

# TTW India



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## Indian Tourism Industry in the wake of



# COVID-19 crisis

## Dear Readers,

**T**he travel and tourism industry contributes largely to the Indian economy. The country has always welcomed international as well as domestic tourists throughout the year. However, in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, the travel and tourism sector has been disrupted similar to the rest of the world.

Our 'Cover Story' highlights the situation of the Indian travel and tourism industry in light of the global pandemic. It discusses the declining graph of the sector and the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the industry.

In this edition, we also feature the majestic Chitrakoot Waterfalls of Bastar, Chhattisgarh. Ideal for a visit during the season of monsoon, one can plan a trip to this region after resuming travel activities once the hard times are over. Read our 'Seasonal Destination' to learn about the activities and sights to visit in the region.

Our 'Special Feature' includes an overview of the Thrissur Pooram festival. India is known as the land of festivals and irrespective of the trying times, India's festive spirit remains indomitable. Though the festival has been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, the main rituals were carried out in the temples with minimum gathering of individuals while practicing social distancing measures.

On the other hand, the 'City Chronicles' speaks about Gangtok, the capital city of Sikkim, which is the only state in the country without any reported coronavirus cases. Read the piece to know about the tourist activities that can be undertaken in the city and plan a trip once the domestic travel restrictions are lifted.

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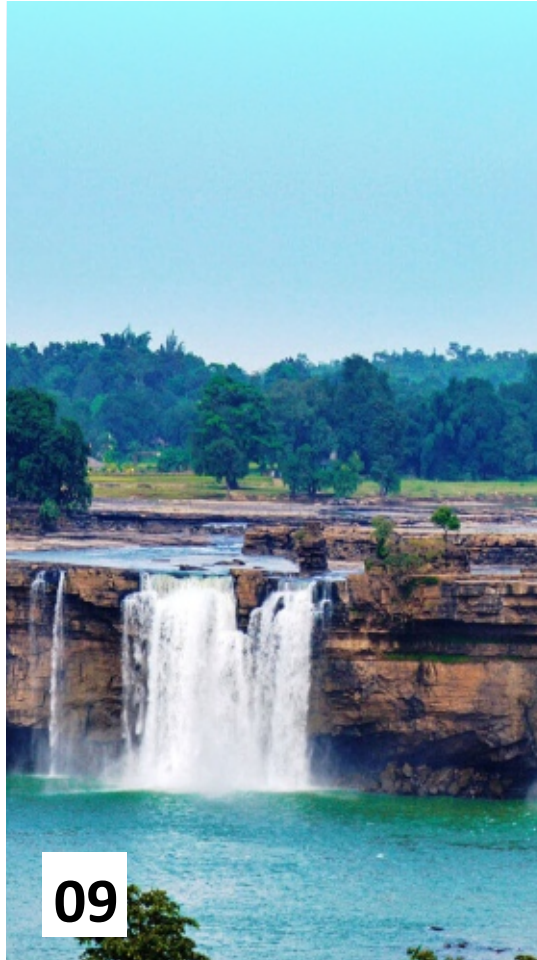
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09



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**04- City Chronicles:** The capital city of Sikkim, **Gangtok**, is recognised for its hills and natural bounties. It is also the only city in the country of India, with no reported coronavirus cases.

**09- Seasonal Destination:** Known as the “Niagara falls of India”, **Chitrakoot Waterfalls** of Bastar, Chhattisgarh provides an epic journey in the land of majestic waterfalls amidst the lush green tribal region.

**16- Special Feature:** The **Thrissur Pooram festival** is considered to be one of the greatest gatherings in Asia. Despite the main events being cancelled this year, the main rituals of the festival took place in the respective temples maintaining social distancing guidelines.

**22- Cover Story:** The travel and tourism industry of India has been harshly affected by the coronavirus crisis. Read on to know about the present scenario of the sector and the **impact on the pandemic** on India's tourism economy.

