

# DECCAN HERALD

## French tourists stay back as Kerala feels safer

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4

## French tourists stay back as Kerala feels safer

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In further recognition to the health care sector of Kerala, several French nationals preferred to stay back in the state even while the French embassy and the government made arrangements for the foreign nationals stranded in Kerala to return.

While the French embassy had initially prepared a list of 127 nationals of their country stranded in Kerala and nine in Puducherry, only 112 had returned in the special flight operated by the Kochi international airport on April 4.

According to Kerala Tourism department officials, as many as 24 of them preferred to stay back as they felt safe to be in Kerala. Many of them were at Mata Amritanandamayi Ashram in Kollam district as well as some other ashrams in the state, while some of them were undergoing Ayurveda therapy. They had valid visas and hence there was no legal hurdle in them staying back.

### Kerala reaching out to Malayalis stranded abroad

Kerala is reaching out to the lakhs of emigrants from the state stranded in various parts of the world. Over 20 Malayalis died in various countries, including the US, UK and Gulf countries, reports DHNS from Thiruvananthapuram.

As distress calls poured in, the state government has initiated setting up help desks in Gulf countries with the support of overseas Malayali associations and missions.

Kerala Tourism joint director K Raj Kumar said that arrangements were being made for the return of 250-odd UK nationals stranded in Kerala by April 15. A decision on the return of seven UK nationals, who recovered from Covid, was still pending as they were still under the mandatory quarantine period. Around 210 Russian nationals

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan also urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take steps to ensure the welfare of the expats.

A study in 2018 estimated that over 21.2 lakh Malayalis stay in various countries, of which 18.5 lakh are in Gulf countries.

NORKA-Roots Chief Executive Officer Harikrishnan Namboothiri K said that most people wanted to know whether they can return.

in Kerala and some persons from Switzerland would be also returning soon. Already a flight to Germany with 236 tourists, with about 200 German nationals and about 30 from other European countries has left Thiruvananthapuram airport. A few tourists from countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and Brazil left through other states.

