

KERALA TOURISM: MONSOON SEASON LURED ONLY A FEW VISITORS



The inflow of tourists to the Indian state of Kerala has been adversely affected by the heavy rains and the accompanying monsoon related illnesses. Sources in the tourism industry confirm that both domestic and international tourists have reduced substantially, despite the discounts offered by many hotels.

P. D. Joseph, patron of Kerala Travel Mart states that the season has been dull and worse than expected. **The Arabs who usually frequent luxury hotels in Kerala during the monsoons, are coming in smaller numbers this year.**

E. M. Najeeb, president of the Kerala Chapter of the Indian Association of Tour Operators opines that it is the ever increasing airfares coupled with other problems like untreated garbage, lack of infrastructure and illnesses that spread during the monsoons such as dengue, that is causing this dearth of tourists.

Suresh Kumar, general manager of Ramada Resort in Kochi explains that the month of Ramadan, which begins on July 8 has affected the flow of tourists from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as the people avoid travel during their holy month.

Newer destinations like Sri Lanka and Bangkok have also lured away a chunk of the regular travelers to Kerala, according to Chinnu Jimmy of Le Meridian in Kochi.

The business during the normal peak season of November - December was below par compelling hotels to offer steep discounts to attract more tourists and increase occupancy during the monsoon season. Hotels are offering huge discounts on seven-night stays with discounts on room tariffs touching a whopping 60%. In addition, the guest is offered a choice of either a free stay for one night at any branch of the hotel within the state or a discount of 20% on food and drinks, or a complimentary stay for the spouse and two kids below the age of six.

Austin Varghese, chairman of the Kerala Chapter of the Travel and Tourism Association of India concludes that the attractive, economical packages offered to travel abroad induce people to travel to international locations for a holiday rather than places within India.

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