

20. Heritage Walk Trivandrum

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Abstract

How well do you know your city?; its history and heritage? To answer these questions, one has to discover the ‘micro history’ of the city by walking and exploring its big and small by-lanes resplendent with stories of its history and heritage. And that is exactly what Heritage Walk Trivandrum (HWT), a voluntary initiative started in October 2013, does. HWT reintroduces the city to its people, with a focus on the different historical processes that led to its formation and growth, rather than focusing exclusively on the grand monuments.

There is an urgent need to understand and document these micro-histories. While much research has gone into the study of imperial dynasties and empires, the ‘history of the periphery’ of vassal states and communities is often neglected. It is true for the state of Kerala. Well known the world over for its green cover and backwaters, and more recently for Ayurveda, the history and heritage of Kerala still evades not just the visitors but also the locals. Due to its geographical positioning, with the Western Ghats on one side and the Arabian sea coast on the other, the region and community has nurtured a unique socio-economic-cultural history, as feudatories with political ties with the larger kingdoms headquartered across the Western Ghats. In the modern times however, developmental and infrastructural changes are rapidly erasing what remains of the historical past.

HWT stresses on these aspects, and explores of what remains of cultural and structural heritage in Trivandrum. The initiative has grown considerably over the last 5 years. Every Walk is an exploration of the heritage value of a locality, structure, or tradition. Besides visiting the commonly known and frequented places, the Walk has covered areas and structures, for which the history is either unknown or considered insignificant, such as old markets, hospitals, educational institutions, jail and public offices. There is also an active Discussion Forum, for the more seriously inclined to go deeper into aspects of

city's history and heritage. The initiative, every walk and discussion, is being documented. There are plans for wider outreach, by making it a movement that spreads into the other districts of Kerala.

Keywords: Heritage Management; Heritage Walk; Cultural Tourism; Heritage Tourism; Trivandram.