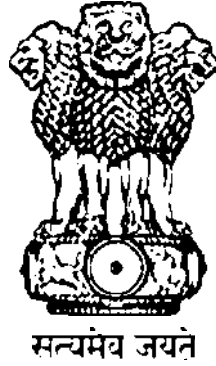


**National Strategy and Roadmap**  
*for*  
**Sustainable Tourism**



**June 2, 2021**

**Ministry of Tourism**  
**Government of India**

# National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism

<b>CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP .....	4
1.2. TOURISM – A DOUBLE EDGED SWORD FOR SUSTAINABILITY.....	4
1.3. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM – GLOBAL SCENARIO .....	5
1.4. INDIA TOURISM – RANKS POORLY IN SUSTAINABILITY .....	6
1.5. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM – INDIAN SCENARIO.....	6
1.6. COVID-19 PANDEMIC – A GRIM REMINDER TO RESET THE DIRECTION .....	8
1.7. NATIONAL STRATEGY AND ROADMAP FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM.....	8
<b>CHAPTER 2 – SUSTAINABLE TOURISM THROUGH ADVENTURE AND ECO TOURISM .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1. ALL TOURISM TO BE MORE SUSTAINABLE .....	9
2.2. INDIA’S NATURAL HERITAGE.....	9
2.3. WHY ECOTOURISM?.....	10
2.4. ECOTOURISM – GLOBAL SCENARIO.....	10
2.5. ECOTOURISM – INDIAN SCENARIO.....	10
2.6. WHY ADVENTURE TOURISM?.....	11
2.7. ADVENTURE TOURISM – GLOBAL SCENARIO.....	11
2.8. ADVENTURE TOURISM – INDIAN SCENARIO .....	12
<b>CHAPTER 3 – VISION, MISSION AND STRATEGY .....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1. VISION.....	13
3.2. MISSION .....	13
3.3. STRATEGIC PILLARS.....	13
3.4. STAKEHOLDERS.....	13
<b>CHAPTER 4 – DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES AND PERSPECTIVES .....</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1. DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM .....	17
4.2. DEFINITION OF ADVENTURE TOURISM.....	17
4.3. DEFINITION OF ECO TOURISM.....	17
4.4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM .....	17
4.5. SUSTAINABILITY FOR ALL FORMS OF TOURISM.....	18
4.6. AIMS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM .....	18
4.7. TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS .....	19
4.8. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ECOTOURISM.....	20
<b>CHAPTER 5 – CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM.....</b>	<b>22</b>
5.1. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CRITERIA OF INDIA (STCI).....	22
5.2. FINALIZATION OF SCHEME FOR CERTIFICATION AS PER STCI.....	22
5.3. CERTIFICATION FOR ADVENTURE TOURISM AND ECOTOURISM .....	22
5.4. DIGITALIZATION AND BRANDING OF CERTIFICATION SCHEMES .....	22
5.5. STATE SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME.....	22
<b>CHAPTER 6 – IEC AND CAPACITY BUILDING.....</b>	<b>23</b>
6.1. INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION.....	23
6.2. CAPACITY BUILDING OF FIELD FUNCTIONARIES AND CONSERVATION AGENCIES .....	23
6.3. SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP .....	24

6.4.	SETTING UP OF INTERPRETATION CENTRES .....	24
6.5.	TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION OF GUIDES.....	25
6.6.	ECOTOURISM EDUCATION, RESEARCH & TRAINING.....	25
<b>CHAPTER 7 – STATE ASSESSMENT AND RANKING .....</b>		<b>26</b>
7.1.	RANKING OF THE STATES ON ECOTOURISM AND ADVENTURE TOURISM .....	26
7.2.	IMPROVING INDIA’S RANK IN ECOTOURISM .....	26
7.3.	IMPROVING INDIA’S RANK IN ADVENTURE TOURISM.....	26
<b>CHAPTER 8 – MARKETING AND PROMOTION .....</b>		<b>28</b>
8.1.	CREATING A SUB BRAND .....	28
8.2.	DEDICATED PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN .....	28
8.3.	STATE SPECIFIC CAMPAIGNS.....	28
8.4.	DESTINATION SPECIFIC CAMPAIGN .....	28
8.5.	CAMPAIGN FOR RESPONSIBLE TRAVELLERS.....	28
<b>CHAPTER 9 – SAFETY STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS .....</b>		<b>29</b>
9.1.	ADVISORY REGARDING GUIDELINES FRAMED BY ADTOI.....	29
9.2.	STANDARDIZATION OF SAFETY STANDARDS AND REGULATORY SYSTEM .....	29
9.3.	NATIONAL RESCUE AND COMMUNICATION GRID.....	29
<b>CHAPTER 10 – DESTINATION AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT.....</b>		<b>30</b>
10.1.	IDENTIFICATION OF DESTINATIONS, PROFILING AND PRIORITIZATION .....	30
10.2.	DEVELOPMENT OF PRIORITIZED DESTINATIONS .....	30
10.3.	IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS .....	32
<b>CHAPTER 11 - PUBLIC PRIVATE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS .....</b>		<b>33</b>
11.1.	PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP IN ECOTOURISM/ ADVENTURE TOURISM.....	33
11.2.	COMMUNITY AND PRIVATE CONSERVANCY.....	34
11.3.	HOMESTAYS AND COMMUNITY LODGES.....	35
<b>CHAPTER 12 – GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>		<b>36</b>
12.1.	ACTION PLAN .....	36
12.2.	GOVERNANCE.....	36
<b>CHAPTER 13 - LEGAL AND FINANCIAL.....</b>		<b>38</b>
13.1.	FINANCIAL SUPPORT .....	38
13.2.	CONSERVATION FEE.....	38
13.3.	ENABLING LEGAL PROVISIONS.....	39
13.4.	DISCLAIMER .....	39
<b>ANNEXURE.....</b>		<b>40</b>
ANNEXURE 1 – TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS.....		41
ANNEXURE 2 – SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CRITERIA OF INDIA FOR DESTINATIONS .....		45
ANNEXURE 3 – SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CRITERIA OF INDIA FOR INDUSTRY.....		52
ANNEXURE 4 – CHARTER FOR A RESPONSIBLE TRAVELLER .....		56

## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

### **1.1. Tourism and Sustainable Development – A special relationship**

- 1.1.1. Tourism is an activity where the consumer (tourist) travels to the producer and the product, which leads to a special relationship between consumers (visitors), the industry, the environment and local communities.
- 1.1.2. The nature of tourism, as a service industry that is based on delivering an experience of new places, means that it involves a considerable amount of interaction, both direct and indirect, between visitors, host communities and their local environments.
- 1.1.3. Tourism makes people (visitors and hosts) become far more conscious of environmental issues and differences between nations and cultures. This can affect attitudes and concerns for sustainability issues not only while travelling but throughout people's lives.
- 1.1.4. Much of tourism is based on visitors seeking to experience intact and clean environments, attractive natural areas, authentic historic and cultural traditions, and welcoming hosts with whom they have a good relationship. The industry depends on these attributes being in place.

### **1.2. Tourism – A double edged sword for sustainability**

- 1.2.1. The close and direct relationship between visitors, host communities and local environment creates a sensitive situation, whereby tourism can be both very damaging but also very positive for sustainable development.
- 1.2.2. On the positive side, tourism can provide a growing source of opportunities for enterprise development and employment creation as well as stimulating investment and support for local services, even in quite remote communities. Tourism can bring tangible economic value to natural and cultural resources. This can result in direct income from visitor spending for their conservation, and an increase in support for conservation from local communities. It can be a force for inter-cultural understanding and peace.
- 1.2.3. Conversely, tourism can place direct pressure on fragile ecosystems causing degradation of the physical environment and disruption to wildlife. It can exert considerable pressure on host communities and lead to dislocation of traditional societies and compete for the use of scarce resources, notably land and water. It can be a significant contributor to local and global pollution.
- 1.2.4. Sustainable tourism aims to increase the positive impacts and reduce the negative impacts of tourism development

### 1.3. Sustainable Tourism – Global Scenario

- 1.3.1. As we stepped into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the impacts of global warming and climate change started exacerbating through frequent natural calamities not only causing damage to life and property, but also proving detrimental to tourism industry globally, including many developing and under developed regions where tourism constituted a major share of the GDP.
- 1.3.2. However, this also put the spotlight on tourism value chains' increasing share in GHG emissions and other indices negatively impacting the environment, including accommodation units, tour operators, MSME providers of visitor services, transporters and nature tour outfitters.
- 1.3.3. According to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism contributes to 5% of global carbon dioxide emissions and 4.6% of global warming by radioactive forcing. The transport accounts for 75% of the total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by the sector, with aviation and road transport accounting for 40% and 32% respectively and the accommodation stands at 21% of the total tourism sector emissions<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.3.4. Sustainability has emerged as an important issue for some of the fast-growing tourism destinations around the world, especially in developing countries which already support large native populations. One parameter highlighting this fact is the number of international visitors compared to the local population, which provides an indication of the impact tourism may have on the destination.
- 1.3.5. While there is a definitive consensus about the fact that sustainability's impact will grow in importance over the coming decades, with more and more consumers and businesses travelling responsibly, the extent to which modern day consumers are committed to responsible tourism practices still remains low.
- 1.3.6. On a global policy level, initiatives to promote sustainable tourism have been consistently introduced to lay out broad adaptive frameworks that are flexible enough to be adopted by both developed and developing countries. There has been evolution of institutional mechanisms in Sustainable Tourism from the first UN Earth Summit 'Rio 92' to the third Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development) 'Rio +20' held in 2012.
- 1.3.7. Establishment of Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) has been one of the key developments to promote sustainable tourism globally. It establishes and manages global sustainable standards, known as the GSTC Criteria. There are two sets: (1) Destination Criteria for public policy-makers and destination managers, and (2) Industry Criteria for hotels and tour operators.

1.3.8. These are the guiding principles and minimum requirements that any tourism business or destination should aspire to reach in order to protect and sustain the world's natural and cultural resources, while ensuring tourism meets its potential as a tool for conservation and poverty alleviation.

#### 1.4. **India Tourism – ranks poorly in sustainability**

1.4.1. India Tourism has grown consistently to reach 13<sup>th</sup> rank in the world in terms of International Tourism Receipts and 22<sup>nd</sup> rank in terms of International Tourist Arrivals as per UNWTO data for year 2019.

1.4.2. India has improved its overall rank to 34<sup>th</sup> position in World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Rank in 2019, but its rank under Environment Sustainability has been 139, 134 and 128 in year 2015, 2017 and 2019 respectively. It shows India's poor track record in sustainable tourism.

1.4.3. India has also ranked poorly in adventure tourism securing 96<sup>th</sup> position in the Adventure Tourism Development Index 2020, which is much lower than its neighbours Bhutan (14), and Nepal (67). India is also not a preferred destination for nature tourism.

