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On a discovery of Kerala

S. Anil Radhakrishnan



Bloggers participating in Kerala Tourism's Kerala Blog Express in front of Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday. Photo: S. Gopakuma

The Hindu

27 bloggers from 15 nations keen to learn about the treasure trove at Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple.

“Is it all gold?” A query from some of the world’s top travel bloggers on stepping out of the Kerala Blog Express, a luxury bus, near the eastern entrance of Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple here on Tuesday.

The 27 bloggers from 15 countries were keen to learn from the tourist guide about the treasure trove unearthed from an ante-chamber to one of the six vaults of the temple that has drawn world attention, and the rituals. After observing the more than a century-and-a-half-old ‘Methanmani’ atop the Karuvalappura malika at the north-eastern portion of the Valiyakottaram complex of the landmark temple, the bloggers moved close to the steps leading to the temple to have a close look after a photo session. Many did not hide their displeasure on learning that they cannot enter the temple.

“It is very sacred and I love the rituals followed here. You take it very seriously. The dress code one has to follow to enter the temple is interesting. It is an amazing experience to be here,” an excited Daniel Nunes Goncalves from Brazil, a first-timer to Kerala, told *The Hindu*.

It was day two for the bloggers, selected through an online contest for a two-week trip on board the Kerala Blog Express organised by Kerala Tourism using social media to promote the destination globally.

Daniel, who posted his first blog based on the first day’s experience in Kovalam, Poovar and Chowara, said he got the opportunity to lend a helping hand to the fishermen in pulling the boats in Poovar.

“The Kathakali presentation and Ayurvedic therapy offered will be in the mind for long. Kerala is popular in Brazil. The people are friendly and environment better,” Daniel said .

Tarun Gaur and Prasad N.P said the temple is amazing and they would return with families again to visit the temple. “The bloggers from abroad are still amazed about the wealth inside the temple. Many have come after gathering lot of information on the temple,” said Tarun, who hails from Delhi.

Stefania van Lieshout, blogger and travel journalist from the Netherlands, said the State has fascinated her and that the environmental ambience is impressive. “I love colours. Kerala and India were on the wish-list for a long time and I look forward to knowing the State in close quarters in the next two weeks,” said Stefania, who found time to visit a village near Kovalam.

Worldwide following

Inma Gregorio (Spain), Nelson Carvalheiro (Germany), Oscar Augusto (Brazil) and Gael Hilton (Philippines) in the 27-member team, including five Indian bloggers, enjoy a worldwide following.

Anita Bora from Bangalore said she was looking forward to seeing the rich tradition and culture during the trip and post them in the blog. "I have travelled a lot in this State, but I have missed them," she adds.

During the two weeks on the Kerala Blog Express, the participants will be writing on their experiences in the State in their own blog while staying in the house boat, hotels and resorts.

The specially designed bus will touch major tourist destinations such as Kumarakom, Alappuzha, Thekkady, Munnar, Muzris, Kalamandalam, Wayanad and Kappad before winding up at Kochi on March 26.

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