



ECOTOURISM CHARTER FOR BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN ECOTOURISM

(Guidelines for Ecotourism Managers,
Tour Operators, Hoteliers and Tourists)

Madhya Pradesh
Ecotourism Development Board 2012



**Madhya Pradesh
Ecotourism
Development Board**

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Preface

This Charter has evolved through a series of brainstorming sessions with members of the then Ecotourism Cell, which got institutionalised as the present Ecotourism Development Board in July 2005 through constant efforts of the PS (Forests) and Chairman (EC) of the Board, Shri Avani Vaish. The Charter includes inputs of Shri Nitish Bhardwaj, the then Chairman, MPTDC, Shri A.V.Singh, the then Chairman, NVDA, Dr. H.S.Pabla, APCCF (Wildlife), and special contributions of Shri Suhas Kumar, CCF (Wildlife). The Charter intends

to enrich all stakeholders, especially tour operators, hoteliers, Ecotourism managers and also the tourists, by developing the best Management Practices in Ecotourism.

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Ecotourism Charter

The charter aims to develop the best management practices (BMP) in ecotourism to educate and regulate all stakeholders (hoteliers, tour operators, resource managers, visitors, host communities, concerned government departments, NGOs) on one hand and, on the other, also help the ecotourism managers, to implement the BMP for sustainable development. This charter will be supportive of the International declaration of Quebec Ecotourism Summit, 2002, and expect all stakeholders to support and practice Ecotourism in true spirit:

- The Quebec declaration on Ecotourism acknowledges that tourism has significant and complex social, economic and Environmental implications, which can bring both benefits and costs to the environment and local communities.
- Ecotourism should continue to contribute to make the overall tourism industry more sustainable, by increasing economic and social benefits for host communities, actively contributing to the conservation of natural resources and the cultural integrity of host communities, and by increasing awareness of all travelers towards the conservation of natural and cultural heritage,
- It should recognize the cultural diversity associated with many natural areas, particularly because of the historical presence of local and indigenous communities, of which some have maintained their traditional knowledge, uses and practices many of which have proven to be sustainable over the centuries.
- Many of the ecotourism spots are home to peoples often living in poverty, who frequently lack adequate health care, education facilities, communications systems, and other required for genuine development opportunity.
- Affirm that different forms of tourism, especially ecotourism, if managed in a sustainable manner can represent a valuable economic opportunity for local and indigenous populations and their cultures and for the conservation and revenues for protected areas and other forest areas.
- Ecotourism development must consider and respect the land and property rights, and, where recognized, the right to self-determination and cultural sovereignty of indigenous and local communities, including their protected, sensitive and sacred sites as well as their traditional knowledge.

The charter follows the WTO definition of ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people."

The Ecotourism BMP should address all issues related to

1. Waste management
2. Water usage
3. Energy usage
4. Facilities maintenance
5. Recreation
6. Public/social interaction
7. Ensuring local employment generation/ livelihood opportunities for host communities

Each best practice covers different concepts and addresses them in varying detail, depending on the characteristics of the activity and the region concerned. Nonetheless, there are some common areas in all of them, which form the base for any Environmental Management System.

- Energy
- Solid Waste
- Water
- Emissions and effluents
- Environmental Impacts
- Noises

The charter includes

- Guidelines for the major stakeholders (Government, Communities, Private operators, Tourists and NGOs)
- Guidelines for the specific tourism activities
- Guidelines for the Tourism in Protected Areas

Guidelines for government officials

- Ensure the involvement, appropriate participation and necessary coordination of all the relevant public institutions at all levels.
- Use internationally approved and reviewed guidelines to develop certification schemes, eco-labels and other voluntary initiatives geared towards sustainability in ecotourism, encouraging private operators to join such schemes and promoting their recognition by consumers.
- Resort to site-specific micro-planning for community based ecotourism to ensure that basic environmental and health standards are identified and met by all ecotourism development even in the most rural areas.
- Include micro, small and medium-sized ecotourism companies, as well as community based and NGO-based ecotourism operations in the overall promotional strategies and programmes.
- Encourage and support the creation of regional networks and cooperation for promotion and marketing of ecotourism products at the international and national levels.
- Provide incentives to tourism operators and other service providers (such as marketing and promotion advantages) for them to adopt ecotourism principles and make their operations more environmentally, socially and culturally responsible.
- Enable entrepreneurs to establish their ventures by facilitating their works related to such development.
- Institute baseline environmental impact assessment (EIA) studies and surveys that record the social environmental state of destinations, with special attention to endangered species, and invest, or support institutions that invest in research programmes on ecotourism and sustainable tourism.
- Promote and develop educational programmes addressed to children and young people to enhance awareness about nature conservation and sustainable use, local and indigenous cultures and their relationship with ecotourism;
- Promote collaboration between govt. authorities, private tour operators, other service providers, research institutions and NGOs.
- Governments should also promote the development of eco-tourist facilities by providing financial support and tax incentives as well as alternative financial arrangements e.g. charitable establishments. These demands were based upon the high cost of many of the specialist materials required to be environmentally sound.
- Strengthen, nurture and encourage the community's ability to maintain and use traditional skills, particularly home-based arts and crafts, agricultural produce, traditional housing and landscaping that use local natural resources in a sustainable manner.
- Formulate national, regional and local site-specific ecotourism policies and development strategies.

Guidelines for local community

- Community should strive to strengthen, nurture and encourage the traditional skills, particularly home-based arts and crafts, agricultural produce, traditional housing and landscaping that use local natural resources in a sustainable manner.
- Respect the value of environment and cultural heritage. Be friendly with the eco-travelers; perform the role of 'eco-guide' and 'conservationists'. To remain fully aware about the private tour operators who could exploit the natural and cultural assets for their own benefits and avoid over-exploiting the area.
- Cooperation with Government authorities and private operators for ensuring BMP ecotourism.

