

TIMES OF INDIA

Festival puts Idukki back on tourist map

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Idukki: In a first break from the lull of the lockdown, tourist destinations in the district welcomed large numbers of tourists to coincide with the Deepavali holidays.

Munnar, Thekkady, Ramakkalmedu, Panchalimedu, Sreenarayanapuram waterfalls and other rural destinations hosted the most number of visitors recently.

The verdant meadows of Vagamon, which opened to tourists recently, were another key attraction. According to officials, green check posts have been set up in Vagamon to convert the third most popular destination in the district -- after Munnar and Thekkady -- into a green corridor.

"Saturday marked a departure from the inactivity of the lockdown with Idukki's main attractions playing host to a large number of



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tourists. All destinations under the DTPC are now open and witnessing a steady flow of visitors," District Tourism Promotion Council secretary in-charge Gireesh P S said.

"Boating has been revived in Mattupetty and this proved to be another major draw. Tourist inflow is now almost back to pre-pandemic levels," said Gireesh.

Things were no different at Eravikulam National Park. "Nearly 2,900 tourists, including some from north India, visited the park on Saturday and Sunday," range officer Job J Neriamparampil said.

Aju Abraham Mathew, general manager of Tall Trees Resorts in Munnar, vouched for the rise in numbers. "Most of the resorts and homestays are offering 40-50% discount on room bookings. We are following Covid-19 protocols and adhering to strict mask mandates and use of hand sanitizers," said Mathew.

Tourists will be allowed in Thekkady from 6am onwards, a Periyar Tiger Reserve press release said. "The boat service has been increased to three a day and eco-tourism activities such as nature walk, green walk and Periyar tiger trail and bamboo rafting have resumed," it said.