

**SCOPE OF ECO-TOURISM IN KERALA” – A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

Kerala, a western coastal state is located on the southernmost tip of India. It stretches from north to south along the coastline of 580 km with a width of 35 to 120 kms. It lies between 74 51` E to 72* 22` E Longitudes and 8*18` N to 12*48` N Latitudes. It covers an area of 38863 sq km which is about 1.18% of the total area of India. In Kerala, 28.90% land area is covered with forest which is about 2.3% of national average forest cover. Its natural beauty and exquisite landscape which attract the tourist of India and abroad. Landscape is covered with coconut palms, paddy fields, banana plantation, tea plantation are looking like green blanket and pleasing atmosphere throughout the year provides best sites for the ecotourism i.e. Thenmala, Bhoothan Kettu, Peruvannamoozhy, Thekkady, Nelliampathy, Konni, Kumbalangi, Kuruva, Thatikkad, Poovar, etc.*

Key words: *Coastal state, Plantation, ecotourism, natural beauty, landscape.*

Introduction: Kerala has rich potential for ecotourism and it is very fast growing in this state. It is best destination of eco tourism due to its natural beauty, landscape, greenery. It is a perfect hub for promoting eco tourism. The hill stations, western Ghats, silent valley , the wild life sanctuaries, jungle and parks are all splendid ecotourism destinations in Kerala. The green patches provide shelter to some of the best plant, bird, mammals , reptiles and amphibians species. Kerala, a western coastal state is located on the southernmost tip of India. It stretches from north to south along the coastline of 580 km with a width of 35 to 120 kms. It lies between 74* 51` E to 72* 22` E Longitudes and 8*18` N to 12*48` N Latitudes. It covers an area of 38863 sq km which is about 1.18% of the total area of India. In Kerala, 28.90% land area is covered with forest which is about 2.3% of national average forest cover. Its natural beauty and exquisite landscape which attract the tourist of India and abroad. Landscape is covered with

coconut palms, paddy fields, banana plantation, tea plantation are looking like green blanket and pleasing atmosphere throughout the year provides best sites for the ecotourism i.e. Thenmala, Bhoothan kettu, Peruvannamoozhy, Thekkady, Nelliampathy, Konni, Kumbalangi, Kuruva, Thatikkad, Poovar, etc.

Study Area : Kerala, a western coastal state is located on the southernmost tip of India. It stretches from north to south along the coastline of 580 km with a width of 35 to 120 kms. It lies between 74°51'E to 72°22'E longitude and 8°18' to 12°48' north latitudes. The total area of Kerala is 38863 sq km which is about 1.18% of the total land area of India 2.30% national average forest cover are in Kerala. In Kerala 28.90% land area is covered with forest which is about 2.3% of national average forest covers its natural beauty.

Objectives of the Study: The main objectives of the present study are:

- (1) To examine the potentiality and wide scope of eco tourism in the region.
- (2) To highlight the major eco tourism areas in study region.
- (3) To create interest and awareness in eco tourism.

Methodology: In the present study, data have been collected from secondary sources i.e articles, news reports, journals etc.

Eco tourism Destinations in Kerala

(1) **Thenmala:** It has immense scope and potential for eco tourism i.e. greenery, green patches, provides shelter to birds, mammals, and reptile and amphibian species. The greenery is not only relaxing but also for refreshing. They also roam around in the green patches. It is first plan eco-tourism destination in India, where eco-tourism resorts provide the best services to the travelers, to go close to the nature, fresh air laden with flowers while sipping in warm cups of coffee, have breakfast listening to the mellifluous tunes of birds and take a walk around the resort to feel the best of both worlds.

(2) **Bhoothathankettu:** Bhoothathankettu (Ernakulum district) is an ideal eco-tourism destination providing the perfect holiday for the nature lovers with forest to trek in, birds to watch, a river for boating, rapids to shoot, a lake to fish, etc. Splendid place attracts a large number of travelers due to tall mountains, a calm lake, the river periyar, rich forest cover and moderate climate. A nature loving tourist enjoy due fresh water lake, trek through deep evergreen forest and other adventure activities.