**14- Travel News**



**T**he city of Gangtok is the capital of the Indian state of Sikkim. Located in the Eastern Himalayan Mountain range, at an altitude of 5,410 feet, the city is known for its natural bounties. Summer season is an ideal time for Indian travellers to set out on a journey towards the hills. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a nationwide lockdown similar to the rest of the world.

As the country battles the deadly coronavirus disease, travellers eagerly wait to embrace another journey once the trying times are over. Sikkim is the only Indian state without any positive coronavirus cases. Though most tourist attractions are closed for now, Gangtok being one of Sikkim's most popular destinations can be considered as one of the safest cities to plan a trip to after the pandemic ends.

**A scenic extravaganza in the lap of Himalayas**

# Gangtok Sikkim



**Tashi View Point:** Built by Tashi Namgyal, the erstwhile King of Sikkim, this beautiful viewpoint provides an incredible sight of the cityscape lying below as well as a panoramic view of the surrounding hills. On a bright sunny day, one can also enjoy a clear view of the Kanchenjunga Mountain Range. The Labrang Monastery and Phodong Monastery situated in an opposite hill can also be spotted from here.

**Bakthang Waterfall:** Near to Tashi Point is the Bakthang Waterfall. A wide stream of water flows through the canopy of trees down the rocks and makes a pool at the bottom. The natural spring of the area comes from the dense vegetation situated above. Here you can also take a short zip-line across the falls. A small stone bridge brings you closer to the waterfalls, provides good opportunities take few photos.

**Ganesh Tok :** Situated at an altitude of 6,500 metres, the small Ganesh temple can accommodate only one person at a time. It also serves as a viewpoint of Kanchenjunga, Raj Bhawan and the surrounding valley.

**Hanuman Tok :** Nearly 10 minutes away from the Ganesh Tok is the Hanuman Temple that is maintained by the Indian Army. The serene ambience, religious chants and occasional ringing of the bells coupled with scenic views create a divine atmosphere and provide peace to the travellers' heart.



## *Tourist Attractions*



**Enchey Monastery:** Considered to be one of the most pious places in the city, the site of the 200 years old monastery is believed to be blessed by Lama Druptob Karpo , a tantric with superhuman flying powers. Rebuilt in the year 1908, it has a unique architectural artistry resembling Gyanak Riwo Tse-Nga or China's five peaked mountain.

**Ban Jhakri Falls:** Just 4kms away from Gangtok, the Ban Jhakri Falls is a natural waterfall cascading down from a height of approximately 98 ft. It is placed amidst a lush green valley and is surrounded by a mountain river. Close to it is a recreational park built with a shamanic theme. One can take a stroll along the trailed paths and gazebos while relishing the sight of the streams and falls.

**Namgyal Institute of Tibetology :** The recognised institution of Tibetan learning and culture is considered to be the highest seat of learning among the Mahayana scholars. The institute also has a museum and library that has the world's largest collection of Buddhist works and rare manuscripts. It is also home to nearly 30,000 volumes of documents in the form of xylographs.

**Do Drul Chorten :** One of the key tourist attractions in the city, the stupa displays the holy gold-topped shikara with 108 prayer wheels. It has some important relics and unique religious objects.





**Shop at MG Road :** Located at the heart of Gangtok, the MG Marg Shopping Centre is an open mall or boulevard square area filled with shops, restaurants, cafes and bars. The shops sell miscellaneous items including souvenirs and handcrafted materials. The area is completely free of litter and appears as a street carnival even on normal days. It is also a pedestrian-only zone.

**Enjoy the Ropeway Ride :** One of the most popular tourist activities in Gangtok is the ropeway or cable car ride. The 1 km long ropeway provides a journey of 15-20 minutes. Extravagant views of the cityscape, markets and valley and assembly halls can be enjoyed during the ride.

**Experience Paragliding :** One can also taste raw adventure in the city by a medium fly paragliding session. The ride takes off from Baliman Dara and takes around 5-10 minutes to land at the stadium field on Reshithang Sports Village.