- Local individuals should sell produce and handicrafts to visitors directly or through tourism businesses. This has often proved to be a good way of spreading benefits within a community.
- Communally owned and run enterprises should be promoted. Sometimes these suffer from lack of organisation and incentives, but this can be overcome with involvement of the NGOs and institutions capable of transferring requisite skills to community members

Guidelines for private operators

Tour Operators / private entrepreneurs

- ▶ **Minimize negative impact of tourism related development on environment and natural resources**
- Be responsible towards sustainable management of physical environment and protection of natural attributes (flora and fauna) of the area being visited.
- Prepare and implement site-specific plan in conformity with prevailing legal framework policy guidelines, and local customs aimed at resource protection, community benefits, and visitors' satisfaction.
- Design and build tourist accommodations and facilities in a manner that it contributes to ecological well being of the natural environment and minimizes negative impacts.
- Be willing to use non-wood fuel for their operations and ensure that none of their support staff uses wood-based fuel.
- Be willing to bear full or partial cost of introducing non-conventional energy in the villages falling within their area of operation.
- Be willing to enter into an agreement with host communities (viz. Joint Forest Management Committees) for supply of local food material and dairy products and allowing them to sell their local handicrafts and artifacts from operators' premises.
- Extend reasonable employment opportunities to local people and take steps to impart and upgrade skills.
- Install have an environmentally sound garbage disposal and waste (including waste water) recycling mechanism in place.
- ▶ Prepare eco-travelers to minimize their negative impacts while visiting sensitive environments and cultures before departure
- Offer visitors the educational materials they need to learn about the places and people to be visited and introduce the importance of contributing to the conservation of places being visited.
- Educate visitors about the full range of natural and cultural phenomenon to be observed.
- Educate visitors to consider the effects of their visits in advance and to modify their behavior while traveling, with the objective of minimizing impacts.
- Provide introductory information on the people and ecosystems to be visited in pre-departure packages. Stress the importance of reading pre-departure information, such as selected bibliographies, and review additional resources for each destination.
- Keep information objective and well-grounded using examples of phenomenon visitors might encounter.
- Provide general travel ethics addressing standards for behavior in natural areas and with local cultures.
- Provide information on the equipment, clothing and personal supplies suitable to the regions being visited.
- Warn against bringing disposable goods that contribute to the solid waste burden in the region.
- Provide information on products to avoid that are illegally traded.
- Provide information, as required, on avoiding the accidental transport of foreign, exotic species into isolated ecosystems being visited.
- ▶ **Prepare travelers for each encounter with local cultures and with native animals and plants**
- Pave the way for reciprocal sensitivity between cultures by teaching tourists to be unobtrusive while they are encountering environments and cultures.
- Provide visitors with the opportunity to learn more about the social and political circumstances of the region being visited.

- Provide visitors with the opportunity to learn more about local environmental problems and conservation efforts.
- Provide quality orientation and enough leaders to manage the group according to the sensitivity of the environment visited.
- Give quality interpretation at all times; explain local cultures and describe natural history. Encourage interaction with local people while overseeing contact to avoid cultural errors.
- Conduct briefings before each stop, including behaviors to avoid, restricted practices and zones, special alerts for fragile and endangered species, specific distances to maintain with local wildlife, and local regulations.
- Use of time on road and in cities for educational discussions of all kinds including balanced discussions of local issues.
- ▶ **Minimize visitor impacts on the environment by offering literature, briefings, leading by example, and taking corrective actions**
- Help visitors to minimize their negative impacts by enhancing their understanding of the fragility of the environment.
- Obtain and distribute available guidelines for each natural area visited.
- Allow protected area staff to introduce guidelines if possible.
- Brief visitors on proper behavior - on trails, in campsites, around wild animals, around fragile plants - and with trash, with human waste, with fires, and with soaps.
- Advise all travelers on the level of difficulty of each excursion to prevent damage to the environment caused by lack of experience or ability to maneuver in unfamiliar terrain.
- Discourage unrealistic expectations of observing rare wildlife and plants by interpreting all aspects of the ecosystem.
- Advise against collecting souvenirs from natural areas, such as feathers, bones and shells, unless it is specifically condoned by local authorities.
- Advise against purchasing specific crafts that are produced from threatened natural resources.
- ▶ **Minimize traveler impacts on local cultures by offering literature, briefings, leading by example, and taking corrective actions**
- Interpret local cultural values and history of local cultures.
- Provide a set of cultural guidelines created by the company, specific to the area being visited. Where available, obtain and distribute guidelines written by local communities.
- Advise visitors to accept differences, adopt local customs, and be unobtrusive. Discuss appropriate behavior when photographing.
- Discuss appropriate behavior when purchasing goods, tipping, and responding to begging.
- ▶ **Use adequate leadership, and maintain small enough groups to ensure minimum group impact on destinations. Avoid areas that are under managed and over visited.**
- Be sensitive to total number of groups visiting sites simultaneously. Informally census the number of groups encountered on trails or roads within protected areas and keep track of sites with rapid increases. Notify authorities or landowners if the number of groups is growing rapidly.
- Monitor negative environmental impacts, including trail erosion, improper waste dumping, littering, water pollution, species harassment, illegal collecting of plants or animals, feeding of wildlife, or wild animals that have become abnormally tame or aggressive. Notify authorities or land owners both verbally and, if need be, in writing.
- Assist land managers in monitoring key, indicator species, or offer logistical assistance to researchers working on tourism impacts.
- Design itineraries and promotions to avoid overselling popular sites, particularly those that are inadequately managed for visitation during peak seasons.

