

## First Responsible Tourism meet to be held in Kerala

An international meet on 'responsible tourism' will be held in India for the first time. The four-day meet begins in Kochi Friday.

The Kochi meet is a follow-up of the first Responsible Tourism Conference held in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2002.

State Tourism Secretary V. Venu said: 'It is a recognition for the enormous progress made by the tourism industry in Kerala. The conference will bring leaders in the industry at the local, national and global level together for open dialogue on issues and opportunities crucial for shaping the future of the tourism industry.'

'It is a tribute to Kerala as the first ever Responsible Tourism conference in India is being held in Kerala,' Venu told IANS.

Around 400 Indian and foreign delegates have already been registered. Foreign delegates are coming from over 20 countries including Britain, Germany, Gambia, South Africa, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.

The meet will discuss wide-ranging topics like local economic development and poverty reduction, taking responsibility for destination sustainability, travel philanthropy and the role of government - national and local.

The conference aims to create awareness amongst operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists to take responsibility and action to make tourism more sustainable.

Delegates will visit various sites in Kerala including home stays, heritage precincts, farms and also meet local entrepreneurs who have adopted responsible tourism practices.

The event is being organised by the Kerala Tourism and the International Centre for Responsible Tourism (India) with India Tourism as a partner.

'This is an excellent opportunity for us to tap ideas and learn from international experts to advance responsible tourism development in Kerala and unlock the full potential of our industry,' said Venu.

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