

# CITY EXPRESS

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## A TIME TRAVEL TO THE GOLDEN AGE OF MUZIRIS



**Paliyam Dutch Palace**  
PICS:EXPRESS

Muziris heritage tourism circuit, which seeks to recreate Muziris, a major port which had trade relations with more than 31 countries back in first century BC, is awaiting its opening by the PM

**Kochi:** The first phase of Muziris heritage tourism circuit will be launched within few months, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi conducting the inauguration.

The renovation of seven museums, including Paliyam Dutch Palace, Paliyam Nalukettu, Kottayil Kovilakom Jewish Synagogue, Paravur Jewish Synagogue, Kesari Balakrishna Pillai Memorial Museum, Cherai Sahodaran Ayyappan Memorial Museum and Kunjikuttan Thamburan Convention Centre, has been completed.

Apart from these museums, other sites like Kottapuram Fort and Gothuruthu Chavittu Nadaka Kalakend-



ram, are ready to receive visitors. The construction of eight boat jetties is over and the air-conditioned boats are awaiting the inaugural ceremonies.

"The second phase of the project has already started. Renovation of Pallipuram Fort, construction of the excavation site museum that exhibits the excavation re-

mains from Pattanam, Kesavadev Memorial Museum, Christian History Museum in Kottakavu Church, renovation of Paravur market and beautification of Kottapuram market are the projects that are to be completed within a year. Several historians are working on the content of the literature to be produced regarding the

monuments. Fifty acres of land has been acquired for the construction of Asia's biggest maritime museum in Chitathukara panchayat with US, French, Dutch and Danish association. We have developed a new project titled Global Spice Route, for which we convened a meeting in Delhi of ambassadors of 31 countries," said V D Sathesan MLA, a director board member of Muziris Company, which is implementing the project.

The spice route traces the trade connection of Muziris with 31 countries covering the Arabs, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, British etc.

- Rini Ann George

### Advantages for Tourists, Local People

The Muziris project mainly focuses on water transport. Visitors have the opportunity for sightseeing by boating through the beautiful backwaters of the region. Tourists can also depend on road transport, of which cycling is another attraction.

The visitors' centres that will be launched soon will provide passes to the visitors. Students and local people will be offered special rates. Route map system will be implemented, so that visitors can undertake the tour alone, without the help of a guide. Tourists can select either a place or places as a whole, which gives great freedom to people who visit the centres.

Muziris project gives a glimpse of the cultural and historical background of the Paravur, Cherai and Kodungallur regions. It will also help in local employment generation. Development of 50 home stays is another project which will help the local people. An opportunity to depict Chavittunadakam in Gothuruthu, which will help the poor artists, and in turn help in the preservation of this art form, is also offered. Food courts will be set up in various regions to promote traditional food and thereby help the women folk of the areas.

Performance of traditional temple arts in Chendamangalam will impart knowledge

on Kerala art forms. The traditional handloom and other craft will be exhibited for sale, for which, several shops are being renovated. Visitors will be provided an opportunity to understand the traditional industries and they can buy the traditional products. Many private resorts have expressed keen interest, understanding the commercial value of the region. Many projects for infrastructure development are also being undertaken in connection with the Muziris project.

The people of the region are very enthusiastic about the project. "This region was a neglected area; even we were not aware of the historical value of our place. This project is actually an eye-opener for us and makes our land known around the world. This will increase tourist inflow, that will, in turn, help us in number of ways. Even now, many foreigners, especially Jews, are visiting the place. This project will earn revenue for the government also," said Jacob George, a local resident.

In Gothuruthu, local people have already started campaigns like 'Clean Muziris, Green Muziris'. People are actively involved in planting trees, which will make the region more beautiful and attractive.

### What is Muziris?

"The Muziris project was started mainly as a conservation project. Our heritage is getting lost and our old buildings are being pulled down. But Kerala's cultural heritage is important to be conserved for the future generations," said Benny Kuriakose, Chief Consultant, Muziris Heritage Project.

According to historians, in first century BC, Muziris was a major port which had trade relations with more than 31 countries. This port was considered as a business, cultural, religious centre.

