Kerala – Indian forerunner in ecotourism

Darmstadt, August 24, 2017 *** Behind China and the United States, India has the third-largest CO2 emissions worldwide. It would be inadequate to associate the subcontinent solely with poverty, crowds of people, mountains of waste and stomach problems. Kerala in Southwest India is a great example to refute these prejudices and will also help to perceive India through different eyes. Since 2007 the region is following a sustainable approach, assisted by the state. With the slogan "God's own country" the green aim is to hire and work with local craftsmen as well as suppliers on site, to support local social and cultural projects and awards. Many green and eco-friendly projects not only demonstrate these sustainable ways of thinking and acting, but also enable an authentic and direct contact with the people, the wonderful nature in the...
backwaters and plenty of cultural treasures. For example, you can dive into Ayurveda or learn how to do the traditional dance, called Kathakali.

Man-made forest in Kerala

In 1977 Abdul Kareem bought five acres of barren rock in Puliyankulam, in the region of Kerala, planning to plant trees there. In the first years he transported water for the plants in cans from outside sources on his two-wheeler. The people nearby and even his family were not sure what to make of his actions, so he became the laughing stock in his hometown. But, after years, the ecosystem was developing at a good pace. Meanwhile, Abdul had bought another 27 acres of land and planted trees all his property, while constantly being motivated by the fruits of his labor. He has never weeded his „forest of childhood“, never lopped a tree, never raked the leaves, never hunted game, never selected a species and of course, never used chemicals of any kind. Abdul’s project is a showpiece for a sustainable forest. The forest is open for public always in compliance with Abdul’s regulations. Moreover, Abdul has turned down various offers to commercialize the forest and turning it into a theme park.
Less is more – Ecotourism in Kerala

The vision of ecotourism that respects and reflects the architecture and the local traditions turned into a mission for the Indian hotel group CGH Earth. In the late 1980s, CEO Jose Dominic together with CGH Earth was a pioneer in the field of responsible tourism, before it became popular in general and especially in the region of Kerala. Today, 20 years later, CGH stands for the main values of the enterprise – Clean, Green, Healthy. All resorts are built with local materials and the use of local knowledge. The CGH Spice Village Resort in Thekkady, located in the south of India, is created like an old mountain village. The cottage roofs were made out of elephant grass - a traditional practice that was rarely used anymore- and will be passed on to the following generations. In 2009 the Spice Village Resort was awarded with the PATA Award for Environment. Thus being the first resort in India receiving this important award. Adding to that, the Spice Village is also the first resort in India to fully
obtain its energy for power and lighting from solar energy.

Focus on the local community

When up cycling was not even close to being a popular term, the CGH Coconut Lagoon Resort in Kuttanad in Kerala was built into a labyrinth of canals, rivers and lagoons only accessible by boat. The distinctive architecture of the Coconut Lagoon consists of villas that are over 150 years old, and were moved there, piece by piece, from the old houses of the county, that had fallen into ruins. The Coconut Lagoon marks a great place for you to get to know traditional dances like Kathakali and learn all about the traditional fight art Kalarippayattu. An in-house naturalist encourages guests to take part in the appreciation of biodiversity and to participate in the organic rice plantation and cultivation activities as well as tree plantation initiatives, within the property or in the neighbouring region. All materials and products are sourced within a 50-mile radius – benefitting the community and reducing their carbon footprint.
Back to basics

The CGH Marari Beach Resort, located about 90 kilometers away from the airport of Cochin, consists of 16 huts with coconut palm thatched-roofs, arranged like an old fishing village. The resort offers different Ayurveda treatments, yoga courses and guided eco-tours through its butterfly garden. Furthermore, the architecture makes it possible to use natural lighting as well as natural ventilation. Almost all buildings on the property are made to achieve more than 92 percent of natural lighting during daytime. Like all CGH resorts, Marari reduces the dependency on fossil fuels as much as possible. Food waste from the staff mess and the restaurants is discarded into the biogas plant. The methane, generated as a result of the anaerobic composting, is utilized as fuel to cook food in the staff mess.
Decision for a green life – An unique organic village in Kerala

Chavara and his family put their old life behind to begin a new, healthier life in the lap of nature. The family lives in a self-built tree house. Since 2013 they live there together with 14 like-minded families in a self-sufficient organic village in Kerala’s Palakkad district. The land was previously used as a rubber plantation. Even the layout of the organic village has been planned, while keeping the principle of sharing and togetherness in mind. In addition, the families are planning to build a guesthouse and a large community kitchen, where everybody can cook and eat together. Having seen the positive effect of sustainable living on their children, the families care to design their own educational system that encourages children to live and act sustainably, in a child-friendly manner.
The Crowd Container "Päckli" - directly from an organic farm in India

3 containers, 29 different products, 1524 sold "Päckli". This is the result of Crowd Container in Switzerland. During a stay in India, start-up founder Tobias visited a small spice plantation in Kerala. The plants grew wild everywhere, a perfect approach to an organic cultivation. However, this form of farming is a challenge for the farmers, since they need to find a market for each product. Then, Tobias had a marketing idea; which started the beginning of Crowd Container. The "Päckli" can be easily and directly ordered online on fair conditions. Crowd Container bundles the orders for filling a shipping container and passes them directly to the Indian farmers. The Crowd Container wages
are two or even three times higher than the average world market price. The ordered „Päckli“ can be picked up in Bern, Zurich or St. Gallen or are delivered by a cargo-carrying bicycle. The Crowd Container vision is a network of consumers and producers for a fair and transparent food trade worldwide.

A quote of Hermann Hesse illustrates the many green and eco-friendly projects as well as the diversity and enormous fascination of India: "For those, who have been to India not only with the eyes, but with the soul, India will always remain a homesickness country."

The German Green Pearls GmbH with place of business in Darmstadt, Germany unifies international tourism companies that support environmental protection and demonstrate social commitment. Thereby, Green Pearls is the first holding company worldwide that consolidates sustainable hotels, destinations and restaurants in a global data source.

Among the criteria of admission to Green Pearls® Unique Places, are a sustainability plan on management level, sustainable architecture, comprehensive water, energy saving and waste recovery measures, the use of seasonal and regional ingredients in the kitchen, as well as a large commitment for the social balance in each of the vacation regions.

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