



PRIYA SREEKUMAR

DECCAN CHRONICLE

**T**he beauty of Kerala is something the denizens of the state take for granted. But look at the rich cultural heritage, the sights and the diversity in flora and fauna through the eyes of a foreigner and be amazed at the bounty Kerala offers. Thirty travel, food and video bloggers from 21 countries are currently aboard the Kerala Blog Express bus, an initiative of the Kerala Tourism project that is taking them through the length and breadth of the State from Thiruvananthapuram to Wyanad.

One of the coordinators of the event explains, "These are all popular online bloggers who have been selected from across the world based on a voting contest. This is basically a two-week trip where we have tried to give them the best of what Kerala can offer. The bloggers are from various countries including the UK, US, Philippines, Indonesia, Spain, Brazil, etc. So far they have been enjoying the hospitality and the sights and sounds of Kerala."

Marky Ramone from the Philippines is a travel blogger and a part of the group. He mentions that he has been to the Northern parts of India like Delhi, Agra and Rajasthan earlier but never to Kerala. Speaking about the experience he says, "It's been very exciting because I am travelling with people from different parts of the world. I have learnt a lot from them. I totally like the food here and am looking forward to exploring some of the towns here and tasting the food." He quips, "I am planning to visit India more often, in fact every year."

The bloggers have visited Kumarakom, Munnar, Kollam, the elephant camps etc. They have travelled in houseboats, canoes, auto rickshaws and seen and bathed elephants at close quarters — all experiences that have astounded them. One of the

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# BLOGGERS GET A SLICE OF KERALA



women bloggers Zuzanna Chmielewska mentions, "We got invited for a kalari performance just three days ago and I think that was the cultural highlight of the trip for me. I was so stunned by the perfection of the moves of the fighters, their strength but at the same time the delicate and dance-like movements. When I heard that it takes around 15-18 years to perfect it, I was really surprised to see the devotion of the performers. I could really sit there and watch them for hours."

She also mentions her pleasure at feeding bananas to the elephants and interacting with locals. She mentions, "I have lived in northern India for six months in Baroda and Mumbai, so I had some knowledge of India, but as I'm discovering Kerala, every day I notice how different it is from the rest of the country. It just has so much to offer, from backwaters to hill stations, even though it's just one state." The backwaters and houseboats have enamoured her and Zuzanna adds, "I would definitely come back for a houseboat retreat for my honeymoon, it's perfect for that!"



## A DELICIOUS JOURNEY

**M**arky Ramone (above) from the Philippines, a travel blogger, says he's in love with the rich local cuisine

Zuzanna Chmielewska