

THE HINDU

Mixed baggage in the State tourism sector

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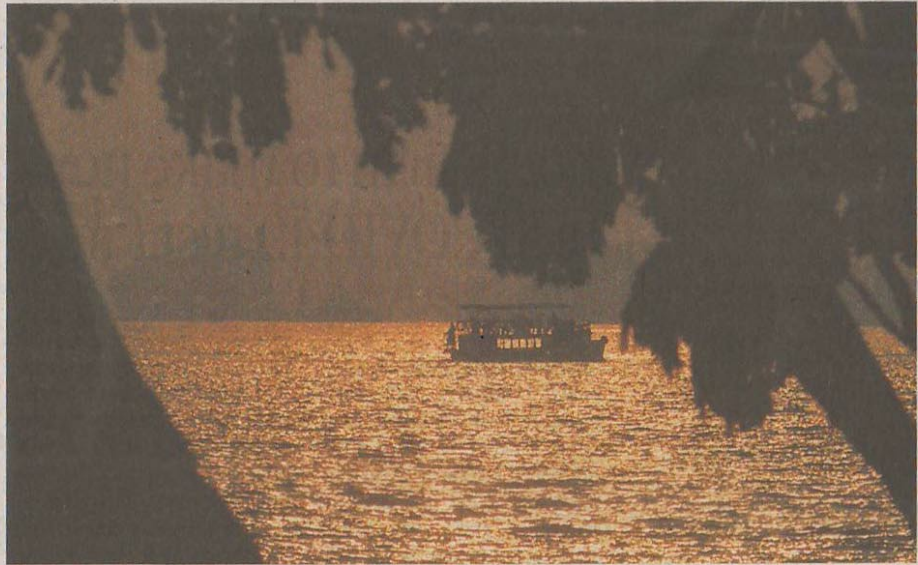
Tourists prefer high ranges than locales in the plains, on the waterfront

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KOCHI

The inflow of visitors to tourism locales in Ernakulam is less than expected, despite relaxation of pandemic-related curbs from November 1. However, destinations in Idukki, especially Munnar, are witnessing more footfall.

Water theme parks such as Silver Storm on the Athirappilly route have shut down temporarily after reopening earlier this month, as the number of visitors was negligible. "This is because the Forest Department has not yet reopened the Athirappilly waterfalls and nearby locales. This has affected resorts and hotels in the vicinity," says K. Ramachandran, general manager of the park.

In Ernakulam, beach locales and those alongside waterbodies are drawing a reasonable number of visitors, including tourists from neighbouring States, during weekends and public holidays. Visitor inflow is less than expected on working days, despite stakeholders hoping that tourists from



In pandemic shadow: Just a handful of tourist boats are operating at Marine Drive in Kochi, a favoured destination for backwater cruises. ■ H.VIBHU

northern India will turn up in groups during the festive season, says S. Vijayakumar, secretary of the Ernakulam District Tourism Promotion Council.

The DTPC and Kerala Tourism had put in place an SOP (standard operating procedure) at all locales, adhering to COVID-19 protocol.

"The low visitor turnout

has affected the prospects of auto drivers, traders, and food kiosk operators. Enquiries of tour packages are coming, but few are getting converted to visits," says Mr. Vijayakumar.

For the past two weeks, visitors are coming to Munnar in large numbers, says C. Saravanan, a taxi driver. "Almost all tourism properties

in the area have reopened, since tourists are using the e-pass facility and opting for less than seven days' tour, covering high ranges in Kerala."

Tour guide Shyam Kumar says visitors to the high ranges are mostly city dwellers from neighbouring districts, who prefer to return home by evening.