

Kerala Tourism

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Kerala Tourism on a strong path of revival

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KERALA TOURISM On a strong path of revival



P Bala Kiran

The state of Kerala looks forward to start off by reviving local tourism. An action plan for the revival of the tourism sector is being drawn and several support schemes are under the consideration of the government, including assistance to tourism stakeholders and employees. P Bala Kiran, IAS-Director, Kerala Tourism, positively hopes that by October this year, the situation would improve considerably and will ease travel. In the meanwhile, they too are working hard to get tourism on the path of revival.

Prashant Nayak

With the COVID-19 pandemic giving a sledgehammer blow to the entire tourism industry, luckily the state governments and the Centre have been taking excellent steps to contain the detrimental effects of the pandemic.

Today, everybody acknowledges that the travel and hospitality sector is going through a great deal of turbulence as it navigates new waves every day. However, one has to be prepared to take on the challenge and emerge on the right and bright side of it. P Bala Kiran says, "In this backdrop, Kerala is also formulating a string of plans. For starting its tourism activities, we first concentrated on facilitating the return of the stranded tourists. More than 3000 foreign tourists and several domestic travellers were repatriated who were stranded in different parts of Kerala when the pandemic struck. Now, we have taken up the relief and rehabilitation measures for the entire tourism industry which has suffered a huge beating in the last seven months or so. We are fervently hoping that the season would become better in the coming months."

tourism within the state and to encourage inter-district travel. Later, based on the prevailing situation in other states, inter-state travel may also take place. If the skies are opened for international flights, they will consider inviting foreign guests. But the priority for them is to create a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for various stakeholders.

"In the wake of the pandemic, we have to provide a safe operating procedure for various stakeholders, such as hotel and accommodation industry, Ayurveda centres, adventure tourism, transport operators and houseboat operators. SOP has already been approved for transport operators and hotel operators. SOP for the transport operators was important as people would be travelling in buses, cars, and taxis, even two-wheelers. There are SOPs for other activities for which are under the active consideration of the government. We are expecting their approvals very soon. Once it is done, we will be providing tourism services with appropriate COVID social distancing protocols," assures the Director.

The SOPs are to be mandatorily followed by tourists, transport operators, hotels and all other stakeholders. Such measures are aimed at boosting confidence among the tourists



On tourism products or offerings that they plan to promote in the initial stages, P Bala Kiran shares, "The first tourism product which will be opened is the one where social distancing is inherently possible. One example is houseboats, which provide an exclusive experience for a group. It is not a mass tourism product. So is adventure tourism, where a lot of social distancing is possible. Likewise, Kerala's resorts and Ayurveda centres don't attract group congregation. Even Kerala's beaches can be opened with adequate safety protocols. Thus, beach tourism, canal tourism, houseboat tourism, and Ayurveda wellness

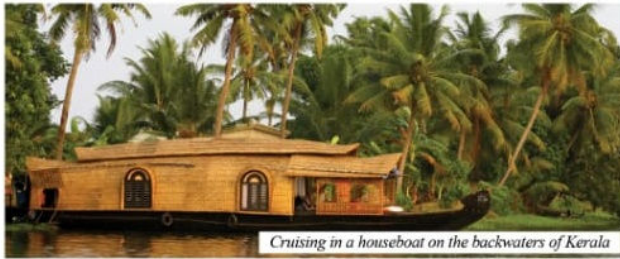
become better in the coming months."

Kerala Tourism's initial plan is to kick-start

at boosting confidence among the tourists
coming to Kerala in the post-COVID scenario.

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houseboat tourism, and Ayurveda wellness
tourism are among the products where social
distancing is inherently possible and can be
taken forward with social distancing."

Ayurveda would be promoted in a major
way, considering the importance of healing
and wellness in the current COVID-19
scenario. Eco-tourism and adventure tourism
are the other two sectors for Kerala to get
tourism back on its feet. Kerala Tourism is
looking forward to collaborating with other
state tourism boards as well as the union
tourism ministry for the promotion of domestic
tourism.



Cruising in a houseboat on the backwaters of Kerala