(3) **Peruvannamoozhy** : It is scenic village located near kozhikoda has been included in the list of eco-tourism in 2008. There are variety of places which provide best sites for development of eco-tourism i.e. dam a beautiful picnic spot, thick forest for trekking and birds watching , ecological hotspots is home to over 680 species of rare plants, wild animal rehabilitation centre , bird sanctuary crocodile farm, snake park, spice garden, trekking , boating, bathing facility in river and bamboo rafting.

(4) **Thekkady** : It is a potentially hot eco-tourism destination in Kerala i.e. Periyar Tiger Reserve. It is an example of nature is bounty, with great scenic charm, rich bio-diversity and provides veritable visitor satisfaction. It covers an area about 777 sq.km. which is reserve for rare, endemic and endangered flora and fauna Various programmes are organized related to eco-tourism i.e. lectures, discussion and individuals presentation, field visits etc. at this place.

(5) **Nelliampathy** : It is an ideal eco-tourism destination at the top of the Western Ghats consisting of cool hills, valleys, and tea, coffee and orange plantations. It has immense trekking and eco-tourism potential. There is a community hall which provides a good camping ground for trekkers and wild life lovers.

(6) **Konni** : Achencoil River is the perfect eco-tourism destination due to rich forests on Western Ghats, streams and scenic beauty of the landscape. Konni Reserve Forest (1897) rich bio-diversity is among the oldest reserve forest in India. “Konni Eco Tourism Project” involves locations in the forest tracts and Konni Elephant Camp developed by Kerala Forest Department and Kerala Tourism Department. It also provides facilities for eco-tourism activities which include elephant viewing, elephant feeding, elephant riding, watching elephant bath etc.. The forested tract in this eco-tourism destination provides the right climate and environment for the development and diverse flora and fauna include a variety of medicinal plants and herbs.

(7) **Kumbalangi** : It is a tiny beautiful Island village has been transformed into model fishing village and eco-tourism hotspots. This is the first model tourism village developed by Kerala Government under Rural Development Schemes. It is an ideal eco-tourism destination due to vast natural resources, Chinese fishing nets and simple and prosperous life of villagers, cultural heritage, fisherman folk and its own natural beauty.

(8) **Kuruva** : This uninhabited Island covers about 950 acre evergreen forest which is an ideal picnic spot and potential eco-tourism destinations due to rare species of birds , orchids, herbs, fresh water lakes, hill station , streams, etc.

(9) **Thatekkad** : Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary covers about 25 sq.km, which is covered with forests provide an ideal eco-tourism destination. Rare birds and natural beauty of the region are paradise for nature's lovers. This sanctuary was designed by Dr. Salim Ali and Bombay Natural History Society has identified 253 species.

(10) **Poovar** : It has a lot of potential for eco-tourism development i.e. golden sand and backwaters beach, blue lagoons, natural beauty, water taxis, recreational facilities, swimming, boating, backwater trips, water sports, cruises, fishing, resorts, massages, etc.

The most attractions for this places eco-friendly floating cottages have been prepared by taking into consideration of various aspects i.e. ventilation medicinal wood which are mostly for Ayurveda treatment under the supervision of qualified experts.

Conclusion:

Kerala an unexplored hub for eco-tourism is paradise for nature's lovers. Its coastal location, greenery, evergreen forest, mountains, hills, valleys stream, rivers, backwaters, beaches, lagoons, cultural heritage and rich bio-diversity provide a wide base for the development of eco-tourism. There is a need to have appropriate planning for these destinations to provide infrastructural facilities for eco-tourism development. Furthermore new potential sites for eco-tourism development are to be identified and planning are to be made accordingly for their development to promote and attract travelers from India and abroad.

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