- Watch for accumulated cultural impact and work to prevent or buffer them. Indicators include; inflated prices for goods in communities; hostility towards tourists from local communities; black markets, drug dealing and prostitution catering to the tourist industry.
- ▶ **Ensure managers, staff and contract employees know and participate in all aspects of company policy to prevent impacts on the environment and local cultures.**
- Establish an environmental code and objectives manual for the company.
- Develop confidence in the personnel who are leading the organization for tourism.
- ▶ **Give managers, staff and contract employees' access to programs that will upgrade their ability to communicate with and manage clients in sensitive natural and cultural settings.**
- Establish clear guidelines for staff regarding opportunities and company support available for training, via internal training programs (natural and cultural history) and via training programs available locally (language skills and first aid, accounting, mechanics).
- Establish an operators' consortium for training. - Establish a relationship with a local educational facility and work to integrate needed training components into the curriculum. - Work with nongovernmental organizations to establish an ecotourism training program.
- ▶ **Be a contributor to the conservation of the regions being visited.**
- Provide corporate contributions to local non-profit conservation initiatives and protected areas through direct corporate donations, partnerships, technical assistance, education programs, publicity, facilitation, direct staff involvement, and becoming involved in joint initiatives.*
- Facilitate visitor contributions to local conservation initiatives during the trip by: providing literature on projects in the regions being visited and guidelines for in-kind contributions; arranging briefings and visits to local projects with project staff; or offering opportunities for visitors to volunteer.
- Facilitate visitor contributions to local conservation initiatives after the trip by: sending follow-up mailings to clients with local nonprofit membership literature, brief descriptions of projects that need assistance, upcoming opportunities to do volunteer services, or opportunities to work at home by being an ambassador or fund raiser or organizer for local projects.
- Encourage writing to government and corporate organizations whose policies are damaging to the environment or local cultures in the areas visited by providing addresses and contact names.
- ▶ **Provide competitive, local employment in all aspects of business operations**
- Hire locally-owned businesses including transport (vehicle and boat rental services), accommodations (hotels, lodges, camps), and restaurants.
- Buy local supplies from food and craft vendors and avoid all products made from endangered or threatened species.
- Hire local office and field staff. Pay competitive wages, above minimum wage for the region, and offer acceptable benefits.
- Contribute to community enterprises and development efforts that support a wide variety of local residents, with special sensitivity to indigenous groups.
- ▶ **Offer site-sensitive accommodations that are not wasteful of local resources or destructive to the environment that provide ample opportunity for learning about the environment and sensitive interchange with local communities.**
- Ensure all aspects of the visitors' experience are in harmony with the natural and cultural environment.
- Review the following check list of considerations when booking new accommodations.
- Select accommodations that are in compliance with environmental regulations.
- Review facility's level of destruction to natural surroundings.
- Consider facilities efforts to maintain a scale in keeping with the local environment and to reflect national or

- local cultural design motifs in architecture and interior design.
- Review facility's use of energy saving devices and renewable energy resources.
- Review facility's treatment of solid and organic waste. Ensure that solid waste is safely disposed of and that recycling programs are in place where possible. Ensure that all waste products are treated to prevent effects on natural resources.
- Determine if restaurant is composting and using other techniques to reduce waste such as avoiding paper products and Styrofoam.
- Determine if facility is offering meaningful opportunities for locals.
- Check into training programs offered by lodge.
- Review opportunities for locals to have sensitive cultural interchange, on their own terms, with visitors.
- Look for locally produced craft and food items available for sale on the premises or used in facility restaurants, and ensure that all products from threatened natural resources are avoided.
- Check for the interpretive/educational materials inside the facility that are available to guests. Look for field guides, videos, books, pamphlets, and check lists of species found locally.
- Check for availability of interpretive services outside, such as self-guided trails and guide services.
- Check for the facility's sensitivity to interpretive opportunities; i.e. how well the facility has interpreted its own land's natural features and natural resources, or the local cultural backgrounds and perspectives of its own staff, for visitors.
- Ask if owners contribute to conservation or community development efforts with financial, technical or logistical support.
- Avoid sites that bait animals, or that keep exotic species on the property that were trapped in the wild, especially threatened or endangered species.



Guidelines For Eco-travelers

Prepare for the trip

Educate oneself about your destination. Be on the lookout for news and current events about the area. Learn about local history, customs and culture as well as vital ecosystems. Learn at least the basics of the local language. A simple hello, please or thank you goes a long way. Approach travel with the desire to learn rather than just observe.

Respect local traditions and etiquette

Wear clothing that is accepted by the local culture. Be aware of people's sensitivity to being photographed; always ask first. Observe local customs. Be perceptive of one's own cultural values and how they affect your judgment of others. Remember that you are the visitor. There are many different concepts of time, personal space, communication etc. that are not wrong or inferior, just different. Act as an example for other travelers who are less informed than you.

Avoid ostentatious display of wealth

That may not seem a display of wealth to one may be considered extravagant by another culture. Tuck certain items away when visiting rural communities. Leave jewelry and other unnecessary valuables at home. They only create barriers and inhibit genuine interactions. Not to hand out sweets and loose change, this only serves to corrupt and create a begging mentality where none existed before.

Be flexible in the expectations

Approach the adventure with an open mind and one won't be disappointed. Sometimes plans change and an opportunity for more in-depth learning or a unique cultural experience presents itself. Adapt oneself to the situation rather than trying to adapt the situation.

Conserving resources

Often times the resources in an area visited by tourists are under a great deal of pressure already. Tourists must be aware about the resources that are being used because of their visit. This includes one's personal consumption of items like water and wood for building fires or specialty foods that had to be transported from afar. Don't allow the guide to hunt endangered or threatened species or harvest rare plants for your consumption. A large luxury hotel in the middle of nowhere takes far more resources to build and maintain than does a small family run inn.

Practice environmental minimum impact

Follow the International Leave No Trace Rules. Pack out everything that you bring in including toilet paper (if there is no toilet) or plastic water bottles (use purification tablets or a filter). Go to the bathroom at least 200 feet (70 paces) from any water source. Remove litter that others left behind. Do not remove any objects, plants or animal products from nature. Be aware of local endangered or threatened species so as not to purchase souvenirs made from their skin, feathers etc. Not only is this will have an adverse impact on the environment but it is also illegal.

Choosing a tour operator or guide

Thoroughly research the tour operator or guide by asking them pointed questions about specifically what they do that is "eco" and how they involve the local communities and economies. The "greening of tourism" has led companies to promote themselves as "eco" simply to sell trips. The larger the company with more luxurious accommodations, the less likely it is to be true ecotourism. So the tourists must be persistent in their inquiries of an international or local tour operator.

Support local economies

How will a visit of an eco-traveler directly benefit the local economy or entire community? This is an integral part of true ecotourism. The eco-travelers should be promoted to use local transportation, guides, inns, restaurants and markets. This helps create a buffer zone for the environment surrounding protected natural areas by giving locals an economic alternative to potentially destructive practices. Community based ecotourism spreads the wealth and workload.

