

Kerala Tourism

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Tourists throng ecotourism centres

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PDF

Clip 1

Image Text

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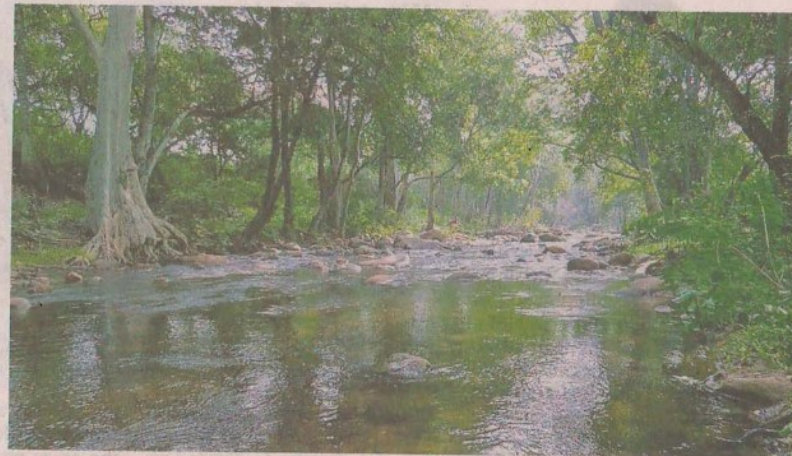
People prefer nearby destinations to unwind after remaining confined to homes for months

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The 60-odd ecotourism centres across the State which were thrown open to visitors after remaining closed for eight months due to the pandemic are witnessing heavy footfall.

Though the visitors cannot stroll freely as during the pre-COVID-19 days and have to follow the physical distancing norms, the ecotourism centres have emerged as favourite places for domestic tourists to unwind after remaining confined to homes for months.

Restrictions such as limiting the stay to one-and-a-half hours at centres such as Ponnudi and Athirappilly have not discouraged the visitors. Limited choice of travel due to the pandemic, preference to drivable locations nearby, holiday season due to Christmas and New Year and the forthcoming reopening of the educational institutions



Soothing effect: Sixty-odd ecotourism centres across the State, including Chinnar in photo, were thrown open to visitors after remaining closed for eight months due to the pandemic.

are cited as the reasons for the surge in visitors.

Back to normal

"It is back to normal at the 60-odd ecotourism centres. Only the ecotourism centres at Kuruva, Chembra, So-

chipara and Meenmutty in Wayanad remain to be opened," Director of Ecotourism Vinod Kumar D.K. told *The Hindu*.

The carrying capacity studies in these four ecotourism centres in Wayanad had

been completed and the report had been submitted to the Forest Department.

Hundreds of workers engaged by the Eco Development Committees (EDC) and the Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS) at these centres

are back to work again.

The 60 ecotourism centres together employ over 5,000 persons. Tourism has again become the livelihood means for them with the centres opening up and local residents arriving in good numbers.

Local bodies such as Kumily, Munnar and Sultan Bathery have also benefited as they depend on revenue from the ecotourism centres in their area.

Boost to economy

The spin-off effect is being reflected in the local economy and traders, hoteliers and tourist vehicle operators also have benefited.

"We are using the services of EDC and VSS personnel to keep a close watch on the visitors. People are being warned to avoid adventurous outing and to take proper care and to follow the rules and regulations," Mr. Vinod Kumar said.