*Things to Do*



**Rumtek Monastery:** The largest monastery in Sikkim is around 24 kms away from the city of Gangtok. It is known for the golden stupa that consists of relics from the 16th Karmapa Lama. It is currently home to the community of monks who performs rituals and prayers in the monastery.

**Tsomgo Lake:** Perhaps a mandatory day trip from Gangtok is the Tsomgo Lake. The destination is an epitome of picturesque beauty and home to the cold placid lake. The water of the lake comes from the snow melting down from the mountains above. The glacial lake displays an array of different colours according to the changing seasons and remains frozen during winter.

**Baba Mandir:** Situated at an altitude of 13,123 feet, the destination is usually covered alongside the trip to the lake. Characterised by a fabled history, people worship Baba Harbhajan Singh, a sentry of Punjab Regiment whose spirit is still believed to be alive by the locals and army men.

**Nathula Pass:** Nearly 56kms away from Gangtok, the famous India-Tibet Silk Route used to operate through Nathula Pass until 1962. A stairway from the place leads one to the Indo-China border and one can notice soldiers guarding the 'no man's land'. The region also has an extravagant collection of natural flora and fauna. Beyond the eastern horizon the striking Chomolhari peak of Bhutan can also be seen from the mountain pass.

## *Places Nearby*



# Chitrakoot Waterfalls

## Epic Journey into Wilderness

*Chitrakoot or Chitrakote Waterfalls has majestic cascade of water overflowing from the cliffs. It is a popular tourist hotspot in the dense tribal region of Bastar and is thronged by international visitors throughout the year. This lush green region is also the perfect backdrop for every photographer with its fascinating landscape views and charismatic tribal art scenes.*

**L**ocated in the Bastar district of Chhattisgarh, Chitrakoot Waterfalls lies in the midst of the dense jungles. It is the largest waterfall in India after Jog Falls and Dudhsagar Falls. As it is the widest waterfall in Asia, it is popularly called as "the Niagara falls of India".

The width of the waterfall depends on the water level in the Indravati River. And from season to season it varies drastically. In summer, the volume of the Chitrakoot Waterfalls is minimum, but during monsoon, the waterfall is roaring at its best. So, it is advisable to visit the waterfall during monsoon.

# India's widest waterfalls

Chitrakoot Waterfalls offer the most spectacular sights. One can truly understand the power and glory of nature by watching the waterfall gushing in top speed. Here spending some days in the backdrop a beautiful waterfall is truly a boon. This widest waterfall in India originates in Odisha, flows west and falls at Chitrakoot, then enters Andhra Pradesh and finally merges with the Godavari River. Indravati River is a rain-fed river and it is mainly used for many hydroelectric power projects.

Chitrakoot waterfalls is a perfect place for your weekend vacation and offers spectacular panoramic views or just some time away from the humdrum of city life. Situated in the west side of Jagdalpur city in the Bastar District, Chitrakoot Falls has a height of about 30 metres and a width of 985 feet. A major attraction below this waterfall is the shrine of Lord Shiva.

## What to see in Jagdalpur

***Chitrakoot Falls is magnificent in itself and here you can spend time just by watching the amazing view. There are also a couple of other interesting activities that you can partake in. You can hire a local tuk-tuk and see other tourist locations in Jagdalpur and forest region.***