Bridging cultural gaps

Take the opportunity to be a cultural ambassador. Much of the world's image of western tourists is based on the unrealities of television and magazines. Look for situations for cultural exchange whereby learning about each other's lives is mutual.

Continued ecotourism

Ecotourism doesn't need to end with the flight home. The tourists should follow through on with their commitment to conservation in one's everyday life. Share the experiences with others to foster a greater understanding of our world. The eco-traveler would have seen and learnt much from your journey. While the brew of ecotourism is still fresh in the heart and mind, the traveler should be motivated to take action using the various agencies, grassroots organizations and resources available to you.

Learn about the flora and fauna of the area

The knowledge of the traveler will lead to a greater appreciation and respect for what ecotourism destination area has. Learning about the world around us is fun, and it can be as easy as taking along a field guide.

Leave plants, animals, rocks, logs, etc. alone

That flower may be the most unusual you've ever seen, and that little critter may look really cute, but they're not there for the traveler to pick or to pet. The traveler has to realize that he is in their home. Wild animals are wild, and they need their space. Give animals plenty of room when viewing them. As for the plants, the animals and insects need them. And that log or the rock the traveler comes across may be someone's home.

Follow directions given by signs and rangers

Both kinds of directions are for the traveler's protection and for the protection of the natural area that he/she visits.

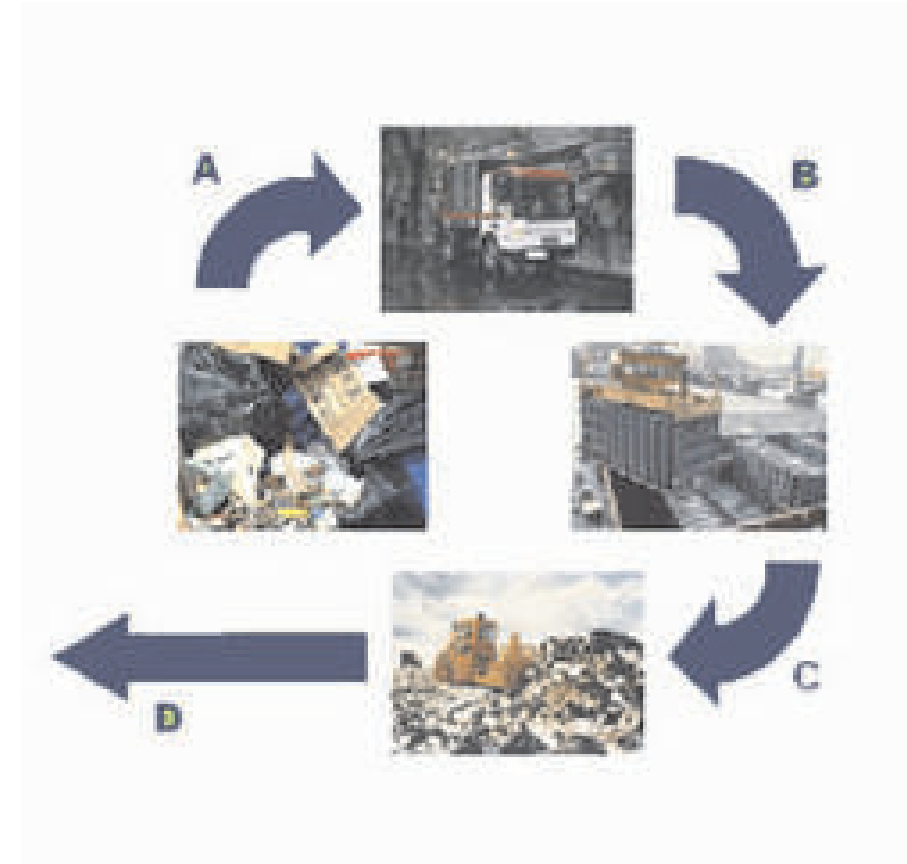
Be a good example for others and spread the word about responsible ecotourism

When family friends and neighbors hear about the experience of the trips to natural areas, they might want to go, too. Point them to areas of special interests and be sure to tell them these great tips!

GUIDELINES FOR NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Provide technical, financial, educational, capacity building and other support to ecotourism destinations.
- Host community organizations, small businesses and the corresponding local authorities in order to ensure that appropriate policies, development and management guidelines, and monitoring mechanisms are being applied towards sustainability.
- Monitor and conduct research on the actual impacts of ecotourism activities upon ecosystems, biodiversity, local and indigenous cultures and the socio-economic fabric of the ecotourism destinations.
- Cooperate with public and private organizations.
- Ensure that the data and information generated through research is channeled to support decision-making processes in ecotourism development and management.
- Cooperate with research institutions to develop the most adequate and practical solutions to ecotourism development issues.







Activity Wise Guidelines:

