



RESPONSIBLE TRAVELLER GUIDELINES

How to be a Responsible Traveller

On World Tourism Day, 27 September 2020, these guidelines have been launched by the Responsible Tourism Society of India and supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

We as travellers need to be caretakers of this planet and the way forward is to be **RESPONSIBLE!**

Tourism is a powerful tool and while both the Tourism Industry and the Government are working towards policies to make tourism sustainable, we urge the traveller to join hands in this endeavour. A lighter footprint is indeed the way forward.



Following is a list of things that each one of us can undertake in our lifestyles and travels to help reduce the impact of global warming and eventually combat climate change. These collective actions are a step forward, towards a 'Green Lifestyle'.

Responsible Tourism is about "making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit" - Harold Goodwin. Responsible Tourism requires that operators, hoteliers, governments, local people, and tourists take responsibility, take action to make tourism more sustainable. To make India a 'Sustainable Tourism Destination', the traveller, the tourism industry, and the government will need to join hands for responsible action.

These guidelines have been put together by the [Responsible Tourism Society of India](http://www.rtsoi.org), earlier known as the Ecotourism Society of India. It was established by senior and committed industry professionals, government officials, environmentalists, and a parliamentarian in 2008. RTSOI is recognized by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India as it's 'Sustainability Partner' through a Memorandum of Understanding in March 2016. RTSOI is supported by a range of stakeholders across the travel and tourism fraternity and multiple walks of life.

Planning your Holiday

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.

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.

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

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.

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

Bring your supplies

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

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.

Eat local

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

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.

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](#).



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.

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.

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.



Respect Cultures

Take time to learn about local customs, norms, and traditions. Be tolerant and respect diversity. Treat local communities and their culture with respect. Avoid behaviour that can offend the local community. Gestures have different meanings in different cultures. One should be mindful of this, especially while visiting religious and cultural sites.

Permission must be sought from local communities before taking photographs.



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.



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.



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.



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 bio-degradable 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.



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.



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.

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

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.