### **Tamra Ghoomar Waterfalls (10.7 kilometers)**

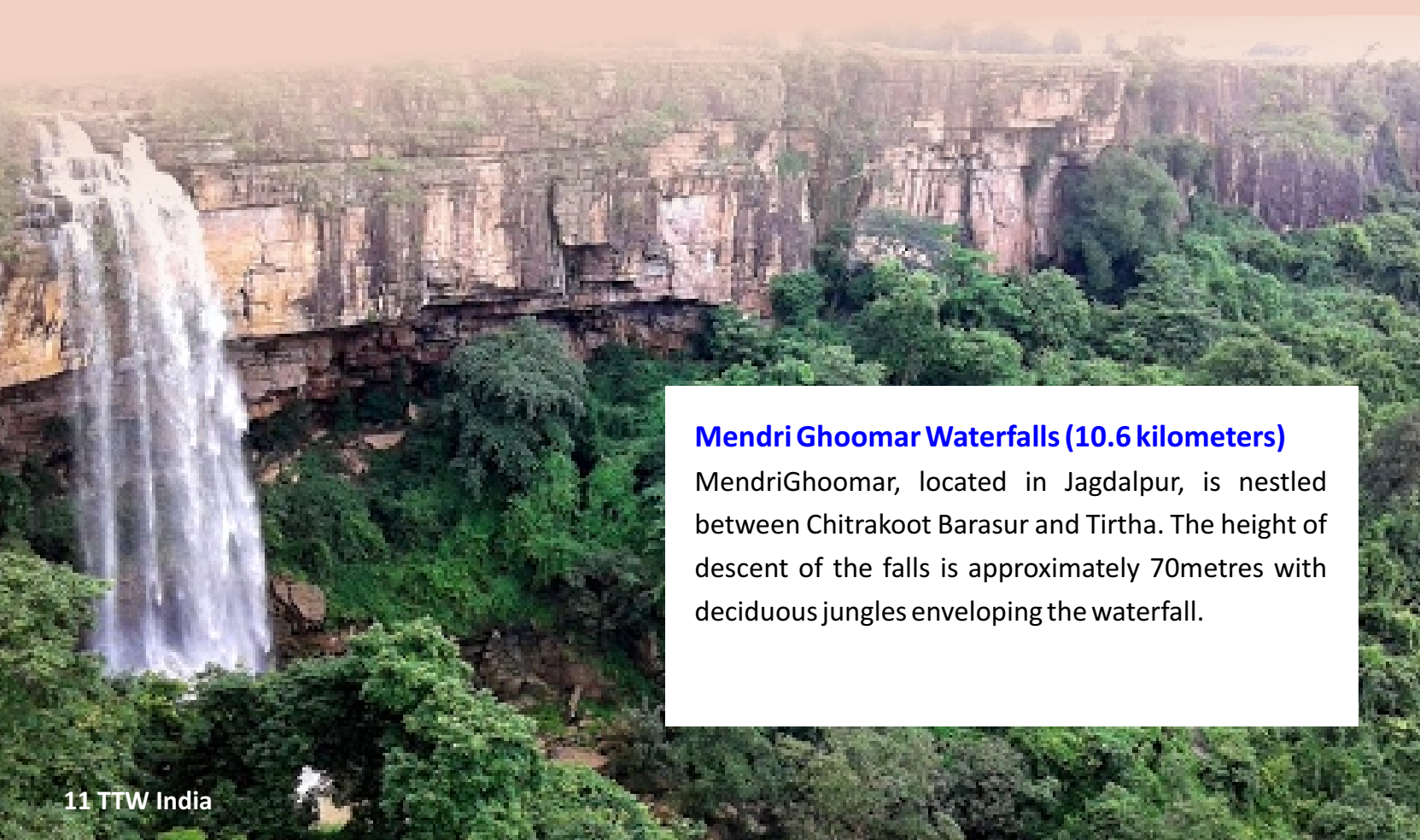
Tamra Ghoomar is a waterfall with a height of more than 100 feet and is generally formed during the monsoon showers. It is a 20 minute drive away and perfect spot for a day outing.

### **Kanger Valley National Park (80 kilometers)**

Kanger Valley National Park has a diverse range of flora. This national park has an area over 200 sq.km of hilly topography and has green landscapes, caverns and serene waterfalls throughout the park.

### **Tirathgarh Waterfalls (59 kilometers)**

Tirathgarh Waterfalls is a block style natural waterfall located in the south-west of Jagdalpur, approximately 60 kilometers from the Chitrakoot Falls. The water descends from a height of 91 meters in a criss-cross pattern. It is close to the Kanger Valley National Park and the Kutumsar Caves.



### **Mendri Ghoomar Waterfalls (10.6 kilometers)**

MendriGhoomar, located in Jagdalpur, is nestled between Chitrakoot Barasur and Tirtha. The height of descent of the falls is approximately 70metres with deciduous jungles enveloping the waterfall.