#### 1.5. **Sustainable Tourism – Indian Scenario**

1.5.1. Ministry of Tourism has recognized the immense potential of sustainable tourism in becoming a source of sustainable livelihoods in a high population scenario, and has given a special focus on promoting 'Incredible India' brand to attract tourists, not only to major cities and heritage attractions, but also to rural India where through correctly aligned policy mechanisms, the problems of disguised unemployment in agriculture as well as migration to urban areas can be mitigated through community based tourism models mentored by the industry.

1.5.2. Moreover, tourism is one of the few service sectors operating in rural areas and other fragile ecosystems, where the conservation of cultural heritage also becomes an important facet apart from the natural heritage. Recognizing this challenge to create a sustainable balance between visitor numbers and heritage conservation, the Ministry of Tourism is working to provide policy mechanisms to guide the industry towards sustainable use of resources and mitigating negative impacts on environment and society.

1.5.3. With the institutionalization of Global Sustainable Tourism Council in 2010, the Ministry undertook to adapt the GSTC criteria for sustainable tourism in the Indian context, specifically taking cognizance of India's attainments in sustainability, while also considering criteria generated by other sources, including GSTC. In this global

backdrop, sustainable tourism and its various branches were integrated proactively into the policy framework in the 12th Five Year Plan.

- 1.5.4. A National Workshop on Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India was convened in July 2010. Based on the recommendations of this National Workshop on Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India, a sub-committee chaired by the Joint Secretary (Tourism), Government of India, and comprising expert stakeholders was constituted in 2010 for defining Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India (STCI) and Indicators. The Ministry of Tourism has since launched the Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India (STCI) with an aim to promote and ensure environmentally responsible and sustainable practices in the tourism industry.
- 1.5.5. Further, the Ministry has also formulated guidelines for classification of hotels under various categories, which require hotels to incorporate various eco-friendly measures like Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), Rain Water Harvesting System, waste management system, pollution control, introduction of non-Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) equipment for refrigeration and air conditioning, measures for energy and water conservation etc.
- 1.5.6. The Ministry has also prescribed that the architecture of the hotel buildings in hilly and ecologically fragile areas should be sustainable and energy efficient and as far as possible be in conformity with the local ethos and make use of local designs and material.
- 1.5.7. The tour operators approved by Ministry of Tourism have to sign a pledge for commitment towards Safe & Honourable Tourism and Sustainable Tourism to fully implement Sustainable Tourism practices, consistent with the best environment and heritage protection standards.
- 1.5.8. Many State Governments have also taken laudable initiatives to promote sustainable and responsible tourism including rural tourism, agro tourism, adventure tourism, ecotourism, homestays, sustainable livelihoods. Industry has also been taking voluntary steps to become more sustainable particularly in use of energy, sourcing of material and adopting eco- friendly measures.
- 1.5.9. The key challenge to promote sustainability is to bring it in the mainstream of tourism development and develop systems and procedures to measure the adoption of sustainable initiatives by the Governments, Destinations and Industry.
- 1.5.10. For governments, tourism policies that address economic, social and environmental issues, and which are developed with an awareness of the potential both for harm and for benefit, can channel the forces resulting from the tourism sector's dynamic growth in a positive direction.

1.5.11. For the tourism industry, accepting this responsibility is not only about good citizenship, it should also be fuelled by a strong element of self-interest, since any harm that is inflicted to the natural, cultural or social environment of destinations can lead to their eventual destruction or loss of value as a tourism product. In economic terms, sustainability can guarantee that crucial factor: ‘the viability of enterprises and activities and their ability to be maintained in the long term’.

**1.6. COVID-19 Pandemic – A grim reminder to reset the direction**

The hiatus in the tourism sector brought about by COVID-19 is seen as providing a chance to rethink and reset the direction of tourism and the values on which its success is judged. The COVID-19 crisis is a watershed moment to align the efforts of sustaining livelihoods dependent on tourism to the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring a more resilient, inclusive, carbon neutral and resource efficient future.

**1.7. National Strategy and roadmap for Sustainable Tourism**

1.7.1. Tourism can be a key driver of inclusive community development contributing to resiliency, inclusivity, and empowerment, while safeguarding natural and cultural resources. This challenge can be met by revisiting and redeveloping tourism strategies for sustainability.

1.7.2. National Strategy and roadmap for sustainable tourism with focus on adventure and ecotourism has been prepared to mainstream sustainability in Indian tourism sector. It will also help us achieve the full potential of adventure and ecotourism as a vehicle for tourism, conservation and jobs.



## **Chapter 2 – Sustainable Tourism through Adventure and Eco tourism**

### **2.1. All tourism to be more sustainable**

2.1.1. The principles of sustainable tourism apply to all forms of tourism and all kinds of destinations and therefore need to be adopted by all rather than only specific forms of tourism. However, Eco tourism and Adventure Tourism, which have great potential for promoting sustainable tourism have been focused in this strategy.

2.1.2. It may be pertinent to mention that rural tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, conservation tourism, community-based tourism, pro-poor tourism, responsible tourism, volunteer tourism and geo-tourism are all overlapping terms and broadly have similar objective that is enhancing the positive impact of tourism on local communities and local environment.

### **2.2. India's natural heritage**

2.2.1. The natural attractions in India are almost unrivalled in the world, ranging from pristine forests, snow-clad Himalayas, montane grasslands, golden and silver deserts, rivers, lakes, wetlands, mangroves, beaches, volcanoes and corals, housing tremendous biodiversity. Besides, we have the mega-fauna consisting of iconic species such as tigers, lions, elephants, rhinos, leopards, wild buffaloes, Indian bison (gaur), etc. and more than 1200 species of birds.

2.2.2. India has significant geographical advantage owing to its rich natural & eco-tourism resources:

- 70 per cent of the Himalayas
- 7,000 kms of coastline
- among the one of the three countries in the world with both hot and cold deserts
- ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in total area under forest cover
- ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in terms of number of recognized UNESCO Natural Heritage sites

2.2.3. Despite this natural wealth, India ranks among the lowest in global ecotourism development rankings. Hence there is an urgent need to develop a model of ecotourism which helps in conserving our natural wealth while generating maximum economic benefits for the country, particularly remote communities, while keeping its adverse impacts to the minimum.

2.2.4. Ecotourism may be developed in wildlife conservation areas designated as Protected Areas – Wildlife Sanctuaries, National Parks, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves – and in areas outside designated protected Areas, which may include, forests, mangroves, Sacred Groves, mud flats, wetlands, rivers, etc.

### 2.3. **Why Ecotourism?**

- 2.3.1. Eco tourism is now globally recognised as a powerful tool for conservation of forests, biodiversity/ wildlife and scenic landscapes. It does so by creating sustainable alternative livelihoods for forest dependent communities and by generating conservation awareness among masses and decision makers.
- 2.3.2. Ecotourism is the fastest growing segment of the travel and tourism industry which is one of the highest producers of global wealth and employment.
- 2.3.3. Apart from its conservation and economic value, public interest in nature-based recreation, i.e. ecotourism is fast increasing, and it is the duty of the government to provide this service to the public as far as compatible with conservation imperatives.
- 2.3.4. In order to strengthen community control and management of the forests, it is important to generate a sustainable flow of non-extractive financial benefits of forests for the communities, to ensure that the communities take interest in the conservation of forests and wildlife. Ecotourism is perhaps the only means of achieving this end.

### 2.4. **Ecotourism – Global Scenario**

As per allied market research report, the global market of ecotourism was approximately 181 billion in 2019, which is projected to reach 338.7 billion by 2027 with CAGR of 14.3% during 2020-2027. Some of the best ecotourism destinations are Costa Rica, Norway, Kenya, Palau, Galapagos and Antarctica in the World.

### 2.5. **Ecotourism – Indian Scenario**

- 2.5.1. India is still evolving as an ecotourism destination. The States/ UTs of Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Assam, Sikkim, Karnataka and Kerala are the leading destinations in the country.
- 2.5.2. In 1998, the Ministry of Tourism extensively deliberated with the industry and other stakeholders and came up with “Eco-tourism in India – Policy and Guidelines”, covering:
  - (i). Ecotourism definition and ecotourism resources of India
  - (ii). Policy and planning
  - (iii). Operational guidelines for Government, developers, operators and suppliers, visitors, destination population / host community, and NGOs/scientific & research institutions

The Ministry also developed Sustainable Tourism Criteria of India, which was launched in 2013. Many states have come out with their ecotourism policies such as Sikkim, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh.

- 2.5.3. The Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned a number of projects for promotion of Ecotourism under Swadesh Darshan Scheme across many States.

## 2.6. **Why Adventure Tourism?**

- 2.6.1. Adventure tourism incorporates and promotes core values of responsible tourism i.e. respect for cultural and natural assets and protection of the most vulnerable. It attracts visitors outside of peak season, highlights the natural and cultural values of a destination, thereby promoting its preservation, and creates resilient and committed travellers.

- 2.6.2. Adventure tourism is resilient, attracts high value customers and supports local economies. Adventure tourism practitioners encourage sustainable tourism because without pristine natural environment and meaningful cultural experiences, adventure tourism cannot exist.

- 2.6.3. Adventure Tourism has grown exponentially worldwide over the past years with tourists visiting destinations previously undiscovered. This allows for new destinations to market themselves as truly unique, appealing to those travellers looking for rare, incomparable experiences.

- 2.6.4. Adventure tourism can be divided into two parts, hard and soft adventure tourism. Hard tourism includes with risk and challenges and the persons involved in these activities should be physically and mentally healthy. It can be all the weather round and in any condition. Canoeing, bungee jumping, climbing, trekking, rock climbing, rafting and wilderness survival are some examples of hard adventure tourism.

- 2.6.5. Soft adventure tourism includes people who do not want any danger and want a lower risk factor. They are not restricted by any physical or mental health requirements. Bird watching, hiking, kayaking, bicycling, camping, cross-country skiing, riding and surfing are some examples of soft adventure tourism.

## 2.7. **Adventure Tourism – Global Scenario**

- 2.7.1. As per Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), Adventure Tourism market at 683 billion USD in 2017 is 30% of the Global Tourism Expenditure (2.3 trillion USD). Adventure tourism is fastest growing segment under tourism. Pre-COVID, the global adventure tourism market was projected to reach USD 1,626.7 billion in 2026, registering a CAGR of 13.3% from 2019 to 2026.

2.7.2. Until the Covid-19 pandemic struck, the global adventure tourism industry was on the rise but this trend had been interrupted in 2020, but with the rollout of vaccines at the global level, it is expected that the tourism industry will gradually recover from the beginning of 2022.

2.7.3. While Europe maintains its dominant position, Asia-Pacific is growing at an impressive rate owing to faster economic growth and increase in disposable incomes.

