Colonel Martin Smith to visit the Ajanta Caves on 26th February, 2016

Mumbai, 25 February, 2016: Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) is delighted to welcome Colonel Martin Smith, a direct descendent of Captain John Smith who re-discovered the Ajanta Caves way back in the summer of April 1819.

Situated in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, the Ajanta caves are one of the first to be inscribed on the World Heritage Sites in India in 1983.

Maharashtra is known for its abundance of Buddhist caves – about 800 of them spread across various districts. But of these, the 29 caves at the World Heritage Site of Ajanta stand out distinctively and attract tourists in large numbers because of their architectural splendour, Buddhist legacy and artistic masterpieces, including Jatakas painted on the walls of ‘chaityas’ (prayer halls) and ‘viharas’ (residential cells). The caves include paintings and sculptures described by the government’s Archaeological Survey of India as “the finest surviving examples of Indian art, particularly painting” and these are representative of Buddhist religious art with figures of the Buddha and depictions of the Jataka tales. A cluster of 29 Buddhist caves, the site is a protected monument in the care of the Archaeological Survey of India.

Colonel Martin Smith, will be visiting Aurangabad to explore this heritage site that was re-discovered by his great greatgrandfather. Speaking on this occasion, Mr. Paraag Jain Nainuttia (IAS), Managing Director, MTDC, said, “It is a great honour for us at MTDC to have Colonel Martin Smith amidst us and have this chance to shower him with true Maharashtrian hospitality. We would like to take this opportunity to acquaint him with Maharashtra’s rich culture and showcase the historical heritage especially, given his relation to Colonel John Smith who re-discovered the spectacular Ajanta Caves which is also one of the most celebrated tourist destinations in the world. This will also provide a boost to tourist traffic from UK to India and Maharashtra.”

Commenting on this occasion, Smt. Valsa Nair-Singh IAS, Principal Secretary Tourism and Culture, Government of Maharashtra said, “We are delighted to have this opportunity to host Colonel Martin Smith. Maharashtra’s tourism portfolio is rich, varied and enticing and Ajanta is one of the shiniest gems in its crown. MTDC is keen on ensuring a memorable visit for Colonel Martin Smith as he visits his roots and retraces his ancestor’s steps which led to the re-discovery of the majestic Ajanta caves.”

MTDC has planned an array of programs to make Colonel Martin Smith’s visit a remarkable one. On the anvil, are plans to traditionally welcome him at the Ajanta Cavesview (Viewpoint) from where his ancestor Captain John Smith of the Madras Light Infantry of the East India Company, sighted a tiger, while on a hunting party. The Cavesview is a destination under the control of MTDC and gives a panoramic bird’s eye view of the horseshoe shaped valley beneath. Captain John Smith glanced at the “Gawaksha” of Cave 10, which was lost to debris and ordered removal of the foliage debris of all the caves and gave us a world treasure i.e. Ajanta.
The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will have a special welcome at Cave 10. The tourism fraternity in Aurangabad like the TPG, ATTA, AHR&A are planning interactions with Colonel Martin Smith on this occasion. Villagers of Pimpaldari, Ajanta and Fadapur are all set to welcome this “Roots Tourism” personality.

About MTDC:

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) was established with the aim of promoting tourism in the state. Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the state, which generates substantial foreign exchange and has culminated in significant employment prospects. Since its foundation, MTDC has been at the forefront of development and maintenance of various tourist sites and at present owns and maintains resorts in these regions. MTDC also initiates & supports various cultural activities across the state with the objective to drive tourism and implements aggressive promotional campaigns and strategies. To aide tourists, MTDC has opened information centres at all popular destination, which provide travel information about various tourist spots in Maharashtra along with travel maps, Maharashtra tourism guides and travel books at affordable prices.

Maharashtra is one of the most popular tourist destinations in India offering a diverse range of experiences from pristine beaches, wildlife sanctuaries, hill stations, natural caves, waterfalls, to imposing forts, colourful festivals, ancient pilgrimage shrines, museums, and historical monuments. For further details, please visit:

http://www.maharashtratourism.gov.in/