

# THE HINDU

Tourism sector upbeat as opening nears

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## Tourism sector upbeat as opening nears

After six months of lull, government to open the sector in phases from October 15

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An upbeat mood prevails in the travel trade over the proposed opening of the tourism sector in the State from October 15 after six months of dampened activity following the COVID-19 pandemic-induced lockdown.

Tourism Minister Kadakampally Surendran had announced that initially hill stations and places where visitors can be restricted would be opened. The stakeholders of the badly hit industry are expecting good response.

### Positive signals

The arrival of the visitors to the hill resort of Ponmudi, near here, and to popular destinations in Wayanad during weekends, and the interest shown by leading online travel portals like Make-



**Hope in the horizon:** Tourists near the Banasurasagar dam across the Karamanathodu river, a tributary of the Kabini, in Wayanad on Friday.

Mytrip, Goibibo and Booking.com on Kerala despite the uncertainties have been projected as positive signals for the revival of the

and insistence on testing at the border check-post of Muthanga for those coming from Karnataka are concerns for the stakeholders.

"The demand is for short tours. Our properties are ready to cater to the visitors. Rooms in the Ponmudi resort are sold out during weekends. An increase in the number of trains and flights will give confidence for people to travel," an official of the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) said.

### Many enquiries

Hotels that remain closed and local travel agents are preparing to receiving guests.

"Enquiries have started coming from northern States. Small groups have started booking for arrivals in November and December.

We are reserving them with the tag that everything will be subject to government guidelines," says Abraham George, CMD of the Kochi-based Intersight Tours & Travel.

The demand for the rooms in the properties that opened up in Wayanad from those in northern districts has surprised the industry. "Wayanad during the weekend is sold out, as holidayers from Bengaluru have also started arriving. Bachelors and families are arriving in good numbers," says Prasad Manjali, MD and CEO, Citrine Hotels and Resorts.

### No beaches at first

Meanwhile, the opening of the sector has not brought much cheer for the stakeholders at Kovalam as beaches do not figure in the initial opening phase.