## 2.8. **Adventure Tourism – Indian Scenario**

2.8.1. As per industry guestimates, inbound adventure tourism in India is growing 5-7 per cent annually and domestic adventure tourism is growing by 20-25 per cent. According to market research expert Nielsen, India attracted just over 3.4 m adventure tourist visits in 2015. Of this number, about 15 per cent are foreign adventure tourists. Meanwhile, revenue generated from domestic adventure tourist visits to India amounted to approx. US\$ 190 mn in 2015, according to Nielsen, while foreign adventure tourist visits to India generated about US\$ 70 mn.

2.8.2. The Ministry of Tourism has recognized Adventure Tourism as an important segment to promote India as a 365 days destination and attract tourists with specific interest. The key States in adventure tourism are Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Goa and Kerala.

2.8.3. India has recently opened 124 new mountain peaks in Himalayas. Adventure tourism is emerging as one of the fastest growing segments in India with more and more travellers are opting for experiential tourism.

2.8.4. The segment faces hurdles of centralising safety standards and streamlining practises. There is no framework that adventure tour operators must adhere to which means nearly anyone can begin to conduct adventure sports activities without adequate regard to safety. Indian adventure travel market is primarily unorganized as only a handful of operators even bother to take the voluntary recognition.

2.8.5. Lack of basic infrastructure facilities, appropriate tented accommodation sites, scarcity of skilled and professional trained instructors, lack of financial support from government or private entities for procuring and maintaining equipment, establishing high standard of safety and need of up-scaling the marketing and awareness campaigns to promote adventure destination are some of the challenges that this niche segment has been facing.

## Chapter 3 – Vision, Mission and Strategy

### 3.1. Vision

To mainstream sustainable tourism development in the country and to improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of India as a destination for ecotourism and adventure tourism.

### 3.2. Mission

- (i). To lay down a framework for sustainable tourism development in the country
- (ii). To develop an enabling ecosystem for growth of Adventure Tourism and Eco Tourism in the Country.
- (iii). To create synergies between the government, communities, conservation NGOs and the private sector for the development of ecotourism

### 3.3. Strategic Pillars

Following strategic pillars have been identified for development of sustainable tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism:

- (i). Certification Scheme for Sustainable Tourism
- (ii). IEC and Capacity Building
- (iii). State Assessment and Ranking
- (iv). Marketing and Promotion
- (v). Safety Standards & Regulations
- (vi). Destination and Product Development
- (vii). Public Private and Community Partnerships
- (viii). Governance and Institutional Framework
- (ix). Legal and Financial

### 3.4. Stakeholders

#### 3.4.1. Key Stakeholders

Promotion and development of sustainable tourism, adventure and eco-tourism will involve a diverse set of stakeholders, whose role will be crucial for the success of the Strategy. The key stakeholders are:

- (i). Central Ministries
- (ii). State Governments
- (iii). Panchayati Raj Institutions
- (iv). Industry

- (v). Non-government organizations
- (vi). Local community

The role and responsibilities of the stakeholders are given below.

#### 3.4.2. **Central Ministries**

Various Central Ministries are involved in the development of adventure and eco-tourism. Various Central and State Schemes must be converged and synergy created for major impact. Programs and initiatives of the following Ministries need to be studied in detail for promotion and development of adventure and eco-tourism:

##### (i). **Ministry of Tourism**

Ministry of Tourism is responsible for promotion of Tourism in the Country. The Ministry implements various schemes for creation of infrastructure, marketing and promotion and skill development initiatives for tourism. Various schemes of the Ministry can be leveraged for promotion and development of sustainable tourism, adventure tourism and eco-tourism.

##### (ii). **Ministry of Rural Development**

The Ministry of Rural Development is working towards sustainable and inclusive growth of rural India through a multipronged strategy for eradication of poverty by increasing livelihoods opportunities, providing social safety net and developing infrastructure for growth. The Ministry of Rural Development is an important stakeholder in the development of rural areas in the Country and contribute towards the objective through various schemes being implemented by the Ministry.

##### (iii). **Ministry of Environment and Forests**

The Ministry is responsible for implementation of policies and programmes relating to conservation of the country's natural resources including its lakes and rivers, its biodiversity, forests and wildlife. Ministry of Environment is responsible for framing laws and regulations for environment and forests and has a key role in development of sustainable tourism. The Ministry can provide valuable guidance and direction for utilizing natural resources for sustainable and responsible tourism.

##### (iv). **Ministry of Culture**

Ministry of Culture is responsible to preserve, promote and disseminate all forms of art and culture in the Country and has a large number of Institutions

and organization involved in the field of art and culture. The Ministry can contribute in the promotion of culture and heritage in a sustainable and responsible manner.

(v). **Ministry of Development of North East Region**

The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region is responsible for the matters relating to the planning, execution and monitoring of development schemes and projects in the North Eastern Region. Its vision is to accelerate the pace of socio-economic development of the Region so that it may enjoy growth parity with the rest of the country. Ministry can help development of sustainable tourism, adventure tourism and eco-tourism in north east region.

(vi). **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**

Ministry of Skills can help with various skill development initiatives for sustainable and responsible tourism including promotion of entrepreneurship.

(vii). **Ministry of Textiles**

Ministry of Textiles is responsible for promotion of handicrafts and handlooms and these activities are concentrated in rural areas. Many tourists may be interested to know about handicrafts and the Ministry can provide support and synergy in developing responsible tourism.

(viii). **Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare**

Department of Agriculture is responsible for agriculture, cooperation and farmers welfare. The Department implements various schemes, which impact the farming activities and communities in rural areas. The Department may provide support for Farmstays, agri tourism and other related activities, which have synergies with sustainable and responsible tourism.

(ix). **Department of Youth Affairs and Sports**

Department of Youth Affairs pursues the twin objectives of personality building and nation building, i.e. developing the personality of youth and involving them in various nation-building activities to channelize the constructive and creative energies of the youth. The Department also promotes adventure sports in the country and can contribute towards developing sustainable tourism and adventure tourism.

3.4.3. **State Governments**

State Governments have a key role for development of tourism in their respective states. Many states have taken important measures for development of sustainable and responsible tourism. Many states have also framed eco-tourism policies and prioritized development of ecotourism and adventure tourism. State Governments will have the primary role in creating momentum for sustainable tourism.

#### 3.4.4. **Panchayati Raj Institutions**

Panchayati Raj Institutions have a strong influence on local communities and their support is vital to the success of ecotourism and rural tourism. Village Panchayats and other institutions have to be consulted and involved in the preparation of plans for developing ecotourism in their villages.

#### 3.4.5. **Industry**

Industry players, who specialize in adventure and ecotourism and tour operators apart from accommodation providers such as hotel, B&B, Farm Stay owners and tourist guides are important stakeholders. There is a need to involve industry players, who may be willing to be part of developing sustainable tourism destinations. They may have existing business or may set up new business. A business plan for the destination vetted by Industry is important for the sustainability.

#### 3.4.6. **Non-Government Organizations**

Non-Government Organizations involved in the areas of sustainable and responsible tourism, integrated rural development, livelihood promotion in rural areas, community development in rural areas can play a great role in forging community linkages.

#### 3.4.7. **Local Community**

Local community is a key stakeholder and has to be taken on board. The Community has to be made aware of the benefits of sustainable adventure and ecotourism, their apprehensions, if any have to be allayed and they have to be encouraged to participate and be part of the value chain. In order to ensure inclusive and responsible tourism, most of the supplies and services must be sourced from local providers. Their capacity building will have to be done to ensure they become part of the supply chain.



## Chapter 4 – Definitions, Principles and Perspectives

### 4.1. Definition of Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable Tourism is the tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.

The above definition has been adopted from UNWTO.

### 4.2. Definition of Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism is a trip that includes at least two of the following three elements physical activity, natural environment and cultural immersion.

The above definition has been adopted from Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA).

### 4.3. Definition of Eco Tourism

Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.

The above definition has been adopted from The International Ecotourism Society (TIES).

### 4.4. Guiding Principles for Sustainable Tourism

As per UNWTO, Sustainable tourism should follow the three basic principles:

#### (i). Environmental Sustainability

Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

#### (ii). Socio-cultural Sustainability

Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

#### (iii). Economic Sustainability

Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable

employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

#### 4.5. **Sustainability for all forms of tourism**

The principles of sustainable tourism shall be applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments.

#### 4.6. **Aims of sustainable tourism**

UNEP and UNWTO in their joint publication in “Making Tourism More Sustainable: A guide for policy makers” have laid down the twelve aims for sustainable tourism:

(i). **Economic Viability**

To ensure the viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises, so that they are able to continue to prosper and deliver benefits in the long term.

(ii). **Local Prosperity**

To maximize the contribution of tourism to the economic prosperity of the host destination, including the proportion of visitor spending that is retained locally.

(iii). **Employment Quality**

To strengthen the number and quality of local jobs created and supported by tourism, including the level of pay, conditions of service and availability to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways.

(iv). **Social Equity**

To seek a widespread and fair distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout the recipient community, including improving opportunities, income and services available to the poor.

(v). **Visitor Fulfillment**

To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways.

(vi). **Local Control**

To engage and empower local communities in planning and decision making about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders.

(vii). Community Wellbeing

To maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities, including social structures and access to resources, amenities and life support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation.

(viii). Cultural Richness

To respect and enhance the historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of host communities.

(ix). Physical Integrity

To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoid the physical and visual degradation of the environment.

(x). Biological Diversity

To support the conservation of natural areas, habitats and wildlife, and minimize damage to them.

(xi). Resource Efficiency

To minimize the use of scarce and non-renewable resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services.

(xii). Environmental Purity

To minimize the pollution of air, water and land and the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors.

The order in which these twelve aims are listed does not imply any order of priority. Each one is equally important.

#### 4.7. **Tourism and Sustainable Development Goals**

Tourism has been included as targets in Goals 8, 12 and 14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, respectively. Tourism, however, has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly, to all of the sustainable development goals as detailed out in Annexure-1.

India is committed to achieve 2030 SDGs. Mainstreaming sustainability into tourism development, will ensure tourism contributed in full measure to SDGs.

