

DULL END TO POOR YEAR District Administrations To Restrict Visitors

State tourist destinations set to impose curbs for New Year

ManuAiyappa.Kanathanda
@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: If you have been craving a break or planning a year end trip to iconic tourist destinations in the state to celebrate Christmas or New Year, think again. Fearing a second wave of Covid-19 infections, several district administrations in the state have imposed restrictions on tourists.

Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru and Hassan districts have decided to either ban or restrict visitors arriving for New Year celebrations. Some districts, like Kodagu, have already made official announcements, while others have hinted at curbs. Some also plan to conduct Covid-19 tests on tourists, which could be a turn off.

In SOPs issued earlier this week, the government has already banned parties in hotels and resorts and has said penalties will be imposed if rules are violated. It prohibited entertainment programmes and parties between December 30 and January 2 at clubs, pubs, restaurants and other places.

It has also barred people from shaking hands or hugging



Pics: TOI

DAMP SQUIB: A file picture of visitors being screened at Mysuru Palace. With the government imposing curbs, many tourist destinations are restricting or even banning visitors

during celebrations. Tourism department officials said they would keep an eye out for violations at homestays and resorts.

"People must keep New Year celebrations simple," health minister K Sudhakar said. "Precautions will be in place as there is uncertainty over a Covid-19 vaccine. There is also the possibility of a second wave of infections hitting the state by the end of December or in January."

Both Christmas and New Year's Day fall on a Friday this year, making for extended weekends. The hospitality industry, which took a massive due to the

nationwide lockdown and curbs thereafter, were expecting to make amends, but are now resigned to a dull yearend.

Homestay and resort owners in Kodagu and Chikkamagaluru say many people from across the state celebrate New Year in their facilities, but this year, no special preparation has been made.

"We did get a good number of bookings for Christmas and New Year this year, but it's all being cancelled now," said Naveen Chenagappa, a homestay owner in Madikeri. "Normally, people make bookings for Christmas and New Year's a month in advance."

Lodges closed at Bandipur, BRT

Forest department authorities in Bandipur and Biligiri Ranganathaswamy Tiger Reserves in Chamarajanagar district have banned tourists from renting lodge rooms in the reserves. The decision was made to prevent people from flocking these destinations and disturbing wildlife with their New Year revelry. Officials say no rooms will be available on December 31 and January 1. "For the past three years, there has been a ban on tourists renting rooms during the New Year to prevent illegal activity and disturbance to wildlife," a forester said.

However, there will be no ban at Nagarahole Tiger Reserve. Nagarahole director D Mahesh Kumar told TOI that all rooms are booked till January 4. "There is no ban on tourists on New Year," he said. THN

Revenue minister R Ashoka said New Year's Eve celebrations in public places across the state stand banned. "People can celebrate in their homes and hotel rooms, but not in public places," he said.