

# Kerala Tourism

THE HINDU

Tourism banks on Christmas-New Year

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## Tourism banks on Christmas-New Year

Pandemic-hit sector anticipates revival during the upcoming festival period

SAM PAUL A.  
ALAPPUZHA

Grappling to sustain amidst an unprecedented crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry is looking forward to the Christmas-New Year period for revival.

As a sign of improvement, houseboats, hotels and resorts are seeing a surge in bookings, though nowhere near the pre-COVID-19 times. Houseboat tourism, one of the mainstays of the sector, anticipates the upcoming festival period will kick-start the long journey towards normalisation.

"The houseboat industry is not out of the woods yet. With no foreign tourists, we now depend entirely on domestic tourists. The majority of them come from different parts of Kerala, while a small number arrives from other States. Usually, the sector does brisk business during the Christmas-New Year period with tourists from other States and foreigners



The houseboat sector, one of the mainstays of the tourism industry, is slowly limping back to normalcy. A view from R Block in Alappuzha. ■ SURESH ALLEPPEY

arriving in good numbers. This year, there is no such rush. However, there are signs of revival," says Kevin Rozario, general secretary, All Kerala Houseboat Owners and Operators Samiti.

Houseboats have introduced special packages and are offering discounts to attract tourists during the festival period, Mr. Rozario said.

Industry insiders say lack of tourists from abroad is

hurting the sector as foreigners tend to stay for a much longer duration than domestic tourists.

### Slow process

"We can say that the sector is on the path to revival, but it is a slow process. The most important thing is survival. We are offering rooms at discounted prices. Although the volume of bookings is less compared to the earlier times, it is picking up ahead

of the Christmas holiday season. However, the normalisation is still several months away," says Radhakrishna Shenoi, general manager, Marari Beach Resort.

### Rise in footfall

According to the Tourism Department, the district is witnessing an increase in tourist footfall since the sector opened in October. "Houseboat operations have started to gather steam with an increase in tourist arrivals, especially during holidays and weekends. A large number of houseboats have already received bookings for the festival period. Overall, things are getting better in the tourism sector in the district," says M. Malin, secretary, District Tourism Promotion Council.

Houseboat owners have sought relaxation in COVID-19-related restrictions. They call upon authorities to do away with a cap of 10 passengers in a boat and two persons in a room.