#### 4.8. **Guiding Principles for Ecotourism**

Based on the guiding principles of sustainable tourism and aims of sustainable tourism, development and regulation of Ecotourism in India shall be based on the following guiding principles:

- (i). Subject to the availability of management capacity and legal provisions, all-natural habitats and landscapes will be open to ecotourism development.
- (ii). Special care and measures shall be taken to protect fragile and ecologically vulnerable sites, species and scenery, against any unacceptable impacts of tourism.
- (iii). Depending on the potential of a site, ecotourism programmes shall comprise a diversity of products such as drives for wildlife viewing/ photography, wildlife viewing/ photography from machaans/ hides, trekking/ hiking, bird watching, mountaineering, boating, river rafting, camping etc. to dilute the impact by spreading it over larger areas.
- (iv). Tourism in natural habitats shall be based on the general principle of high value and low impact (low volume/ density).
- (v). In cases of high demand for certain locations, differential ecotourism products may be created to cater to different market segments, so that the area subject to higher impact due to more liberal access, is relatively low.
- (vi). Safety of visitors and risk awareness shall be given the highest priority in every ecotourism product.
- (vii). Local communities shall be recognised as the most important stakeholders in ecotourism projects and operations. The success of ecotourism operations shall be primarily measured in terms of the benefits accruing to the communities and nature conservation, in addition to the quality of visitor experience.
- (viii). Social, religious and cultural sensitivities of local communities shall be respected in planning and implementing ecotourism programmes and products.
- (ix). Enhancing the quality of visitor experience shall be given priority over increasing volumes in planning and implementing ecotourism operations.

- (x). Impact of ecotourism on natural resources and communities shall be monitored based on nationally and globally accepted parameters, in order to keep it within acceptable limits.
- (xi). Natural profile and ecological integrity of forest and wildlife areas, along with their wildlife/ biodiversity values shall be maintained. Infrastructure for ecotourism will be so designed that it merges with the ambient environment. These will utilise local construction materials and shall avoid the use of cement concrete as far as possible. The structures will be eco-friendly, and no permanent structures will be established.

## **Chapter 5 – Certification Scheme for Sustainable Tourism**

### **5.1. Sustainable Tourism Criteria of India (STCI)**

In order to mainstream sustainability in tourism sector, it is important to measure the adoption of principles of sustainable tourism in various destinations, products and industry whether accommodation providers or tour operators.

India has adopted Sustainable Tourism Criteria of India based on the framework of Global Sustainable Tourism Council. Draft Criteria for destinations and Industry is given in **Annexure -2** and **Annexure-3** respectively.

### **5.2. Finalization of Scheme for Certification as per STCI**

The Ministry will finalize the Scheme for Certification for sustainable tourism as per STCI principles and indicators for destinations, accommodation sector and tour operators in consultation with Industry. The Ministry will work with Industry and reputed non-government organizations in seeking their technical expertise for promotion of sustainable tourism.

The Ministry will also initiate action to create Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India and Indicators for other tourism service providers not covered so far.

### **5.3. Certification for Adventure Tourism and Ecotourism**

In order to promote development of adventure tourism and ecotourism in a professional, sustainable and responsible manner, Certification Scheme for tour operators, guides and other service providers for ecotourism and adventure tourism will also be framed.

### **5.4. Digitalization and branding of Certification Schemes**

The entire process of STCI certification, adventure and eco-tourism certification shall be end to end digital. The Certification will have an attractive branding and it will be aggressively promoted by the Ministry of Tourism through all its channels including incredible India website and mobile application.

### **5.5. State Support for Implementation of the Scheme**

The Ministry of Tourism will work with the State Governments to build capacity of the industry to prepare them for certification. The State governments will be encouraged to prioritize destinations for certification of sustainability.

## **Chapter 6 – IEC and Capacity Building**

### **6.1. Information, Education and Communication**

#### **6.1.1. The need for IEC**

Sustainable and responsible tourism is an evolving area and there is great need for a well-planned Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaign to create awareness, understanding and acceptance of sustainable tourism amongst all stakeholders. The campaign will have to spearheaded by the Central Government and State Governments will full support of the industry and other Stakeholders including local government functionaries, forest and wildlife officials, local communities and non-government organizations working in the field.

#### **6.1.2. Development of IEC material**

Ministry of Tourism with the assistance from technical experts will devise overall IEC material, which can be customised and expanded by the State Governments keeping in view their specific needs and requirements. The material will be both digital and print and will be made available on websites, social media and other channels.

#### **6.1.3. State support for sensitization and training**

In addition to IEC material being made available through various channels, the Ministry will work with the States to organize sensitization and training workshops for various stakeholders including Government and Private Sector officials, NGOs and local communities/ institutions. Apart from various aspects of sustainable and responsible tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism, it will also cover the need for enhancing the visitor experience and value chain enhancement for competitive advantage. This tourism focus should be an essential component of each destination.

#### **6.1.4. National and State Resource Centres**

The Ministry of Tourism will set up a National Resource Centre as a source of capacity and expertise at the National level for sustainable tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism. Similarly, the Ministry will also encourage the State Governments to set up State Resource Centres. These resource centres along with other identified institutions will help in developing adequate material, preparing a pool of master trainers, training of trainers and other capacity building initiatives.

### **6.2. Capacity Building of field functionaries and conservation agencies**

6.2.1. The Ministry of Tourism will support the State Governments in building the capacity of the conservation agencies and communities for developing and operating world

class ecotourism programmes, in partnership with various stakeholders and private sector. It shall be continuously improved and enhanced.

- 6.2.2. The State Governments will endeavour to prepare a capacity building plan for communities and regulatory staff for every site to ensure progressive improvement in quality of operations and flow of benefits to communities. Special attention will be paid to impart specialized training to field functionaries on green skilling, on Eco-tourism activities etc.

### 6.3. **Skill development and entrepreneurship**

- 6.3.1. The State Governments will identify the capacity needs of local communities to benefit from ecotourism programmes, through jobs and entrepreneurship development, among other things. This may include training to discharge specialized tasks such as tourist guides, natural science interpreters, patrol partners for protection work, entrepreneurs for small scale homestead-based hospitality industry, small business operators (like souvenir shops, equipments for hire, photography etc).

- 6.3.2. The Ministry of Tourism is already providing various skills in adventure tourism through Indian Institute of Travel and Tourism, National Institute for Water Sports, National Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering. There are other training institutions run by Central Ministries and State Governments.

- 6.3.3. Ministry of Tourism will support State Governments in undertaking various skill development and entrepreneurship development activities as identified for meeting the needs of the local community. The State Government will also facilitate them in placement and starting their own venture.

### 6.4. **Setting up of Interpretation Centres**

- 6.4.1. Interpretation Centres are an important tool for education and interpretation of ecotourism potential of the area and provide crucial information to the visitors in order to enable them to appreciate the eco-system services and intangible benefits provided by the area. The visitors are sensitized to the significance of conservation and expected behavioural requirements while they are within the pristine area through an effective communication plan.

- 6.4.2. The Ministry of Tourism and the State Governments will endeavour to set up Interpretation Centres at all the important ecotourism destinations. Interpretation centres will be equipped with appropriate electronic visualisation tools, signage, audio-visual presentations, interactive learning tools, safety protocol and information material on the area.



**6.5. Training and Certification of Guides**

Guides and naturalists being one of the most important elements of imparting quality ecotourism experience. The Ministry of Tourism will strengthen the facilities for their training and certification of guides/ naturalists through nationally accepted certification processes across the country.

**6.6. Education, Research & Training on Sustainable, Eco and Adventure Tourism**

6.6.1. Ecotourism research, monitoring and training facilities shall be created in identified Institutions across the country to develop ecotourism as a full-fledged academic discipline in the country. School and college curricula should also incorporate sustainable tourism. Ecotourism shall be included as a discipline in the professional training curricula of all levels of foresters and wildlife managers and their capacity shall be regularly updated through in-service training and study tours to acclaimed ecotourism destinations in India and abroad.

6.6.2. Education and Skill training will cover various aspects of responsible Tourism such as awareness of over tourism impacts, environmental impact and concept of carrying capacity, community participation, indigenous solutions and tourism offerings, entrepreneurship and community development initiatives at local level (Vocal for Local).

## **Chapter 7 – State Assessment and Ranking**

### **7.1. Ranking of the States on Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism**

- 7.1.1. The Ministry of Tourism will conduct ranking of the States, with the key objective to foster competitiveness and encourage States to work proactively towards developing ecotourism and adventure tourism with the overarching objective of promoting sustainable tourism. It will be implemented as a capacity development exercise to encourage mutual learning among all states and to provide support in policy formulation and implementation.
- 7.1.2. The broad areas and action points for ranking exercise will be taken from Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India, global rankings of countries in adventure tourism and ecotourism. The States may be suitably classified into leaders, aspiring leaders and emerging States. This will also help prepare a State Specific Report containing analysis of respective ecosystems for promotion of ecotourism and adventure tourism, strengths and priority areas for future and best practices adopted by the States.
- 7.1.3. The ranking exercise will be carried out with professional support and through independent experts from various Institutions both Government and Private. The Ministry of tourism will provide necessary training to the officials and other stakeholders and handhold the States for their participation in the exercise.

### **7.2. Improving India's rank in Ecotourism**

Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with other Ministries and State Governments will prepare a plan to improve the ranking of the country in the ecotourism parameters, listed in The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017 of the World Economic Forum. The plan shall be implemented expeditiously and updated as and when new assessment reports are received.

### **7.3. Improving India's rank in Adventure Tourism**

- 7.3.1. Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) prepares Adventure Tourism Development Index (ATDI) based on following pillars:
- (i). Safe & Welcoming Adventure Readiness
  - (ii). Sustainable Development
  - (iii). Safety
  - (iv). Natural Resources
  - (v). Health
  - (vi). Entrepreneurship
  - (vii). Adventure Resources

- (viii). Humanitarian
- (ix). Infrastructure
- (x). Cultural Resources
- (xi). Image

7.3.2. The improvement is dependent on all stakeholders (government and private) and good governance in tourism. The Ministry of Tourism in consultation with other Central Ministries, State Governments and Industry will prepare a plan to improve the rank.

## Chapter 8 – Marketing and Promotion

### 8.1. **Creating a Sub brand**

In order to promote India as a destination for Adventure tourism and Ecotourism, a sub brand around these themes shall be created under the overall “Incredible India” Brand.

### 8.2. **Dedicated Promotional Campaign**

There is a need to have a dedicated promotional campaign for positioning India as a adventure tourism destination. India has to focus on utilising its natural heritage. This will require a different promotional strategy than the one for selling monuments and culture. It has to focus on our mountains, rivers, forests and deserts. These campaigns should be planned in partnership with Industry Stakeholders.

### 8.3. **State Specific Campaigns**

Every State has its own unique offerings and therefore the States have to plan their own campaign to popularise the State as ecotourism and adventure tourism destination.

### 8.4. **Destination Specific Campaign**

It is ultimately the destination which succeeds or fails and therefore destinations will have to plan specific campaigns to showcase their unique offerings.

### 8.5. **Campaign for Responsible Travellers**

While supply side interventions are required, there is also a need to work on demand side by making the traveller aware of sustainable and responsible tourism.

Responsible behaviour by travellers and demand for more sustainable tourism will greatly influence the Industry to adopt sustainability in their businesses.

The Ministry in partnership with the States, Industry and Destinations will launch a campaign for responsible traveller. The Campaign will encourage travellers to behave responsibly as per charter given in **Annexure-4**.