Category Adventure/ Sports	Activity Rafting	<p>Dos and Donts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't enter the restricted areas • Don't pollute the water by your activities. • Don't use Soaps and detergents in natural water bodies. • Don't bathe in the water bodies, if it is restricted. • Don't throw waste / food materials in the water bodies. • Never try to touch the water animals. • Don't feed water animals.
	Canoeing and Kayaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't enter the restricted area. • Don't use Soaps and detergents in natural water bodies. • Don't bathe in the water bodies, if it is restricted. • Don't throw waste / food materials in the water bodies. • Never try to touch the water animals. • Don't feed water animals. • If you see an aquatic animal that appears to be in distress or injured, do not attempt to rescue it. The best course of action is to contact the nearest authority. • Follow the directions given by the sign boards and instructions.
	Boating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please avoid harassing or disturbing natural environment. (Harassment is defined as: any activity that alters the animal's natural behavior.) • By altering the natural behavior, you may create the likelihood of danger that is bad for the animal and against the law. • Don't enter the restricted areas. • Don't feed anything to the water animals. • Follow the instructions given by the sign boards strictly. • Don't pollute the water by your activities. • Never get in between the marine animals and its path of the water.
	Angling- Sport fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do remove all mud and aquatic plants from your vehicle, boat, anchor, trailer and axles, waders, boots and fishing gear before departing the fishing access site or boat dock. • Do dry your boat and equipment between river trips. • Do not transport fish from one body of water to another. • Do not dispose of fish entrails, skeletal parts, or other by-products in any body of water. • Do not collect sculpins (also known as bullheads) or use sculpins as bait.
	Trekking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember.....You are a guest. • Allow enough time in each place to appreciate it.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel by your own muscle power where possible. • Stay on the track (trail). • Leave an area cleaner when you found it. • Don't exploit an area when collecting food/ fuel wood. • Don't enter to the restricted areas. • Don't disturb wildlife or their habitats. • Don't have a fire in the forest area. • Never harass or chase wildlife for the sake of a better look or an 'ultimate' photograph. • Never get between a parent animal and its young. • Keep noise level to a minimum to avoid unnecessary stress. • Don't collect flowers or the material from the area which is an endangered, just for souvenir. • Stay on trails. Don't wander into the brush or onto the prairie; the trails are there for a reason. Leaving the pathway, you might unknowingly disturb wildlife habitat, or endangered or threatened plant communities. Besides, if you stay on the trail, you won't get lost. • Learn about the flora and fauna of the area you are visiting. • Do not litter; if you see any litter when trekking or nature walk, pick it up. Many form of litter have devastating effects on the ecosystems and on the animals. • Reduce, reuse and recycle. • Leave plants, animals, rocks, logs etc., alone. You're in there home. • Whenever you can walk, skate or bike and leave your vehicle turned off. Park your vehicle, save some gas and spare everyone the emissions. Enjoy the beauty of the park up close. • Follow directions given by the signs and rangers. Both kinds of directions are your protection and for the protection of the natural area you visit. • Be an ambassador back home.
	Nature walks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember.....You are a guest. • Allow enough time in each place to appreciate it. • Stay on trails. Don't wander into the brush or onto the prairie; the trails are there for a reason. Leaving the pathway, you might unknowingly disturb wildlife habitat, or endangered or threatened plant communities. Besides, if you stay on the trail, you won't get lost. • Follow directions given by the signs and rangers. Both kinds of directions are your protection and for the protection of the natural area you visit. • Do not litter; if you see any litter when trekking or nature walk, pick it up. Many form of litter have devastating effects on the ecosystems and on the animals. • Do not use polythenes and other non- biodegradable

		<p>substances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave plants, animals, rocks, logs etc., alone. You're in there home.
	Mountain Biking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups create and promote "zero" tolerance messages regarding excessive speeds for motorized activities, drinking, then recreating and making noise late at night. • Please check your speed limits and other motorist and bicycling violations. • Whenever you can walk, skate or bike and leave your vehicle turned off. Park your car, save some gas and spare everyone the emissions. Enjoy the beauty of the park up close. • Do not litter; if you see any litter when trekking or nature walk, pick it up. Many form of litter have devastating effects on the ecosystems and on the animals. • Don't enter to the restricted areas.
	Safari	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wherever you go, do not litter. • Please keep your rubbish with you until it may be disposed of properly. If you bring it into the area, take it out when you leave. • Water is a precious resource. Please use water sparingly wherever possible, using simple actions such as turning off the tap while brushing your teeth. • Electricity is expensive and in short supply. Please switch off the lights if you are not using them or if you leave the area. • Never touch, chase or harass the wildlife or marine life. • Do not collect any form of flora or fauna when on your safari, whether inside a National Park or not. • In particular, do not purchase any form of handicraft or souvenir that requires the death of an animal, such as shells, starfish, ivory, animal hides, bird eggs etc. • Within the National Parks and Reserves, there is a published "Wildlife Code". Obeying these rules and regulations helps to ensure everyone's enjoyment and safety, while protecting the area for the future.
	Night Jungle Treks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please do not disturb any animal. Making noises, flashing lights or making sudden movement to frighten animals is regarded as disturbing it. • Animals, if continually harassed, will avoid human contact or could become aggressive. Never chase animals and keep noise to a minimum. • Too much noise disturbs the wildlife and can antagonize other visitors. • Where there is an existing road system, do not under any circumstances drive your car off the road. Vehicles leaving the road can damage the habitat; oil and fume pollution and plant disruption can seriously affect the eco-system by altering drainage patterns, soil erosion and pollution.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not discard any foodstuffs or litter; it is dangerous for the animals, disrupting traditional feeding patterns, creating fire hazards and potentially maiming or killing wildlife. Do not light a fire and never discard a burning object. Bush and forest fires cause enormous damage to vegetation and the wildlife itself. • Please do not stop your car in a position or behave in any way likely to inconvenience or annoy a fellow visitor. Consideration must be given at all times to the wildlife and other enthusiasts keen to enjoy the same experience. • Drive carefully at all times. Speeding results in accidents to wildlife, as well as degradation of the road surface. • For your own safety please stay in your vehicle at all times, except where a signboard indicates that leaving the car is permissible. Many of the parks and reserves have designated picnic sites and nature trails. • The animals are wild and can be dangerous. Do not stand up in your vehicle unless you have adequate protection and supervision from a professional driver or guide.
	Mountaineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow enough time in each place to appreciate it. • Travel by your own muscle power where possible. • Learn about the flora and fauna of the area you are visiting. • Do not litter; if you see any litter when trekking or nature walk, pick it up. Many form of litter have devastating effects on the ecosystems and on the animals. • Leave an area cleaner when you found it. • Don't exploit an area when collecting food/ fuel wood.
	Jungle camping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can help protect the natural resources when you travel. • You can help support the Marine Park Rangers, build school classrooms, and fund local community medical clinics and sponsor children through school. (More information can be provided upon request). • However, simply obeying the rules and regulations within each protected area and respecting local traditions and cultures makes the greatest contribution to local community and conservation projects. • Within the National Parks and Reserves, there is a published "Wildlife Code". Obeying these rules and regulations helps to ensure everyone's enjoyment and safety, while protecting the area for the future. • Wherever you go, do not litter. • Please keep your rubbish with you until it may be disposed of properly. If you bring it into the area, take it out when you leave.
Wildlife	Wildlife Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow enough time in each place to appreciate it. • Be careful not to introduce exotic plants and animals. • Don't enter the areas which are restricted for you.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave an area cleaner when you found it. • Don't litter. • Don't use plastics and other substances which are harmful for nature and animals as well. • Don't disturb animals and wildlife habitats. • Don't offer animals any kind of food. If you see someone else trying to do so, please ask him not to do so or bring it into the notice of the authorities. • Never get between the animals and the young. • Animals always have the right- of- way; it is there home; you are merely a visitor. • Keep noise levels to a minimum to avoid unnecessary stress. • Never harass or chase wildlife for the sake of a better look or an 'ultimate' photograph. • Do not litter. • Don't blow horns of the vehicles. • Don't encourage illegal trade by buying products made from the endangered species. • Follow the directions and the signs in the area, which are for your comfort and convenience. • Follow the principle of Reduce, reuse and recycle. • While in a protected area please strictly follow the rules
Historical/ Spiritual	Caving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When selecting the leader and guide/s for a caving trip it is essential to consider the following: • The leader and guide/s must have the required competency to conduct the trip, effectively manage incidents and to satisfy the planned objectives. • The leader or a guide on the trip must be familiar with the specific cave system being visited. • Competencies must be commensurate to the cave system being visited. • Move through a cave with minimal impact. • Apply single pitch abseiling skills in caves • Perform complex vertical rescues • Do not make noise or play music in the caves.
	Forts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not photograph, if it is not permitted. • Don't burn the fire in the nearby forests or natural areas. • Don't throw the plastics and detergents in the water bodies. • Do not write any thing on the walls or on the monuments.
	Temples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not enter the temple with shoes. • Do not photograph, if it is not permitted. • Don't throw the prasads and the wrappers and other solid waste here and there. • Use dust bins. • Don't burn the fire in the nearby forests or natural areas.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't throw the plastics and detergents in the water bodies. • Keep your worship place neat and clean.
	Pilgrimage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be culturally sensitive and respect local customs. • Always remember you are a guest. • Familiarize yourself with local regulations. • Learn about the customs and the local heritage and traditions. • Do not litter. • Do not pollute the water bodies by your activities.
Heritage	Tribal heritage trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be culturally sensitive and respect local customs. • Always remember you are a guest. • Allow enough time to the village to appreciate them. • Familiarize yourself with local regulations. • When traveling spend your money on local enterprises. • Accept the differences, adopt the local customs. • Consider the implications of buying plant and animal products. Find out if they are rare or endangered, taken from the wild, and if the trade is approved of by the locals. • Don't encourage illegal trade by buying products made from the endangered species. • Do not play loud westernized music or create any other nuisance in the area. • No not drink. • Learn about the customs and the local heritage and traditions. • Be an ambassador and back home.
	Village stays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be culturally sensitive and respect local customs. • Always remember you are a guest. • Allow enough time to the village to appreciate them. • Familiarize yourself with local regulations. • When traveling spend your money on local enterprises. • Accept the differences, adopt the local customs. • Consider the implications of buying plant and animal products. Find out if they are rare or endangered, taken from the wild, and if the trade is approved of by the locals. • Do not play loud westernized music or create any other nuisance in the area. • No not drink. • Learn about the customs and the local heritage and traditions. • Be an ambassador and back home.
	Folk museums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be culturally sensitive and respect local customs. • Always remember you are a guest. • Allow enough time to the village to appreciate them. • Learn about the customs and the local heritage and traditions. • Be an ambassador and back home.

