

Botanical Excursion to Kerala 2013

The M Sc semester II students visited Kerala as part of the **Botanical Excursion** in February(11th to 22nd February-2013). The students were accompanied with Dr. Archana Mankad and Dr. Hitesh Solanki. The 12 days study tour was well planned with visit to various Sanctuaries, Research Institutes, Universities and Botanical gardens. In Ernakulam itself, where the group had their first halt, they visited Regional center of NIO-National Institute of Oceanography and Mangalvanam Bird Sanctuary. Kerala is known for its forest wealth and it was well illustrated during the visit to Kerala Forest Research Institute-KFRI at Peechi, Thirsur. Here, the students visited the Butterfly garden, Seed centre, Arboretum, Palmetum, Greenhouse and mist chamber. They also visited Banana Research Center, a center of Kerala Agricultural University, where the students saw the plantation of several local cultivars of banana and some newly introduced hybrid varieties. A visit to the Horticulture department, Kerala Agricultural University was planned where the students saw the plantation of several horticultural crops. They also visited the Cocoa processing unit where they witnessed the whole processing of cocoa i.e., beans / seeds to chocolate. It was very exciting as the aroma of chocolate filled the rooms, everyone was tempted at eating some fresh chocolates and luckily there were quite a few types on sale. A visit to the college of forestry was also truly educative since the exhaustive NTFP-Non Timber Forest Produce was nicely displayed and explained.

Kerala is also known for its spices and medicinal plants. A visit to Abraham's Spice garden at Kumily, Thekaddy was planned where the students saw all the spices being grown and processed. The owner of the famous garden, Mr. Abraham took special interest and explained the use and significance of various plants. The most noteworthy was the visit to JNTBGRI-Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanical Garden and Research Institute at Palode, Thiruvananthapuram. Here, the students saw the Giant water lily, hybrid miniature *Nepenthes*, all insectivorous plants, medicinal plants, rare plants, Bambusetum, wild fruits, collection of more than 70 types of *Ficus* as Bonsai, cactus house, Herbarium, interesting topiary etc. The group also visited the Department of Botany at University of Kerala where they saw some rare gymnosperms and rare ferns in the botanical garden.

Kerala is known as God's own Country not only for its natural wealth but also for its natural beauty in the form of waterfalls, beaches and hill stations. The most spectacular water fall is the Athirapalli water falls which is in the Vazhachal forest, the most beautiful beach is the Kovalam beach in Thiruvananthapuram and the most beautiful hill station is Munnar. The students visited these with a lot of excitement and brought back lots of memories as photos and purchased spices and handlooms as memoirs.

Botanical excursion to Kerala February 2013: Snapshots



Exploring plants in the forests



At Banana Research Station, Kannara



At Kerala Forest Research Institute-KFRI



At Kerala Agricultural University-KAU

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