

KERALA

Kuruva islands open for tourists today

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Situated in the estuary of Mananthavady river, it is a safe haven for migratory birds and butterflies



The Kuruva islands, a major eco-tourism destination in Wayanad district, will be opened to tourists on Saturday after an interval of two years.

Entry was barred for tourists to the major tourism destinations under the South Wayanad Forest Division such as Soochipara waterfalls, Kuruva islets, Chembra peak, and the Meenmutty waterfalls at Padinharethara, as per a directive of the Kerala High Court on 21 March, 2019.

The order of the court followed a petition submitted by the Wayanad Prakruthi Samrakshana Samity, against the unbridled tourism activities in the tourism destinations.

Recently the Court had vacated its interim order and allowed the visitors to enter the destinations as per the carrying capacity of each destinations.

The Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding, Coimbatore, had conducted the visitor carrying capacity study of the ecologically fragile destination and it recommended that 1,150 visitors could be allowed on the island a day, South Wayanad Forest Divisional Officer P. Ranjith Kumar , told *The Hindu*.

'Kuruvadweep,' a string of 64 islets spread over 1.47 sq km, is situated near Pakkom in the estuary of the Mananthavady River and the Panamaram river, the tributaries of the Kabani, and has a unique biodiversity-rich ecosystem with a collection of rare flora and fauna, Mr. Ranjith Kumar said.

As the islets are a repository of unique plants and micro-organisms, the entry of visitors has been permitted to only 20 hectares of one of the islets. The islets are a safe haven for thousands of migratory birds and butterflies.

River crossing on bamboo raft is another attraction of the destination and two new bamboo rafts have been constructed for the purpose, T. Sasikumar, Range Forest Officer of Chethalayath Forest Range, said.

There are two ticket counters functioning at Pakkom and Palvelichom for tourists and ferry services are available at both the counters.

The Pakkom counter is under the Forest Department and the other is being managed by the Kuruva DMC.

The destination would be open from 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. An entry fee of ₹ 98 would be charged for an adult and ₹55 for a student, he said.