### Chitradhara Waterfalls (25 kilometers)

It is small waterfall in the Potanagar area on the road leading up to Chitrakoot Falls, approximately 25 kilometers away from Chitrakoot Waterfalls. The waterfall has vast stretches of jungles and small natural reservoirs all over the area.

### Bastar Palace (39 kilometers)

Bastar Palace was built by the rulers of Bastar during British era. One of the major tourist attractions in the Bastar area, the palace is encircled by gardens on all sides and is famous for its artifacts and historical relics that adorn the palace walls.

### What to buy



When you are in Bastar, indulge yourself in tribal art. Bastar's signature craft is Dhokra. The skill has been passed down through generation of adivasis, who are involved right from the initial clay moulding and melting of metal which is unique to Bastar. Buy some artifacts made up of Dokra and wrought iron from any Bastar Haats.







### Getting There

Jagdalpur is a very small city but is well connected with Chhattisgarh's capital city, Raipur. You can take any train or flight that arrives at Raipur Airport (Swami Vivekananda Airport) and reach Jagdalpur from here.

From Raipur to Jagdalpur: 290 kms (5 to 6 hrs bus/cab journey)

From Vishakhapatnam to Jagdalpur: 296 kms (7 to 8 hrs bus/cab journey)



# Travel News

## Iconic music festival Montreux Jazz Festival cancelled as coronavirus pandemic escalates

Montreux Jazz Festival, one of the prestigious announced the cancellation of this year's edition due to the COVID 19 or coronavirus pandemic, marking the first time since 1967 that the show cannot go on. It was scheduled to happen to 3rd July to 18th July, 2020. The programme — set to include Lionel Richie, Brittany Howard, Lenny Kravitz and Black Pumas — will be partly carried over to next year's Festival, which will take place from 2 to 17 July 2021.



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## Jamaica Tourism Board to deliver virtual care package

The Jamaica Tourism Board has decided to use digital platforms to deliver a virtual care package to followers around the world. The virtual care package would be delivered in a time when the world is practicing social distancing amid the coronavirus pandemic. The organisation will begin delivery of the virtual package tomorrow. Titled as 'Escape to Jamaica' the session would be broadcasted on the tourism board's social media. The live series will feature ZJ Sparks, one of the leading disc jockeys on the island.



## Indonesia sees US\$14 billion loss in tourism revenue due to coronavirus outbreak

The coronavirus outbreak is set to wipe out US\$14 billion from Indonesia's tourism revenue this year as leisure travel comes to a near complete halt, the government said. The number of foreign tourists is expected to fall to five million this year from last year's more than 16 million as countries impose travel restrictions to stop the spread of the deadly disease.



## Florida opens its beaches

Florida has opened some of its beaches, while other states like Texas and Minnesota unveiled their own tourism revival plans for the coming days. Governor Ron DeSantis' announced that north Florida beaches became among the first to allow beach-goers to return since the closures.



**A look into**

# **THRISSUR POORAM**

**A festival of light and sound**





**T**hrissur Pooram is an amazing festival started by Sakthan Thampuram, the erstwhile ruler of Kochi. It is held in the Malayalam month of *Medam* (between April and May) and has a tradition of more than 200 years.

Events related to the festival are held at the Vadakkumnathan temple located in the heart of Thrissur town and the adjoining Thekkinkadu ground. The festival has been cancelled this year and only the main rituals were held in the respective temples. The decision was taken in the wake of restrictions of