## **Chapter 9 – Safety Standards and Regulations**

### **9.1. Advisory regarding Guidelines framed by ADTOI**

9.1.1. Safety measures are extremely important for adventure tourism keeping in view the nature of activities and the risks associated with the same. The Ministry of Tourism has released the guidelines on safety and quality norms for adventure Tourism in India formulated along with the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI). The guidelines have been framed for 15 Land Based, 7 Air Based and 7 Water Based activities which cover the entire gamut of Adventure Tourism available in India.

9.1.2. The guidelines help adventure tour operators understand and execute safety measures in a better manner. It educates tour operators and other concerned agencies about important safety requirements and lesser-known dangers. Detailed guidelines covered in the document focus on safety from various aspects:

- (i). Role of guide,
- (ii). Important equipment required,
- (iii). Inspections and maintenance process,
- (iv). Operating instructions,
- (v). Risk mitigation,
- (vi). Medical safety etc.

### **9.2. Standardization of Safety standards and Regulatory System**

9.2.1. The advisory issued by the Ministry of Tourism is only voluntary. The ADTOI guidelines are neither standardized by any agency nor have legal or regulatory backing. In order for India to emerge as prominent adventure tourist destination, standards for safety have to be notified and a proper legal and regulatory system for safety of adventure activities in the country needs to be put in place.

9.2.2. Ministry of Tourism will work with Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to standardize the safety standards for adventure activities. The Ministry will also work with relevant Ministries and States to frame legal and regulatory system for safety of adventure activities and ensure its implementation.

### **9.3. National Rescue and Communication Grid**

The Ministry of Tourism will work with other relevant Central Ministries and State Governments to set up National Rescue and Communication Grid for tourism with immediate access to air evacuation whenever needed to ensure quick response time in case of any unfortunate event. The Ministry will also work towards grant of allowing limited use of satellite phone and drone for safety of tourists.

## **Chapter 10 – Destination and Product Development**

### **10.1. Identification of destinations, profiling and prioritization**

- 10.1.1. Each State will identify the adventure destinations by offerings (Land, Air and Water based activities) in Soft, Hard and Other categories and create a detailed profile. It will include both existing adventure tourist destinations as well as potential adventure tourist destinations.
- 10.1.2. Each State will identify areas for eco-tourism within the Protected Areas, in pristine areas rich in biodiversity or of aesthetic significance through a participatory process involving stakeholders, particularly the local communities, tribal & other traditional forest dwellers. A list of ecotourism destinations both existing and new potential sites will be prepared and profiled.
- 10.1.3. The State Government will prioritize development of new destinations based on the existing connectivity and tourist circuits, current tourism ecosystem, unique tourism offerings of the destination/ site and future potential.
- 10.1.4. Established ecotourism destinations shall be decongested where necessary (e.g. prominent tiger reserves; popular trekking trails) through long-term ecotourism planning to spread tourism benefits to other destinations/ sites across Protected Areas landscapes and other natural habitats.

### **10.2. Development of prioritized destinations**

Development plans for the prioritized adventure or ecotourism destinations shall be prepared based on the detailed gap study and benchmarking with national and international best practices and standards. It will include recommendations for connectivity, hard and soft interventions for developing the destination.

#### **(i). Improving the Connectivity**

Most of the adventure activities and ecotourism activities happen in remote areas and it is important to improve the connectivity of these destinations/ attractions to reduce the travel time. The Development plan must address the challenges of connectivity, if any. The State Governments will explore time saving and cost-effective means such as Chopper and Sea Plane Connectivity.

#### **(ii). Ecotourism development and management plan**

Ecotourism development and management plans shall be prepared in consultation with all stakeholders, professional associations, non-profits and recognised experts. Ecotourism plans embedded in existing forest

working plans, micro plans, wildlife management plans of the forest departments and the zonal master plans and area development plans of other departments/agencies, shall be reviewed and updated.

Natural profile and ecological integrity of forest and wildlife areas, along with their wildlife/ biodiversity values shall be maintained. Infrastructure for ecotourism will be so designed that it merges with the ambient environment. These will utilise local construction materials and shall avoid the use of cement concrete as far as possible. The structures will be eco-friendly, and no permanent structures will be established.

The Plan may also include retrofitting existing ecotourism destinations with basic visitor facilities (e.g. interpretation facilities, signage, toilets, garbage disposal, drinking water) inside forests, or along hiking/mountaineering trails.

(iii). **Special restrictions**

Ecologically vulnerable and fragile sites, such as breeding areas, nesting colonies, erosion-prone locations, sites with RET plant species, sources of drinking water, certain parts of core areas of tiger reserves, biodiversity heritage sites, cultural and religious sites etc. may be placed under special restrictions, or may be made no-go areas, if deemed necessary by local authorities, experts and other stakeholders.

(iv). **Demand for budget accommodation**

In view of the large, and growing, domestic market consisting of families, students and budget travellers, adequate facilities to accommodate this demand shall be created while ensuring that this segment has a rich educational and recreational experience with minimum environmental impact.

(v). **Soft interventions**

Ecotourism or adventure tourism development plans shall also include the soft interventions such as skill development and entrepreneurship, capacity building, marketing and branding, itinerary development.

(vi). **Impact Assessment**

Potential impacts of every ecotourism activity shall be recorded at the planning stage and mitigation plans shall be developed accordingly.

Environmental and social impact assessment of ecotourism in important existing destinations shall be carried out expeditiously and appropriate mitigation plans/ safeguards shall be implemented at the earliest.

(vii). **Monitoring**

Eco-tourism plans will invariably include a dynamic monitoring mechanism, covering number of tourists visiting and the pattern, their level of satisfaction, involvement of local people, scope for improvement, etc. This will facilitate prediction of growth and preparation for management of the growth of ecotourism in terms of visitation management, growth of hospitality facilities in neighbourhood, need for security arrangements for the area and so on.

**10.3. Implementation of Development Plans**

- 10.3.1. The State Nodal Agency responsible for sustainable tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism will converge various Central Government and State Government plans for mobilizing resources for implementing the plan.
- 10.3.2. A destination or site level management organization or committee should be set up with the participation of all the stakeholders to spearhead the implementation of development and management plan on ground.



## **Chapter 11 - Public Private and Community Partnerships**

### **11.1. Private Sector partnership in Ecotourism/ Adventure Tourism**

#### **11.1.1. Strengths of Private Sector**

Strengths of the private sector in areas of marketing, operations, product and experience creation, quality assurance and finance etc. shall be harnessed to develop and spread ecotourism through mutually beneficial partnerships including public-private, community-private, public-private-community among others.

#### **11.1.2. Institutional Framework**

Central and State Governments will work jointly to evolve a framework for enlisting ecotourism operators, on the basis of globally recognised parameters. Those seeking to participate in government or community concessions (contracts) must be enlisted and accredited. Such competent and qualified private operators shall be mandated to develop well-dispersed eco-lodges/ camps to develop/ conduct ecotourism and adventure activities.

Operators shall be selected following a competitive procedure as may be prescribed.

Standardised contract documents and operational guidelines, related to the development and management of contracts and partnerships with private operators, shall be developed, for the benefit of implementing authorities and communities.

Appropriate tax and non-tax incentives or other suitable benefits may be provided, by the Central Government as well as State Governments, to ecotourism operators to encourage them to follow globally recognised standards and practices of ecotourism.

#### **11.1.3. Ecotourism Blocks to be given for development and management**

State Governments should designate areas for private sector operator to be called ecotourism block for development and management. Suitable procedure for delineating “ecotourism blocks” in forest lands shall be developed by the State Governments keeping in view laws and regulations.

State Governments may give the selected private sector Operator exclusive access to a designated area (ecotourism block), on a reasonably long-term agreement, preferably in partnership with local communities for development and management:

- (i). The operator shall have no right over the forest produce or forest land, except using it for running ecotourism operations as per an approved plan. The local communities shall be entitled to use the forest land as per their rights and

privileges as recognised by law, although the operator may enter into an agreement with them to modify their use in exchange for suitable compensation or alternative facilities and livelihoods, and thus, reducing the dependence of local communities on forest produce for their economic requirements.

- (ii). Management of forests included in an ecotourism block shall be decided in consultation with the operator and the dependent local communities.
- (iii). Ordinarily, only basic tourist conveniences such as toilets, rain-shelters, zero impact or seasonal tented camping facilities, hiking/biking trails, dirt tracks, hides/ machaan etc. shall be allowed to be developed on the forest land while residential and other commercial facilities shall be developed outside the forest areas.
- (iv). Where no suitable private land adjoining the assigned land is available for developing residential facilities, limited forest land may be allowed for this purpose, within a minimum impact format and without clearing/ cutting trees. The operator shall be obliged to return the site to its original pristine condition at the end of the agreement period. The facilities thus created will need to be based on sustainable practices, such as, limited capacity, usage of renewable energy, water harvesting and recycling, local employment, solid waste management and sewage treatment plants etc., to ensure pollution free, eco-friendly and socially acceptable operations.
- (v). However, no new residential facilities shall be allowed on the forest land included in protected areas notified under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
- (vi). The operator shall also be obliged to trade the forest carbon in the international market on behalf of the government/ communities, in accordance with international mechanisms such as CDM, REDD+ and other environmental economic instruments.

## **11.2. Community and Private Conservancy**

- 11.2.1. Owners of farmland adjoining forests may be encouraged to adopt ecotourism as an alternative land use, by developing their lands as wilderness or wildlife habitats, individually or collectively, in the form of private or community conservancies.
- 11.2.2. The Government shall support community and private conservancies through appropriate incentives as such operations will create additional wildlife habitats / wilderness with the concomitant flow of ecosystem services and will also generate rural livelihoods and employment opportunities.

11.2.3. Conservancies shall be encouraged to run ecotourism operations in collaboration with suitable private operators, under an equitable profit/ benefit sharing arrangement, in order to ensure market access, quality of operations and capital inflow.

11.3. **Homestays and Community lodges**

Homestays and community lodges, shall be encouraged through appropriate incentives. Partnerships between community-based hospitality initiatives and private operators or reputed conservation NGOs shall be encouraged with the objective of quality assurance. Community initiatives will have to maintain the same environmental standards related to water and energy conservation and garbage disposal as private operators.

## Chapter 12 – Governance and Institutional Framework

### 12.1. Action Plan

Ministry of Tourism will prepare a detailed National Action Plan in consultation with relevant Ministries, State Governments and Industry Stakeholders for implementation of the Strategy. The Action plan will be reviewed and monitored in accordance with the laid down governance mechanism for the same.

State Governments will prepare State specific policy and action plan for development of sustainable tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism. The Ministry will help with model policies and action plans for guidance of the States.

### 12.2. Governance

In order to ensure that the Strategy is effectively implemented, there is need to review the progress and resolve the issues. Following institutional structure will be followed for the same.

