



Special Tourist Train

Why in News?

According to the sources, The [Uttarakhand Tourism Department](#) has partnered with Indian [Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation \(IRCTC\)](#) to operate a dedicated tourist **train** bound for **south India**.

Key Points

- The unique train approved by the Central government, called **Kedar Badri Kartik (Murugan) Koil Yathirai**, will commence its inaugural journey with **165 travelers from Madurai in Tamil Nadu to Rishikesh**.
- All 165 passengers boarding the train have been given **special tour packages for 12 days and nights**.
 - It includes visits to the newly found tourist place [Kartik Swami Temple](#) in [Rudraprayag](#), [Badrinath](#), and [Kedarnath](#).
 - The tour package includes complete lodging and boarding facilities for the tourists.
- The Uttarakhand Tourism aims at attracting more pilgrims from the south, especially Chennai, to associate them with Kartik Swami Temple, a newly developed important tourist destination in Rudraprayag district.
 - According to the belief **lord Kartikeya**, son of Shiva, came here with his parents and **handed out his bones to the father and flesh to the mother**.
 - It's said **these bones are present in the temple**. In north India, this is the **lone temple of lord Kartikeya**, known as the [deity Murugan](#) in South India.
- The Uttarakhand Tourism Department has collaborated with IRCTC to operate special trains from various regions of India, particularly Western and South India.
 - Two such special trains called **Manaskhand Express** were launched from Pune in March and April, 2024 to **attract tourists from Maharashtra and other states** in the west to the **Kumaon regions**.

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC)

- It is a **Mini Ratna Category-I (conferred in 2008) Central Public Sector Enterprise** that is wholly-owned by and is under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Railways**.
- It is a registered enterprise and its corporate office is situated at New Delhi.
- IRCTC was incorporated in September **1999** as an extended arm of the Indian Railways to upgrade, professionalize and manage the **catering and hospitality services at stations**, on trains and other locations.
- The firm currently operates in 4 business segments namely, **Internet ticketing, Catering, Packaging Drinking Water, and Travel and Tourism**.
- It is the only entity that is authorized by Indian Railways to provide catering services to railways, online railway tickets and packaged drinking water at railway stations and trains in the country.
 - This gives it advantages in increasing market share in e-ticketing, packaged drinking water, and in e-catering.