	Nature Interpretation Centres (NIC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about the customs and the local heritage and traditions. Be an ambassador and back home. Be enthusiastic for gaining more knowledge from the center.
Flora	Botanical Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't wander into the bushes or into the restricted areas without prior permission. Learn about the flora and fauna of the area you are visiting. Your knowledge will lead to a greater appreciation and respect. Don't pluck the flowers and the shrubs unnecessarily just to collect it as a souvenir.
	Visit to plantation sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't wander into the bushes or into the restricted areas without prior permission. Learn about the flora and fauna of the area you are visiting. Your knowledge will lead to a greater appreciation and respect. Don't pluck the flowers and the shrubs unnecessarily just to collect it as a souvenir.
	Medical plant Nursery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't wander into the bushes or into the restricted areas without prior permission. Learn about the flora and fauna of the area you are visiting. Your knowledge will lead to a greater appreciation and respect. Don't pluck the flowers and the shrubs unnecessarily just to collect it as a souvenir.
Educational	Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't interfere with the routine of the animals. Don't engage yourself in the activities that are creating stress on the animals. Keep noise levels minimum to avoid the stress, and ensure that your trip should not harm their feeding and movements. Don't come in the path of the animals and the young. Never harass or chase wildlife for the sake of a better look or an 'ultimate' photograph. Never surround a single animal or a group of animals; animals should always be able to move away from you. Only observe, don't disturb.
	Study Tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the rules and regulations for educational visits and generic risk assessment control measures Pupils have a responsibility to behave sensibly and appropriately. Don't interfere with the routine of the animals. Don't engage yourself in the activities that are creating stress on the animals. Other measures specifically required for the visit. e.g. if in or near water Close supervision occurs by the escorts/ teachers, when the group remains within general sight and/or contact of the supervisor.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When a large group is there split into smaller groups for specific activities. Only observe, don't disturb.
	Environmental Education tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils have a responsibility to behave sensibly and appropriately. Pupils should be told that they must follow instructions, not take unnecessary risks and that they should tell one of the leaders about anything that worries or concerns them. Don't interfere with the routine of the animals. Don't engage yourself in the activities that are creating stress on the animals. Don't litter here and there. Use dustbins Don't play music and create noise in the restricted areas. Don't enter the restricted areas.
	Wildlife Videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't come in the path of the animals and the young. Never harass or chase wildlife for the sake of a better look or an 'ultimate' photograph. Never surround a single animal or a group of animals; animals should always be able to move away from you. Only observe, don't disturb.

Note:

- Specify the activity level as low, moderate and high for each activity for the benefit of tourists.
- While organizing these activities the carrying capacity should be kept in mind.