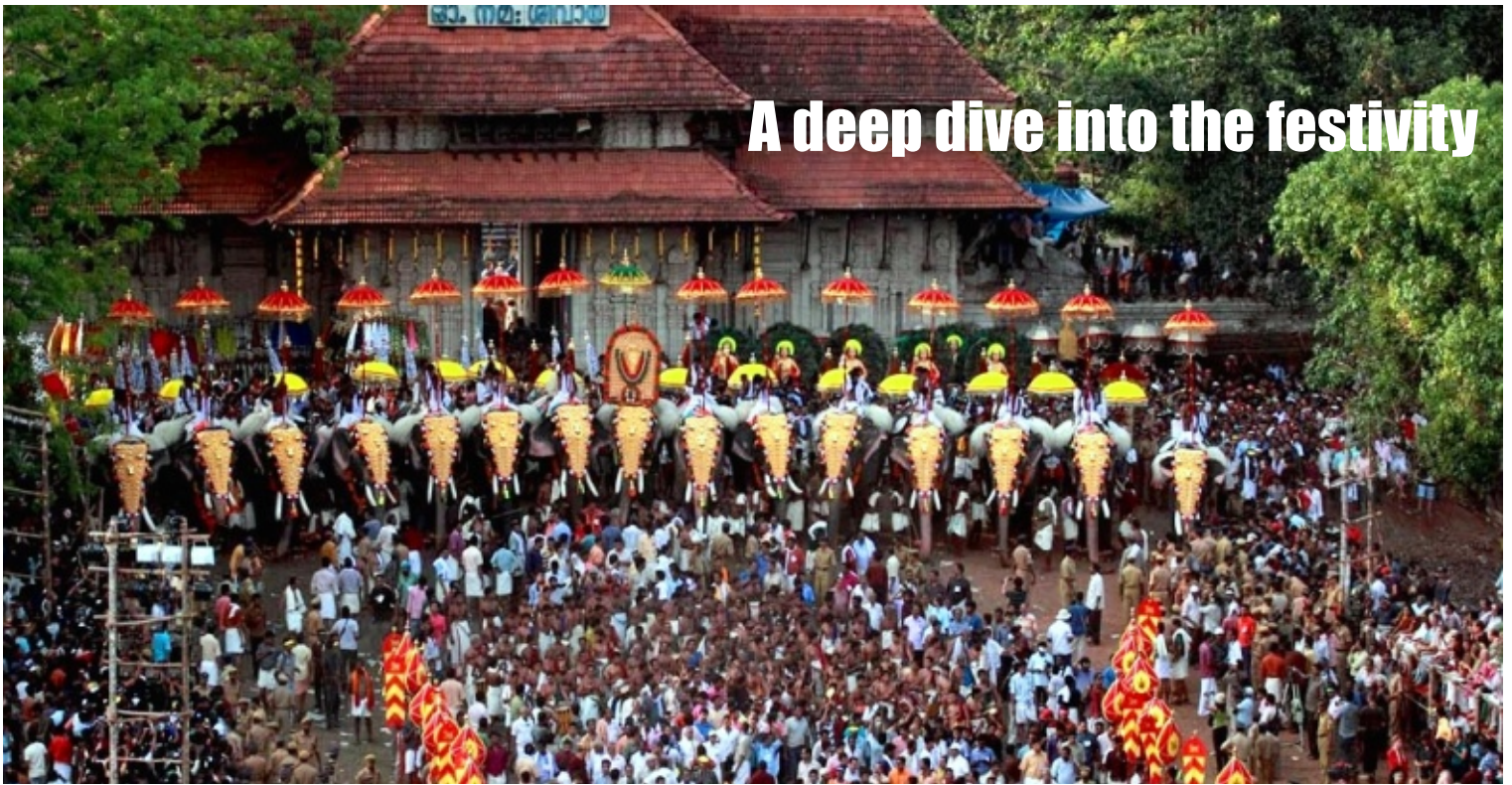
COVID-19 at a ministerial-level meeting which was attended by the representatives of all participating temples. The festival was to be held on May 2 but the lockdown was extended till May 3.

The main rituals were held in the respective temples in the presence of a maximum of 5 people. Celebrations related to the Pooram like **Kodiyettam** were not held. The annual Pooram exhibition which starts from the beginning of April was also cancelled.





## A deep dive into the festivity



The festival signifies the meeting of deities of 10 temples while the main participants are Thiruvambadi and Paramekkavy Devaswoms who organise it.

