintenance of recreational facilities
- e) Absence of proper pathways and narrow roads
- f) Absence of beach related activities
- g) Less promotion & marketing of coir products and Ayurveda
- h) Opposition from the local people towards tourism development

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

From the study, it is clear that Alappuzha requires up gradation of existing tourism infrastructure in quality and quantity and promotion of other forms of tourism along with backwater tourism for increased tourist arrivals and revenue in the fore coming years.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Alappuzha, famous backwater tourism destination rich in religious & cultural forms of tourism is experiencing reduced number of tourist arrivals over the past few years. Comparative study with other leading tourist destinations in Kerala shows that Alappuzha lags behind in supporting tourism infrastructure. Apart from that, tourism infrastructure has to be developed in Alappuzha so that it could accommodate and satisfy the projected tourist population in comply with the proposed projects to be undertaken in Alappuzha in the fore coming years.

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