Guidelines for Regulating Eco-tourism in Protected Areas (PAs)

The PAs constitute a unique ecosystem comprising wide variety of flora and fauna including the diverse and rich aquatic life and avifauna. However the primary objective of the PAs is conservation, nevertheless, these areas are also known for sites of natural beauty and religious significance for local people, besides being the sites of unique bio-geographical, geomorphologic and wildlife significance. These are the areas having the potential to serve as 'the ultimate destination for eco-tourists' of this region and from areas elsewhere including the foreign visitors.

Tourism in Protected Areas (National parks and sanctuaries) is governed by the proviso of Section 28 of Wildlife (protection Act) and Rule 34 of the M.P Wildlife Protection Rules, 1974 as well as the policy guidelines contained in the National wildlife Action plan 2002 and Wildlife Tourism guidelines issued by Project tiger directorate in 1984. According to the present policy, role of ecotourism in protected area is to spread awareness and elicit peoples' support for conservation of wildlife and their habitats. Revenue generation has been kept secondary to conservation objectives.

In order to regulate entry of eco-tourists in the PAs as well as to avoid any instance of excessive tourism in these areas the GOI prescribed to work out the carrying capacity of each Protected Area and limit the intake of visitors to the that extent only.

In view to the guidelines issued by GOI and to ensure its compliance in a smooth and effective way as well as to promote and regulate the visitors' intake in these PAs the following instructions are issued for strict compliance by the officials and staff concerned.

1. DETERMINING THE CARRYING CAPACITY OF EACH PROTECTED AREA

It is prescribed to determine the carrying capacity of each PA on the basis of guidelines issued by GOI. It shall be determined in terms of the following parameters;

- i) Number of vehicles of defined size and make per day
- ii) Number of visitors per day

The permission to entry inside the PAs shall be strictly limited to the carrying capacity. In case, entry shall be exceeding the maximum limit prescribed. Regulation shall be ensured at the Reception Centre and at all the entry points. For the information of the visitors, it shall be displayed on the boards and hording fixed at the entry points along with other Dos and Don'ts in PAs.

2. RECEPTION AND PERMISSION FORMALITIES FOR ENTRY

As per provisions of section 27 and 35 of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, entry in the National Parks and Sanctuaries, without permission of a competent authority, is strictly prohibited. In order to systematize and smoothen the formalities for permission to entry in PAs, the following, measures are proposed to devise and institute at all the defined entry points of PAs.

- Establish Reception Centre at each defined entry point; and devise a comprehensive format (to be filled in by the visitors) to seek requisite information from visitors.
- Indemnity bond to be filled in by each visitor/group. No permission is allowed without the Indemnity Bond filled in and signed by the visitors.
- No permission shall be given without entry fee as per rules.
- Dos and Don'ts in the Parks and PAs shall be printed on the backside of permission form for the ready information of the visitors.
- Checking at entry points to ensure observance of Dos and Don'ts and other formalities.

3. CONDUCTED TOURS AND ECO-GUIDES

In order to ensure minimum impact of visitors' intervention on the natural forest ecosystems and to have effective check on the movements of visitors inside the National Parks and other PAs guided/ conducted tours have been prescribed. It will also help expose the visitors to the best probable sites and places of significance for eco-tourism and wildlife point of view. The movement of conducted or guided tours shall be limited to defined circuits/routes within or connecting the tourism zone areas only. Vehicles of defined size and make shall be allowed for the purpose. For

the purpose of conducted tours inside PAs, the following, components shall be adhered to strictly.

- Entry of visitors and vehicles shall be limited to carrying capacity of the Park and / or the PA concerned.
- No vehicle shall be allowed inside the Park or any PA without the registered eco-guides; who will ensure the movement of vehicle on the defined routes and check the movement visitors and allow stoppage, rest and exposure at defined spots only. On foot excursions inside the Park or PAs are not allowed except on eco-trails and eco-tracks specially defined for the same.
- Eco-guides and staff involved in the eco-tourism shall be specially trained in interpretation and behavioral skills and shall have to follow approved dress code and shall be registered with the Park authority and updated at regular intervals.
- Mini buses with closed windows have been prescribed for conducted tours, while open jeeps and gypsies may be allowed for guided tours.
- Charges for hired vehicles and eco-guides shall be as per approved list by the Park authorities. Rates shall be displayed on the board at the Reception at every entry point of the Park and the PA concerned.

4. ESTABLISHING SOCIETY OF FOREST WORKERS AND GUIDES

It is proposed that each PA in this circle shall have 'Society of Forest Workers and Guides' to maintain and oversee the day-to-day works relating to boarding, logging, and provision of transport and guide facilities to the visitors. The Society shall be duly registered and will have by-laws and executive body to manage its affairs. Forest ranger concerned shall initiate the process of registration and institutionalization of Society of Forest Workers in their respective Park or Sanctuary. The rates for each item of work or service provided shall be approved and displayed at the appropriate sites for the information of the visitors.

5. ECO-ZONING OF THE AREAS OF CONSERVATION AND TOURISM IMPORTANCE (SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION)

The areas, which are important for conservation and have tourism significance should be identified, delineated physically and marked on maps and displayed in the interpretation center or at the entrance gate. These zones may include areas as per the abundance of flora / fauna, any special species, any geological or geographical features, special NTFP / medicinal plants, water bodies, temples, rocks, caves etc. The zoning will help in providing the bigger canvas of the spots / interesting features to diversify the tourists to different areas as per their interests. This will also help to identify the sensitive areas and regulate and restrict tourism in time and space, for example, tourists may not be allowed in an area during the breeding season of a particular species, or if a mother (say tigress) is roaming with the just newly borne cubs.

6. DEVELOPING TOUR CIRCUITS, ROADS, TREKS AND TRAILS

All the existing roads, treks, trails and paths, used or not being used presently, should be marked physically and also on maps, that can be provided to the guides and the tourists. New possible paths may also be explored. Based on the networking of these paths, tourism circuits can be laid out to diversify the vehicles and uniformly disperse the tourists in the Park. Numbers should be assigned to the circuits and each vehicle can be allotted one circuit, next vehicle another circuit and likewise. This arrangement will help to disperse the tourist pressure at any particular place and thus increase the overall carrying capacity of the Park.