The presence of various religious and cultural monuments in Muziris region con-

tributes to this thought. Many communities, including Jews, Christians, Muslims and Konkanis, have lived here in harmony. It was the place where the Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch, Jews and British arrived. It was one of the most important ports of trade even more than 3,000 years ago. Three religions came to India through this port namely, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The famous Paravur market is an example of the brisk trade that was carried out in the region.

The archaeological excavations done in Pattanam region is the basis of the Muziris project, which helps

us to trace the glorious past of the region.

But, in later period, Muziris port was lost following an earthquake, flood or both, say historians.

Thus ended the grandeur of the port. However, this lost fame is being revived through the Muziris Heritage Project, which is a tour back to the historic city of Muziris.

It was a place where various religiously and ethnically diverse people lived in harmony, a port where business and trade was the basis of life, an area where Palathachans were the rulers and a land where the backwaters and water transport played a major role.



### Museums, other Attractions Completed during Phase I

■ Paravur Jewish Synagogue: The synagogue is located in Jew Street of Paravur region. It was built by the Jewish community as their place of worship and is situated close to Paravur market.

■ Paliyam Dutch Palace: The Paliyam Palace was built by the Dutch and presented to Paliyathachans, who were the prime ministers of the maharajas of Kochi. Its construction is a mixture of both Kerala and Dutch architectural styles.

■ Paliyam Nalukettu: It is a lifestyle museum which was earlier used by women and minor boys of Paliyam. It is a typical Kerala architectural work with a courtyard in the centre surrounded by four blocks of buildings.

■ Kottayil Kovilakom Jewish Synagogue: It is one of the two synagogues that come under the Muziris tourism project constructed in the 17th century. The synagogue has many attractions, including a 400-metre-long cemetery.

■ Sahodaran Ayyappan Memorial Museum: Sahodaran Ayyappan was a social reformer and follower of Sree Narayana Guru who lived in Cherai. His house and belongings are preserved in the museum, which helps



Sahodaran Ayyappan Memorial Museum

visitors to understand the life and principles of the legend.

■ Kunjikuttan Thamburan Convention Centre: An international research and convention centre in Kodungallur Kunjikuttan Thamburan Memorial Government College. Kodungallur Kunjikuttan Thamburan was a Malayalam writer and Sanskrit scholar popularly known as Keralavyasa.

■ Kesari Balakrishna Pillai Memorial Museum: A museum in Paravur region which was the house of Kesari Balakrishna Pillai, a famous Malayalam writer, thinker and journalist.

■ Kottapuram Fort: Built by the Portuguese in 1523, which is known as Cranganore fort. The fort is in a dilapidated condition and is now preserved by Archaeological Department.

■ Gothuruthu Chavittu Nadakam: Gothuruthu is famous for the art form 'Chavittunadakam' which was introduced by the Portuguese and portrays the Christian stories and history. The visitors to Muziris will get a chance to witness this rare and beautiful art form.

The first phase of Muziris project has almost been completed and we are waiting for the Prime Minister's date for inauguration. Muziris is a world-class tourism circuit, which will attract the foreigners as well as Indians. On the completion of the project, it will have a seven days' trip that includes visiting varied monuments, museums, traditional industries and watching cultural programmes.

The primary aim of the project is to preserve our culture and tradition and revive our lost glory. It also has other aims like local employment generation. We are planning this as a pathway to help various poor artists and people working in traditional industries. Proposals like development of 50 home stays project will help the locals. We are very cautious about the ecology also; the masterpiece project like Maritime Museum is eco-friendly as well

- V D Sathesan MLA.

In a nutshell, the Muziris Heritage Project will talk about the 3,000 years of history of Kerala. The primary aim of the project is the conservation of heritage - both



built and natural heritage, both tangible and intangible heritage. The future generation in Kerala can learn about our history and our links with the heritage of 50 many countries through the different monuments and the other cultural heritage of the Muziris area.

It is possible to achieve development through heritage. Tourism is only a byproduct. We did not follow any models from any part of the world when the idea of the Muziris Heritage Project was developed. It was developed as an alternate approach to sustainable heritage management and sustainable tourism

- Benny Kuriakose, Chief Consultant, Muziris Heritage Project.



Kottapuram Jetty