#### (i). Vision Group under Union Minister for Tourism

A Vision Group on Sustainable Tourism under the Union Minister for Tourism will be set up. The Vision Group will include all the Stakeholder Ministries, States, Industry, NGO and Experts.

It will provide overall vision and guidance for the development of Sustainable Tourism, Adventure Tourism and Eco Tourism in the Country.

#### (ii). IMCCT

Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee under Cabinet Secretary, already in place, will review and resolve inter-Ministerial issues, which may arise and provide guidance for greater convergence of Central Schemes.

#### (iii). National Board on Sustainable Tourism under Secretary (Tourism)

National Board on Sustainable Tourism under Secretary (Tourism) will be set up. The National Board will include the representatives of the Key Ministries, leading States in sustainable tourism and representatives from Industry, NGO and Experts.

The Board will guide the operationalisation and implementation of various strategic initiatives to strengthen the ecosystem for development of sustainable tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism in the Country:

##### (i) Certification Schemes

- (ii) Safety guidelines
- (iii) Capacity building
- (iv) Marketing and promotion
- (v) Private Sector Participation
- (vi) Specific strategies
- (vii) Any other measures for growth of sustainable tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism in the country.

(iv). **State Steering Committee under Chief Secretary**

The States will set up a State Steering Committee under Chief Secretary. The Committee will have representation from all the relevant Departments at the State level, representatives of Industry, NGOs and Experts.

The Committee will coordinate, review and resolve issues regarding implementation of strategy and other State specific issues for development and promotion of sustainable tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism in the State.

(v). **District level Committee**

The States will set up a district level Committee under District Collector to coordinate and review progress at the district level.

(vi). **Site level monitoring and Coordination Committee**

The States will set up a destination/ site level "Ecotourism Committee", consisting of forest officers, district authorities, representatives of local communities, tour operators, lodge owners and other local stakeholders to provide to provide a forum/ platform for guidance and smooth running of Ecotourism operations.

12.3. **State Nodal Agency**

The States will designation a State Nodal Agency to coordinate, facilitate and promote sustainable tourism including adventure tourism and ecotourism in the State. The agency should be provided with adequate budgetary resources and staff to carry out the assigned responsibilities.

The Ministry of Tourism will work with the designated State Nodal Agency to provide necessary financial and technical support under various schemes of the Ministry for development of tourism infrastructure, tourism promotion and capacity building of tourism service providers.

## Chapter 13 - Legal and Financial

### 13.1. **Financial Support**

The Ministry of Tourism has various schemes for development of destinations, marketing and promotion and capacity building of tourism service providers. The Ministry of tourism has already provided financial assistance for developing various tourism circuits for ecotourism, wildlife tourism, dessert circuit, tribal circuit, Himalayan and north east circuits.

Post pandemic, the Ministry of Tourism has renewed focus on sustainable and responsible tourism and promotion of nature tourism. The Ministry of Tourism may develop a dedicated central sector or centrally sponsored scheme for the promotion of sustainable tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism in line with the national strategy and roadmap.

Apart from the Ministry of Tourism, there are schemes of other Central Ministries, which may be used for promotion and development infrastructure, skill development and capacity building for sustainable tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism.

The State Governments should also provide adequate budget for development of adventure tourism and ecotourism in their respective States and also converge resources from various schemes of Central and State Government for focused development of destinations.

### 13.2. **Conservation Fee**

The State Governments may charge a conservation fee for overall eco-development. The conservation fee may be decided based on the number of persons visiting the facility, the duration of operation of the facility (seasonal or year-round) and on a luxury classification system.

The State Governments should use all direct income accruing from ecotourism e.g. entry fees, user fees, conservation fee etc. for strengthening the protection and management of natural resources, improvement of the ecotourism ecosystem and community benefit, in accordance with the procedures that may be prescribed by the respective State Governments.

The State Governments may also advise the Local bodies, such as village Panchayats, within whose jurisdiction any commercial adventure tourism or ecotourism facilities are situated, to levy, in consultation with the stakeholders, suitable taxes, duties, cess etc. as per the powers granted to them under relevant laws.

### 13.3. **Enabling Legal Provisions**

Sections 28, 33, 35 (8) 38-O and 64 of The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, empower the State Governments and NTCA to frame rules for allowing and regulating ecotourism within the Protected Areas. The powers for approval of Management plan of a Protected Area are vested with Chief Wild Life Warden. In case of Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves, the powers vested in the respective management committees provide enabling environment for formulation of management plans, including ecotourism plans.

Further, section 26 (2), 32, 34 and 76 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 empower the State Governments to make rules for the protection and management of reserve and protected forests and ecotourism can very well fit into the forest protection regime. Section 2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 provides for exempting activities “ancillary to conservation, development and management of forests and wildlife”, and ecotourism obviously qualifies as “other like purpose” because of its globally recognised potential to strengthen conservation of forests and wildlife.

### 13.4. **Disclaimer**

The legal provisions, rules and regulations and other such instructions of the Competent Authorities of the Central Government and the State Governments concerning environment and forests shall override anything stated in this document, which is not in conformity with such legal provisions, rules, regulations and instructions.

## Annexure



## **Annexure 1 – Tourism and Sustainable Development Goals**

### **1. SDG 1: No Poverty**

As one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world, tourism is well-positioned to foster economic growth and development at all levels and provide income through job creation. Sustainable tourism development, and its impact at community level, can be linked with national poverty reduction goals, those related to promoting entrepreneurship and small businesses, and empowering less favoured groups, particularly youth and women.

### **2. SDG 2: Zero Hunger**

Tourism can spur agricultural productivity by promoting the production, use and sale of local produce in tourist destinations and its full integration in the tourism value chain. In addition, agro-tourism, a growing tourism segment, can complement traditional agricultural activities. The resulting rise of income in local communities can lead to a more resilient agriculture while enhancing the value of the tourism experience.

### **3. SDG 3: Good health and well being**

Tourism's contribution to economic growth and development can also have a knock-on effect on health and well-being. Foreign earnings and tax income from tourism can be reinvested in health care and services, which should aim to improve maternal health, reduce child mortality and prevent diseases, among others.

### **4. SDG 4: Quality education**

A well-trained and skilful workforce is crucial for tourism to prosper. The sector can provide incentives to invest in education and vocational training and assist labour mobility through cross-border agreements on qualifications, standards and certifications. In particular youth, women, senior citizens, indigenous peoples and those with special needs should benefit through educational means, where tourism has the potential to promote inclusiveness, the values of a culture of tolerance, peace and non-violence, and all aspects of global exchange and citizenship.

### **5. SDG 5: Gender Equality**

Tourism can empower women in multiple ways, particularly through the provision of jobs and through income-generating opportunities in small and larger-scale tourism and hospitality related enterprises. As one of the sectors with the highest share of women employed and entrepreneurs, tourism can be a tool for women to unlock their potential, helping them to become fully engaged and lead in every aspect of society.

**6. SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation**

Tourism can play a critical role in achieving water access and security, as well as hygiene and sanitation for all. The efficient use of water in the tourism sector, coupled with appropriate safety measures, wastewater management, pollution control and technology efficiency can be key to safeguarding our most precious resource.

**7. SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy**

As a sector that requires substantial energy input, tourism can accelerate the shift toward renewable energy and increase its share in the global energy mix. Consequently, by promoting sound and long-term investments in sustainable energy sources, tourism can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, mitigate climate change and contribute to innovative and new energy solutions in urban, regional and remote areas.

**8. SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**

Tourism is one of the driving forces of global economic growth and currently provides for 1 in 11 jobs worldwide. By giving access to decent work opportunities in the tourism sector, society –particularly youth and women – can benefit from increased skills and professional development. The sector’s contribution to job creation is recognized in Target 8.9 “By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products”.

**9. SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**

Tourism development relies on good public and privately supplied infrastructure and an innovative environment. The sector can also incentivize national governments to upgrade their infrastructure and retrofit their industries, making them more sustainable, resource-efficient and clean, as a means to attract tourists and other sources of foreign investment. This should also facilitate further sustainable industrialization, necessary for economic growth, development and innovation.

**10. SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities**

Tourism can be a powerful tool for community development and reducing inequalities if it engages local populations and all key stakeholders in its development. Tourism can contribute to urban renewal and rural development and reduce regional imbalances by giving communities the opportunity to prosper in their place of origin. Tourism is also an effective means for developing countries to take part in the global economy. In 2014, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) received US\$ 16.4 billion in exports from international tourism, up from US\$ 2.6 billion in 2000, making the sector

an important pillar of their economies (7% of total exports) and helping some to graduate from the LDC status.

**11. SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**

A city that is not good for its citizens is not good for tourists. Sustainable tourism has the potential to advance urban infrastructure and universal accessibility, promote regeneration of areas in decay and preserve cultural and natural heritage, assets on which tourism depends. Greater investment in green infrastructure (more efficient transport facilities, reduced air pollution, conservation of heritage sites and open spaces, etc.) should result in smarter and greener cities from which not only residents, but also tourists, can benefit.

**12. SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production**

A tourism sector that adopts sustainable consumption and production (SCP) practices can play a significant role in accelerating the global shift towards sustainability. To do so, as set in Target 12.b of Goal 12, it is imperative to “Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products”. The Sustainable Tourism Programme (STP) of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP) aims at developing such SCP practices, including resource efficient initiatives that result in enhanced economic, social and environmental outcomes.

**13. SDG 13: Climate Action**

Tourism contributes to and is affected by climate change. It is, therefore, in the sector’s own interest to play a leading role in the global response to climate change. By lowering energy consumption and shifting to renewable energy sources, especially in the transport and accommodation sector, tourism can help tackle one of the most pressing challenges of our time.

**14. SDG 14: Life Below Water**

Coastal and maritime tourism, tourism’s biggest segments, particularly for Small Island Developing States’ (SIDS), rely on healthy marine ecosystems. Tourism development must be a part of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in order to help conserve and preserve fragile marine ecosystems and serve as a vehicle to promote a blue economy, in line with Target 14.7: “by 2030 increase the economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism”.

**15. SDG 15: Life on Land**

Majestic landscapes, pristine forests, rich biodiversity, and natural heritage sites are often main reasons why tourists visit a destination. Sustainable tourism can play a major role, not only in conserving and preserving biodiversity, but also in respecting terrestrial ecosystems, owing to its efforts towards the reduction of waste and consumption, the conservation of native flora and fauna, and its awareness-raising activities.

**16. SDG 16: Peace and Justice**

As tourism revolves around billions of encounters between people of diverse cultural backgrounds, the sector can foster multicultural and inter-faith tolerance and understanding, laying the foundation for more peaceful societies. Sustainable tourism, which benefits and engages local communities, can also provide a source of livelihood, strengthen cultural identities and spur entrepreneurial activities, thereby helping to prevent violence and conflict to take root and consolidate peace in post-conflict societies.