Two groups compete in their respective presentation of richly caparisoned elephants and traditional orchestra called panchavadyam. **Paramekkavu** and **Thiruvambadi** are the two groups representing the geographic divisions between which the pooram festival takes place. Kudamattom is the rhythmic changing of brightly coloured and sequined parasols and the bright fireworks during early morning. The key event of the festival is the procession taking the representation of the Goddess of Thiruvambadi to Brahmaswam Mutt.

The arrival of procession to the mutt is accompanied by panchavadyam or the madathil varavu. By noon the pooram is set out of the Paramekkavu Temple and there is an hour long chembada melam. Ilanjithara

melam is the orchestra held in front of the Ilanji trees. Thekkotirakkam is the meeting of two temple groups of Thiruvambadi and Paramekkavu and Kudamattom is the exchange of colourful parasols. At night there is a panchavadyam or the traditional temple orchestra. On the next day, there are major fireworks during early morning called the pakal pooram and finally there is a ceremonial departure called the upacharam chollo piriyaal.

After the arrivals of the poorams from eight temples, the festivities of the main day commence. At the Vadakkumnathan temple, the first pooram of Kanimangalam Sastha temple arrives by 6:30 in the morning. This is followed by others like Karamukku Bhagavathy, Choorakattukavu Bhagavathy, Naithilakattu Bhagavathy, Laloore Bhagavathy, Panayckambilli Sastha, Ayanthol Karthiyayani Bhagavathy and Chembookavu Bhagavathy.



Earlier Pooram celebration was a one-day festival in Arattupuzha held 10 kilometres to the south of Thrissur. Many could not make it to the Arattapuzha festival due to heavy rains and then the people reported to Sakthan Thampuram about their inability to attend the festival. He immediately planned another festival. This was more rewarding and marked the beginning of the Trissur Pooram festival. The first day of the festival is kodivettam or the flag hoisting ceremony this is followed by the sample Vedikettu or the firecrackers ceremony. On the sixth day, the main Pooram is held and the star rises. The priests of the local temples pay obeisance to Shiva. The priests of the two temples, Paramekkavu Bagavathi and Thiruvambadi Sri Krishna Temple along

with their processions stand opposite each other and worship Lord Shiva whose idol is placed in the centre.

There are fifteen elephants and accoutrements are added with great attention to details. These two temples compete with each other and try to outwit each other in procession. There is a colourful exchange of umbrellas and fans in perfect rhythm and there are nadaswarams and drum beats. There is a fantastic display of fireworks at the *Swaraj* ground on the seventh day.

People from all over the world come to enjoy and be a part of the festival.



## How it started?



## Fast Facts

- In 1962 during the India-China war the Thrissur Pooram festival was held with just one elephant and was cancelled for the first time.
- From the sounds of the 36 hour festivities, oscar -winning sound editor Resul Pookutty and his team recorded the sound and made a movie Oru Kadhai Sollatuma ( The sound of story).
- It is one of the greatest gathering in Asia, despite being a Hindu festival it is attended by different sections of Kerala society.





# Indian Tourism Industry in the wake of COVID-19 crisis

Cover Story

It has been a few months since the COVID-19 crisis took the world by storm. On March 11, the World Health Organisation declared the virus outbreak as a pandemic. Ever since its inception in China around December last year, the deadly coronavirus has rapidly spread to different corners of the world. Alongside unfortunate medical emergencies and human fatalities, the COVID-19 virus has also impacted the global economy. At present, tourism can be considered as one of the worst-hit industries by the coronavirus outbreak. India reported its first positive coronavirus case back

in Kerala in the month of February. Similar to the rest of the world, cases rapidly increased in the country. India entered a complete nationwide lockdown on March 25 for 21 days as a stringent measure to curb the spread of the coronavirus disease. The lockdown was further extended until May 3. The measure though robust was inevitable considering the nature of the outbreak. However, every sector of India's tourism industry has been harshly affected by international travel restrictions and the nationwide lockdown. Both international and domestic tourism have currently come to a standstill in the country.



