

TIMES OF INDIA

Winter returns: Munnar again a hot spot

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Winter returns: Munnar again a hot spot

Sandeep Thomas | TNN

Idukki: As another winter season returns to Munnar, tourism is starting to find its feet again. The scenic Kolukkumala, one of the highest peaks in Suryanelli, is the most recent to reopen for tourists.

Devikulam sub-collector S Premkrishnan had directed the District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC) to make arrangements to reopen the trekking in the mist-covered hills of Kolukkumala, where tourists flock early in the morning to witness the sunrise.

A large number of taxi jeeps operate from Suryanelli to cover the 12 km stretch to Kolukkumala. The jeep drivers whose livelihood was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic had been demanding



Actor Sandra Thomas and family watch sunrise at Kolukkumala

for the destination to be reopened.

The Suryanelli town is largely dependent on tourism and its merchants were affected by the lockdown. The Chinnakanal grama panchayat had submitted a memorandum to the sub-collector demanding the reopening of the hills for tourism.

With restrictions being lifted, visitors are back. Ac-

tor and film producer Sandra Thomas and family were among those who made the first trek to the hills the other day.

Meanwhile, the temperature has started to dip below four degrees Celsius in Munnar. The winter has just started, but Munnar is chilly, heralding the cooler days to come. "Last week the temperature recorded six degrees Celsius at Nallathanni, Mat-

tupetty, and Chokkanad areas," said an official of Kannan Devan Hills Plantation (KDHP).

Tourism stakeholders feel the falling temperature could bring good business to the destination. Munnar hotel and resorts association president V V George told TOI: "There is a positive sign that Malayali tourists are staying one or two days in Munnar. The hotel rooms are affordable to local tourists and most of the hotels are giving 40 to 50 percent discounts.

"Earlier less number of Malayali tourists stayed in Munnar and the general trend was one-day trips. But after the lockdown, Malayali tourists are beginning to stay longer." Eravikulam Range officer Job J Neriamparampil told TOI that the national park has been busy recently.