**17. SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals**

Due to its cross-sectorial nature tourism has the ability to strengthen private/public partnerships and engage multiple stakeholders – international, national, regional and local – to work together to achieve the SDGs and other common goals. Indeed, public/public cooperation and public/private partnerships are a necessary and core foundation for tourism development, as is an increased awareness in the role of tourism in the delivery on the post-2015 Development Agenda.

## **Annexure 2 – Sustainable Tourism Criteria of India for Destinations**

### **1. Sustainable Management**

#### **1.1. Management structure and framework**

##### **1.1.1. Destination management responsibility**

In order to promote sustainable tourism at any destination, existence of a destination management organization is essential, which could be responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism. The DMO should ensure involvement of the private sector, public sector and civil society. The DMO should be given the responsibility for the management of socio- economic, cultural and environmental issues. It should be provided requisite funding, staff and capability for sustainable tourism.

##### **1.1.2. Destination management strategy and action plan**

There should be a multi-year destination management strategy and action plan based on sustainability principles. The strategy includes an identification and assessment of tourism assets and considers socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues and risks.

##### **1.1.3. Monitoring and reporting**

The destination should put in a place a system to monitor and respond to socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues and impacts arising from tourism. There should be regular monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the actions and outcomes.

#### **1.2. Stakeholder engagement**

##### **1.2.1. Enterprise engagement and sustainability standards**

Tourism-related enterprises should be regularly informed about sustainability issues and encouraged in making their operations more sustainable. Adoption of sustainability standards should be encouraged and a list of sustainability certified enterprises should be published.

##### **1.2.2. Resident engagement and feedback**

Public participation in sustainable destination planning and management should be enabled and promoted. Satisfaction of local residents with tourism sustainability should be monitored. There should also be a system for enhancing local understanding of sustainable tourism opportunities.

### 1.2.3. Visitor engagement and feedback

Visitor satisfaction with the quality and sustainability of the destination experience should be monitored and reported. Visitors are informed about sustainability issues in the destination and the part that they can play in addressing them.

### 1.2.4. Promotion and information

Promotion and visitor information material about the destination should be accurate with regard to sustainability claims.

## **1.3. Managing pressure and change**

### 1.3.1. Managing visitor volumes and activities

There should be a system of visitor management and manage the volume and activities of visitors and to reduce or increase them as necessary at certain times and in certain locations, working to balance the needs of the local economy, community, cultural heritage and environment.

### 1.3.2. Planning regulations and development control

There is need to have planning guidelines, regulations and/or policies which control the location and nature of development, require environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impact assessment and integrate sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition. These are widely communicated and enforced.

### 1.3.3. Climate change adaptation

The risks and opportunities associated with climate change should be identified and climate change adaptation strategies are pursued for the siting, design, development and management of tourism facilities.

### 1.3.4. Risk and crisis management

A crisis management and emergency response plan that is appropriate to the destination must be prepared. Key elements are communicated to residents, visitors, and enterprises.

## **2. Socio Economic Stability**

### **2.1. Delivering local economic benefits**

#### 2.1.1. Measuring the economic contribution of tourism

The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy is monitored and publicly reported. Appropriate measures may include levels of visitor volume, visitor expenditure, employment and investment and evidence on the distribution of economic benefits.

2.1.2. Decent work and career opportunities

Career opportunities and training in tourism should be encouraged. The destination's tourism enterprises commit to providing equality of opportunity for local employment, training and advancement, a safe and secure working environment, and a living wage for all.

2.1.3. Supporting local entrepreneurs and fair trade

Retention of tourism spending in the local economy should be encouraged through supporting local enterprises, supply chains and sustainable investment. Development and purchase of local sustainable products based on fair trade principles should be encouraged. These may include food and beverages, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.

**2.2. Social wellbeing and impacts**

2.2.1. Support for community

A system to enable and encourage enterprises, visitors, and the public to contribute to community and sustainability initiatives in a responsible manner.

2.2.2. Preventing exploitation and discrimination

There should be established code of conduct to prevent and report on human trafficking, modern slavery and commercial, sexual, or any other form of exploitation, discrimination and harassment of or against anyone, particularly children, adolescents or women.

2.2.3. Safety and security

A system to monitor, prevent, publicly report, and respond to crime, safety, and health hazards that addresses the needs of both visitors and residents.

2.2.4. Access for all

Where practical, sites, facilities and services, including those of natural and cultural importance, are accessible to all, including persons with disabilities and others who have specific access requirements or other special needs. Information is made available on the accessibility of sites, facilities and services.

### **3. Cultural Sustainability**

#### **3.1. Protecting cultural heritage**

##### **3.1.1. Protection of cultural assets**

A policy and system to be put in place to evaluate, rehabilitate, and conserve cultural assets, including built heritage and cultural landscapes.

##### **3.1.2. Cultural artefacts**

Compliance with the laws governing the proper sale, trade, display, or gifting of historical and archaeological artefacts. The laws are enforced and publicly communicated, including to tourism enterprises and visitors.

##### **3.1.3. Intangible heritage**

There should be encouragement to intangible cultural heritage, including local traditions, arts, music, language, gastronomy and other aspects of local identity and distinctiveness. The presentation, replication and interpretation of living culture and traditions is sensitive and respectful, seeks to involve and benefit local communities, and provides visitors with an authentic and genuine experience.

##### **3.1.4. Traditional access**

Local community should have access to natural and cultural sites.

##### **3.1.5. Intellectual property**

Protection and preservation of intellectual property rights of communities and individuals should be encouraged.

#### **3.2. Visiting cultural sites**

##### **3.2.1. Visitor management at cultural sites**

A system for the management of visitors should be developed within and around cultural sites, which takes account of their characteristics, capacity and sensitivity and seeks to optimize visitor flow and minimize adverse impacts. Guidelines for visitor behaviour at sensitive sites and cultural events should be made available to visitors, tour operators and guides before and at the time of the visit.

##### **3.2.2. Site interpretation**

Accurate interpretative material is provided which informs visitors of the significance of the cultural and natural aspects of the sites they visit. The information is culturally



appropriate, developed with host community collaboration, and clearly communicated in languages pertinent to visitors and residents.

#### **4. Environment Sustainability**

##### **4.1. Conservation of natural heritage**

###### 4.1.1. Protection of sensitive environments

There should be a system to monitor, measure and respond to the impacts of tourism on the natural environment, conserve ecosystems, habitats and species, and prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species.

###### 4.1.2. Visitor management at natural sites

There should be a system for the management of visitors within and around natural sites, which takes account of their characteristics, capacity and sensitivity and seeks to optimize visitor flow and minimize adverse impacts. Guidelines for visitor behaviour at sensitive sites should be made available to visitors, tour operators and guides before and at the time of the visit.

###### 4.1.3. Wildlife interaction

Compliance with applicable laws and standards for wildlife interactions should be ensured. Interactions with free roaming wildlife, taking into account cumulative impacts, are non-invasive and responsibly managed to avoid adverse impacts on the animals concerned and, on the viability, and behaviour of populations in the wild.

###### 4.1.4. Species exploitation and animal welfare

Compliance with applicable laws and standards that seek to ensure animal welfare and conservation of species (animals, plants and all living organisms).

##### **4.2. Resource management**

###### 4.2.1. Energy conservation

There should be a target to reduce energy consumption, improve efficiency in its use, as well as increase the use of renewable energy. A system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report their contribution to these targets.

###### 4.2.2. Water stewardship

Encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, publicly report and manage water usage. Water risk in the destination is assessed and documented. In cases of high-

water risk, water stewardship goals are identified and actively pursued with enterprises, to ensure that tourism use does not conflict with the needs of local communities and ecosystems.

#### 4.2.3. Water quality

Water quality should be monitored for drinking, recreational and ecological purposes using quality standards. The monitoring results are publicly available, and there is a system to respond in a timely manner to water quality issues.

### **4.3. Management of waste and emissions**

#### 4.3.1. Wastewater

There should be clear and enforced guidelines in place for the siting, maintenance and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems.

#### 4.3.2. Solid waste

The destination measures and reports on its generation of waste and sets targets for its reduction. It ensures solid waste is properly treated and diverted from landfill, with provision of a multiple-stream collection and recycling system which effectively separates waste by type. The destination encourages enterprises to avoid, reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste, including food waste. Action is taken to eliminate or reduce single-use items, especially plastics. Any residual solid waste that is not reused or recycled is disposed of safely and sustainably.

#### 4.3.3. GHG emissions and climate change mitigation

The destination has targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and implements and reports on mitigation policies and actions. Enterprises are encouraged to measure, monitor, reduce or minimise, publicly report and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including from suppliers and service providers). Offsetting of any remaining emissions is encouraged.

#### 4.3.4. Low-impact transportation

The destination has targets to reduce transport emissions from travel to and within the destination. An increase in the use of sustainable, low-emissions vehicles and public transport and active travel (e.g., walking and cycling) is sought in order to reduce the contribution of tourism to air pollution, congestion and climate change.

#### 4.3.5. Light and noise pollution

The destination has guidelines and regulations to minimize light and noise pollution.  
The destination encourages enterprises to follow these guidelines and regulations.

## **Annexure 3 – Sustainable Tourism Criteria of India for Industry**

### **1. Demonstrate Effective Sustainable Management**

- 1.1. The organisation has implemented a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its reality and scale, and that considers environmental, sociocultural, quality, health and safety issues.
- 1.2. The organisation is in compliance with all relevant national legislation and regulations
- 1.3. All personnel receive periodic training in the management of environmental, socio-cultural, quality health and safety practices.
- 1.4. Customer satisfaction is measured and corrective action taken, where appropriate.
- 1.5. Promotional materials are accurate and complete and do not promise more than can be delivered by the organisation.

### **2. Design and construction of buildings and infrastructure**

- 2.1. Comply with land usage and protected or heritage area requirements
- 2.2. Respect the natural, cultural, social, built and heritage surroundings in siting, design, impact assessment, land rights and acquisition in, so far as new construction, including additions and extensions to property, is concerned.
- 2.3. Use locally appropriate principles of sustainable construction, including local styles, skills and materials for new construction and additions or extensions to property.
- 2.4. Provide access and facilities for persons with special needs in accordance with principles of universal design.
- 2.5. Information about and interpretation of the natural surroundings, customs, local culture and cultural heritage is provided to visitors, as well as explanations of appropriate behaviour while visiting natural areas, living cultures and cultural heritage sites.