## Present Situation

The World Travel and Tourism Council previously reported that the global tourism sector can lose up to US\$22 million due to the pandemic. It also predicted nearly 100 million job losses in the tourism industry globally. Meanwhile, the Indian Association of Tour Operators predicted ₹85 billion losses in the whole travel and tourism industry with the potential

risk of 38 million job losses in the country. The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) have urged the government for immediate survival measures to stop mass bankruptcy and unemployment for the tourism sector.



According to a WTTC report from 2018, tourism generates nearly US\$240 billion revenue and contributes around 9.2% to the country's GDP. The same report also stated that the Indian Tourism Industry supports approximately 42 million jobs, which amounts to 8.1% of the nation's total employment. Domestic tourism is also an important part of the country's tourism sector. According to reports, over 1.85 billion domestic trips were made across the country in the year 2018. Since the year 2000, domestic tourism has seen steep growth in India.

Over the years, airlines, hotels, railways, tour operators and other industries related to the tourism sector began to flourish. However, due to the unprecedented turn of events caused by the coronavirus pandemic, all of the involved industries have been witnessing a crippling

situation. A recent report from the Centre of Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA) stated that global aviation plunged by over 66% last month. Most flights have been grounded and airlines are suffering major losses. Employees in the aviation industry at different level are suffering pay cuts or lay-offs. The only fleets keeping the Indian sky slightly occupied are a handful of repatriation and cargo flights. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) reported that passenger travel demand has declined

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by 47% in the Indian region and nearly 29 lakhs of aviation jobs are at risk.

India is also home to some of the finest luxury hotel brands with glorious properties and significant investments all across the country. The Indian hospitality industry has also welcomed many small scale businesses that have established properties in various tourist places. At present almost every hotel

stands deserted and unoccupied. JLL India, a global real estate services firm, has reported that by the third week of March 2020, the sector has declined by 65% as compared to last year. The situation is expected to worsen further by the second and third quarter of the year.

Similarly, with inbound and outbound travel at an all

time low, the travel associations and tour operators are suffering the worst fate in history. Almost all cash inflows of the tourism sector have been frozen. With domestic and international closed down at the moment, demand for turbine fuel is also likely to face a decline. As most vacations, trips and business events are cancelled throughout the country, leisure travel and MICE tourism are set to suffer heavily in the near future.





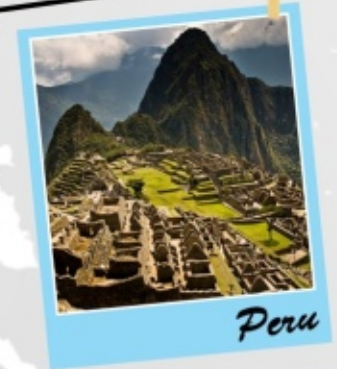
India has always attracted foreign tourists from different corners of the globe. International tourists contribute largely to the country's tourism sector. As India entered into a nationwide lockdown, suspended foreign visas and closed its borders to international arrivals, tens of thousands of foreign tourists remained stranded in the country.

In an effort to provide support to foreign tourists stuck in the country, the Indian Ministry of Tourism launched the “*Stranded in India*” online portal. It was created with the aim of building a support network for foreign tourists and providing them necessary information regarding the services that they can avail. The portal consists of comprehensive information about coronavirus that is useful for tourists. The portal also has helpline numbers that the foreign tourists can reach out to in times of need.

It also has a variety of information about the Ministry of External Affairs control centres and all information about state-based or regional tourism support infrastructure. The portal also has a help and support section that can be used to extend help to the ones in need. Most importantly, it has the facility of connecting foreign guests to concerned authorities and embassies. Numerous visitors have sought help through the app till now and have been provided assistance. Various repatriation flights from around the globe have arrived in the country during the lockdown period to rescue thousands of foreign tourists. Major rescue operations have been conducted from countries such as Canada, the U.S. and Australia as well as South Asian countries. Even the U.K. has finally decided to fly back the British citizens to hometown.



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