7. DOs AND DON'Ts IN THE PAs

Formulation and observance of a standard codes of conduct is essential for smooth and effective running of an affair associated with people. Thus, for effective and smooth conduct of eco-tourism in PAs there is potent need of formulation of code of conduct for the visitors in the form of 'Dos and Donts in the PAs'. A standard list of 'Dos and Don'ts in the PAs' shall be prepared for each PA and displayed at all the entry points and other prominent sites in the PA concerned. A standard list of 'Dos and Donts in the PAs' is enclosed along with these instructions.

DO'S AND DON'T IN THE PAs

- Entry into the Park without valid permission is strictly prohibited. Please do not enter the PAs without valid permit or pass. Tress-passers will be prosecuted as per the provisions of law.
- Carrying of firearms, ammunition or toxic material of any kind inside the PAs is strictly prohibited.

- Kindling or burning of fire, cooking of meal and carrying inflammable material of any kind inside the Park or any other PA is strictly prohibited.
- Nature and wild animals do not like disturbance of any kind. Do not make noise or loud cries and do not throw stones or offer edible things to the wild animals while venturing through PAs.
- Do not go close to snakes or other wild animals. It may be dangerous.
- Do not carry articles made of plastic such as plastic bags, bottles, glasses, cups, etc. inside the park.
- Do not litter around and throw waste papers or articles in the Park. Use the places or Bins meant for the purpose.
- Use of horn, searchlights and musical instruments are not allowed.
- Carry and use of liquor inside the PA is strictly prohibited.
- Swimming in the water bodies and river pools is risky. There may be crocodiles in the water bodies and you may become feed to them.
- Permission is allowed only for the time period between the sunrise and the sunset. Visit during the night hours is strictly prohibited.
- Observe silence if you really want to enjoy nature in its naked best.
- Nature is mysterious. Keep a vigilant eye around while moving. Every moment has the potent to be a lifetime experience for you. Don't miss this opportunity.
- For your enjoyment please do not disturb others sleeps. Wild creatures also need privacy like us.
- Take the help of eco-guides to maximize the gains and joy of your visit.
- Only guided and conducted tours shall be permissible in the PAs. The speed of vehicles shall not exceed in any case more than 35 km. per hour.

The visitors should observe the above Dos and Donts to avoid any possibility of (becoming) the visit becoming a nightmare. They should co-operate with the Park managers for their own well being and safety as well as for the safety and well being of the beautiful creatures of this Park. This will make the visit a memorable experience of life.

8. FACILITY FOR ORIENTATION AND FEED BACK OF VISITORS

An orientation of the visitors towards the best practices before they enter into the PA is must and a feed back of the visitors' experience in the PA is also essential for the improvement of the management of the PA. A mechanism should be evolved to effectively facilitate these two objectives. The interpretation centre can be used for this purpose.



MP Ecotourism Development Board: The Way Ahead

Constituted in July 2005, The Madhya Pradesh Eco-Tourism Development Board is an autonomous organization in the Forest Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh. The major objectives of the Board are broadly aimed at the promotion and organised development of Ecotourism as a mainstream programme of the Forest Department. The Board envisages acting as a pivotal link between the Forest and the Tourism Departments of the State besides other stakeholders to establish perfect synergies among all of them. Within this larger mandate, the Board aims at the achievement of certain specific objectives, such as development of infrastructure; development and enforcement of standards and norms of service; review and development of policies and laws; ensuring participation of and benefits to all stakeholders, especially the rural communities and capacity building support for stakeholders. The by-laws of the Board stipulate that the Board will be a facilitating body to help Government Departments, travel businesses, local communities and other stakeholders to achieve their specific objectives of benefiting from creating visitor access to the serene, scenic and unexplored niches in the vast wilderness of the State, while ensuring that the natural resources prosper to welcome more and more admirers.

The Hon Forest Minister of Madhya Pradesh heads the Board as Chairperson; the Principal Secretary Forests is the Chairman of the Executive Committee, while a senior Forest Officer functions as the Chief Executive Officer. The Executive Committee of the Board consists of senior-most functionaries from the Forest, Tourism and Finance Departments and the autonomous undertakings of these Departments.

Forests and wildlife being the dominant heritage of Madhya Pradesh, MP Tourism has, logically, also been dominated by forest and wildlife related destinations. Despite being the cradle of some of the finest and the most beautiful wildlife reserves in the country, wildlife tourism in the State has not been given its due recognition so far. Eighty percent non-pilgrimage tourism in the State is based on the forests and the wildlife. With the constitution of the Ecotourism Development Board the State is committed to gear up to attract larger numbers of concerned and sensitive visitors to its wilds, rebuilding its efforts to conserve the serenity and diversity of its wilderness. Despite the lack of resources and efforts, wildlife tourism in the state has been growing at above 10% over the last few years.

So far wildlife tourism, more specifically the 'tiger tourism', has been offering a very limited range of activities and experiences not only in Madhya Pradesh but also in the whole of India. The Ecotourism Board intends to widen the horizon of the tourism and enrich the experience of the visitors with more enchanting dimensions of the nature and wildlife. The tourists will henceforth be encouraged to experience a much closer contact with nature and wilderness through treks, nature walks, camping, biking, bird watching, wildlife viewing from strategically located hides and watch towers and full-day park visits, including relaxation at the remote patrolling camps with only the forest guards, experienced guides, naturalists, birds, butterflies and the animals as company. This diversity will make a visit to the forests and the protected areas much more educative, entertaining and fulfilling. With the above background, the Board has taken up the development of some of the lesser-known destinations including Orchha Nature Reserve, Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary, Ralamandal Wildlife Sanctuary, Amarkantak and Dindori Forests, Chambal River, Dumna and Madan Mahal Ecotourism Centres (Jabalpur), Kerwa Ecotourism Destination (Bhopal), Kathotia Adventure Point (Sehore), Jhinna Forest Camp (Panna). Preparing for the challenges to integrate the ecotourism diversification with overall sustainable development, the Board has to go a long way.

