

# Kerala Tourism

TIMES OF INDIA

## Global ecotourism hotspot: One more accolade for state

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### Global ecotourism hotspot: One more accolade for state

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: Kerala has been listed by the TIME magazine among the "50 extraordinary destinations to explore" in its list of the world's greatest places of 2022 as an ecotourism hotspot.

The publication describing Kerala as one of India's most beautiful states said that with spectacular beaches and lush backwaters, temples, and palaces, it's known as "God's own country" for good reason. "This year, Kerala is boosting motor-home tourism in India to inspire a new pas de deux of exploration and accommodation. The state's first caravan park, Karavan Meadows, opened in Vagamon, a scenic hill station," it said.

"In the wake of the state's success with houseboat cruising, caravans are expected to follow suit with a similar promise of sustainable tourism," TIME said, adding that over 1,000 campers have already begun to traverse the land, a fresh and unique way to experience Kerala's beaches and verdant plantations.

To compile this list, TIME solicited nominations of places from its international network of correspondents and contributors, "with an eye toward those offering new and exciting experiences." The list also includes India's first Unesco World Heritage City, Ahmedabad that "boasts both ancient landmarks and contemporary innovations that make it a mecca for cultural tourism".

Other destinations to make it to the list are Ras Al Khaimah, UAE; Park City, Utah; Seoul; Great Barrier Reef, Australia; The Arctic; Valencia, Spain; Trans Bhutan Trail, Bhutan; International Space Station; Bogota; Lower Zambezi National Park, Zambia; Istanbul and Kigali, Rwanda.

Tourism officials here said that this will again give a big push to the state's continued initiatives to regain its buoyancy in international tourism circuits and promote tourism in a safe and hospitable manner. "This is an emphatic recognition of our new initiatives to promote tourism in tune with ecological imperatives and sustainability. We are also making earnest efforts in facilitating tourists to visit unexplored places that dot our scenic state," said tourism minister PA Mohamed Riyas.

With inclusion in TIME's list, the industry hopes that pioneering initiatives like caravan tourism and the second edition of Champions Boat League will give a huge fillip to tourism in the state. "This is an endorsement of the state's conscious and sustained endeavours to bring into focus the unexplored places that would kindle interest among tourists. The results have already started showing; footfalls have increased substantially in the post-pandemic phase," said tourism director P B Nooh.

#### HOW KERALA STACKS UP

No. of foreign tourists arriving in 2019 (before Covid)	No. of foreign tourists arriving in 2021	Even now international tourist arrival has not fully recovered. Only 50% revival
11,89,771	60,487 (82% drop)	

#### Attractions for foreigners

- > Ayurveda
- > Responsible and sustainable ecotourism
- > Lush green tea plantations
- > Houseboat ride in the serene winding backwaters
- > Spice plantations with its unique culture and traditions
- > Caravan tourism



#### Popular ecotourism spots

Wayannad | Munnar | Thekkady | Athirapally | Houseboats in Vemband and Astamudi lakes

#### Growing popular

Silent Valley | Vagamon | Parambikulam | Aralam wildlife sanctuary Kannur | Neliyampathy | Gavi

#### 'Global recognition will give fillip in reviving post-Covid tourism sector'

Kochi: With "God's Own Country version 2.0" struggling to lure international tourists to Kerala since the pandemic, stakeholders believe that this global recognition would encourage the world travellers to hit the skies to explore ecotourism in Kerala.

"This will help boost both international and domestic tourism in Kerala. In post-Covid world, people are keen to explore ecotourism spots with its natural beauty intact. Kerala has a lot to offer here," said Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) president Baby Mathew.

State government, realizing the significance of the eco-tourism concept, has been promoting it in a big way through the introduction of an eco-certification scheme aimed at tourism stakeholders in the state. "Foreigners are attracted to the idea of the locals benefiting from tourism. They want to touch the local life and love being in the community, interacting with them, having food with them, along with enjoying the natural beauty of the place. Kerala is continuously trying to appeal to the responsible travellers," said tourist guide Rajesh PR.

EM Najeer, president, Confederation of Kerala tourism industry said that this recognition along with government and private stakeholders' promotion activities, while ensuring sustainable and responsible tourism, will help boost tourism in the state after the Covid-19 crisis. "With this, foreign tourists will give priority to Kerala as they talk about coming to India. This means that we now have a greater responsibility to make our destination completely world class with better connectivity, better safety and with better waste management facilities," he added.