### **3. Maximise social and economic benefits to the local community and minimise negative impacts**

- 3.1. The organisation actively supports initiatives for social and community participation and development, including, among others, infrastructure, education, health, and sanitation

- 3.2. Local residents are employed, including in management positions, wherever feasible. Training is offered, as necessary.
- 3.3. Local and fair trade services and goods, particularly from MSMEs, are purchased by the organisation, where available.
- 3.4. The organisation encourages the means for local small entrepreneurs to develop and sell sustainable products that are based on the area's nature, history, and culture (including food and drink, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products).
- 3.5. A code of behaviour for activities in indigenous and local communities has been developed, with the consent of, and in collaboration with the community and/or neighbourhood
- 3.6. The organisation has implemented a policy against commercial exploitation, particularly of children and adolescents, including sexual exploitation.
- 3.7. The organisation should provide equal opportunities in recruitment and career growth to all segments of society, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, ethnicity and gender, while completely shunning child labour.
- 3.8. All employees, including contractual labour, are treated in accordance with national legislation and are paid a fair wage, with the minimum being in accordance with the law
- 3.9. The activities of the organisation do not jeopardise the provision of basic services such as water, energy or sanitation to neighbouring communities.
- 4. Maximise benefits to cultural and historical heritage and minimise negative impacts**
- 4.1. The organisation follows established guidelines or a code of behaviour at culturally, ecologically or historically sensitive sites, in order to minimise visitor impact and maximise satisfaction
- 4.2. Historical and archaeological artifacts are not sold, traded or displayed, except as permitted by law.
- 4.3. The organisation contributes to the protection of local, historical, archaeological, culturally and spiritually important properties and sites, as well as natural phenomena, and does not impede access to them by local residents.
- 4.4. The intellectual property rights of local communities will be respected whenever the organisation uses elements of local art and tradition, architecture, or cultural heritage in its operations, design, decoration, food or shops.

## **5. Maximise benefits to the environment and minimise negative impacts**

### **5.1. Conserving Resources**

- 5.1.1. Purchasing policy favours environmentally responsible and eco-friendly products for building materials, capital goods, food and consumables.
- 5.1.2. The purchase of disposable and consumer goods is measured, and the organisation actively seeks ways to reduce their use.
- 5.1.3. Energy consumption should be measured, sources indicated, and measures to decrease overall consumption should be adopted, while encouraging the use of renewable energy.
- 5.1.4. Water consumption should be measured, sources indicated and measures to decrease overall consumption, should be adopted. The organisation practices rainwater harvesting wherever water tables have been receding.

### **5.2. Reducing Pollution**

- 5.2.1. The organisation implements a step-by-step plan to identify, and then quantify, sources of greenhouse gas emissions under its control, and activate measures to offset climate change in a time-bound manner.
- 5.2.2. Wastewater, including gray water, is treated effectively and reused, where possible.
- 5.2.3. A solid waste management plan is implemented, with quantitative goals to minimise waste that is non-biodegradable, not reused or recycled.
- 5.2.4. The use of harmful substances including pesticides, harmful chemicals, swimming pool disinfectants and cleaning material is minimised; substituted, when available, by innocuous products, and all chemical use is properly managed.
- 5.2.5. The organisation implements practices to reduce pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting compounds and air and soil contaminants.

### **5.3. Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes**

- 5.3.1. The organisation does not participate in, accept, allow or encourage the use of, or display or trade in endangered species of flora and fauna, except trophy displays, as permitted under the law.
- 5.3.2. No wildlife is held in captivity.

- 5.3.3. The organisation uses endemic native species for landscaping and restoration and takes measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species.
- 5.3.4. The organisation supports biodiversity conservation, including supporting natural protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value.
- 5.3.5. Interactions with wildlife must not produce adverse effects on the viability of populations in the wild. Any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimised, and, if it occurs inadvertently, steps are taken for immediate rehabilitation and/or compensatory contribution to conservation management.

## **Annexure 4 – Charter for a Responsible Traveller**

### **A. Planning your Holiday**

#### **1. Give preference for a Responsible Travel Company**

Many travel companies conduct their businesses responsibly and sustainably. Book with them to support their practices and encourage others to do the same. Responsible Travel company details can be found on Responsible Tourism Society of India. Explore destinations and get acquainted with nature and biodiversity. Check for certifications and their safety pledges. Make your trip experiential and adventurous and use 'green' transportation that is fuel-efficient, safe, reliable, and feasible. Prioritize activities such as cycling, hiking, and walking where possible.

#### **2. Give preference to Hotels with Responsible Practices**

Many chains and independent hotels operate in-house green programs. Check their websites to see what kind of 'green' practices they follow. Choose a hotel that has a positive impact on the community and destination. Ask them how they dispose of their greywater and if they compost. Inquire about bathroom fixtures and toiletries, in-room recycling bins, and the origin of the restaurant food. Ideally, food items should be purchased within 150 km of the hotel location and offer organic cuisine. Some may be accredited by certification programs such as STCI by the RTSOI, the LEED certification, or other similar ones. Ideally, a 'green' hotel should support the three pillars of sustainable tourism: environmental, social, and economic.

In ecologically fragile and protected area destinations lookout for ecolodges or homestays and support their conservation efforts.

#### **3. When leaving home for your holiday**

Don't leave without preparing your home for a holiday. Turn off light switches and unplug all electricals other than the fridge, freezer, and any other electrical appliances that need to stay on. Unsubscribe daily newspapers and download your e-ticket instead of paper printouts.

### **As you Travel**

#### **4. Choose your Mode of Transportation**

If travel time and physical issues are not a major concern, select a mode of transport that allows you to offset carbon. One can use an Adventure Travel Trade Association or United Nations carbon calculator to offset the carbon footprint. On a road, journey try and share a vehicle.



## **5. Travel Light**

Packing efficiently helps to reduce carbon emissions from aero planes. The lighter the aircraft, the less fuel it burns, and hence decreased carbon emission.

### **At the Destination**

## **6. Bring your supplies**

Carry refillable bathroom toiletries instead of using the mini amenities provided in hotels/rented accommodation as they are generally nonbiodegradable. Hotels should adopt refillable glass/ceramic containers that are secured to the wall. This will help reduce waste and one-time plastic.

## **7. Dispose your waste Responsibly**

While travelling by road, do not throw your plastic or paper waste anywhere. Plastic will not degrade and both plastic and paper may be consumed by grazing animals. Carry your waste back where it can be segregated and disposed of responsibly.

## **8. Eat local**

Support a local entrepreneur/business and try local dishes to appreciate the local culture and support the local economy.

## **9. Cut Down on Waste and Conserve**

Use insulated stainless-steel tumblers. To avoid single-use plastic, refill your tumblers/flasks during your journey from hotels/guest houses where they have reverse osmosis and/or UV filtered water available. Conserve water and electricity as these are scarce resources. When not in the room, switch off the lights. Reducing energy use helps to decrease power plant emissions and combating climate change.

At hotels/guesthouses, towels, and bed linen should be reused and not put into the wash on a daily basis.

Decline non-reusable straws, coffee stirrers, and cutlery that are made of one-time plastic. Encourage your fellow travellers to minimize their waste and water usage on a trip.

## **10. Shop Local**

Promote and purchase handicrafts, souvenirs directly from the local community, or non-profit cooperatives. This would support destinations and encourage people to retain their local culture. Do carry, a reusable bag for purchases. Protect wildlife and habitats and do not buy products made from protected and endangered plants or

animals such as seashells, shahtoosh shawls, etc. A detailed list is available on Traffic and WWF.

#### **11. Protect your Planet**

Reduce your environmental impact by being a guardian of natural resources, and all habitats including forests and wetlands. Respect wildlife and its natural habitat. In protected areas, access only the places open to visitors and avoid disturbing fragile environments and locations such as coral reefs and archaeological finds. While in the water, wear sunscreen that does not cause harm to the marine ecosystem.

Leave only a minimum footprint.

#### **12. Leave No Trace**

Anything you carry in, you should carry out. Pack reusable items such as bags for shopping and drinking straws. Follow the recycling rules of the destination.

#### **13. Animal Welfare**

Be aware of tourist activities that could potentially harm wildlife. Prioritize animal welfare by being ethical and choosing tours and attractions that do not cause suffering or abuse to animals. Wildlife SOS recommends no elephant rides, lion petting, tiger selfies, snake charmers, dancing monkeys, and bears. The process of domesticating wild animals and especially elephants is inhumane. Don't support bondage animal tourism. You should also make sure to visit attractions that do not capture animals from the wild. Animals in captivity should have amenable living conditions. You should also make sure to not touch, disturb, or feed any wildlife as this could harm the animals and impact their ability to survive in the wild.

#### **14. Explore Destinations Beyond**

Several destinations today are faced with the phenomenon of 'overtourism'. Don't follow the crowd. Excess only hurts the destinations and does not add much to the local economy. Economic and social benefits from tourism are significant when less frequently visited destinations also attract visitors. It helps in the sustainable growth of the region. Explore and taste local food, visit local markets, lesser-known protected areas, this supports the local economy, inculcates a sense of pride amongst the local community, and thus incentivizes them to stay on and not migrate to cities.

#### **15. On a Wildlife Safari**

Use established or existing tracks/paths for nature walks while visiting a national park/sanctuary. Wear earthy colors, do not converse in loud voices, and try to enjoy the

entire ecosystem rather than looking for specific species. Be sensitive and respectable towards other fellow travelers by giving everyone an equal chance to view and photograph wildlife. Don't monopolize viewing specific spots while on a safari. For a better experience, carry your binoculars and of course, remember the golden rule of not littering.

**16. On an Adventure Holiday**

Observe the principles of 'pack in, pack out' for the management of waste in remote regions and protected areas. Use established trails while on a hike or trek.

**17. Camping**

A minimum distance of 100 ft should be maintained from freshwater sources. To avoid pollution of the water source, never wash with detergents and instead use biodegradable washing agents.

The campsite should be left in a better state than what it was found like and all non-biodegradable garbage should be carried back for proper disposal. Cover all the toilet holes with dry mud and if the terrain allows cover with grass turf.

**18. Avoid Camp Fires**

Local wood that can be foraged, should be left for the local community for fuel where alternate options are not available for them. In high altitude or other areas, carry solar lanterns and solar heaters. Whilst camping, open fires should be discouraged to prevent forest degradation and reduce carbon emissions. If forests are degraded at the site level, avoid even purchasing and using firewood for campfires.

**19. Support a Local Community**

Support the local community in whatever way is appropriate. Education, health, conservation is encouraged. We suggest supporting certified NGOs and a list is available in the resource centre of the RTSOI website.

**20. Understand Local Laws**

Familiarize yourself with the local laws so that you don't commit any act considered criminal by the destination/country visited. Do not buy products or items that are prohibited by national/international

**21. Get the Next Generation Involved**

Our children are the youth of tomorrow and if they see you being responsible for your environment, they will do the same. They will travel responsibly, conserve the environment, and respect local cultures.

We need to leave a planet worth living for.