

# THE HINDU

## Hotels, resorts get new RT classification system

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Thrust on economic, social and environmental responsibilities

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Kerala Tourism has ushered in new economic, social and environmental responsibilities under the Responsible Tourism (RT) concept to roll out rejigged RT classifications for hotels and resorts in the State.

The State, considered a role model for RT practices, has put in place the new system as hotels and resorts presently follow that of the Union Ministry of Tourism, which is not based on the RT concept.

The new criteria, notified by the government, primarily covers economic, social and environmental aspects. In the context of global warming and climate change, they are expected to give thrust to environmental protection activities.

Accessible tourism policy, code of conduct for management, staff and visitors, policy against child abuse, efforts towards employment of transgenders and promotion of local arts, culture, cuisine and souvenirs have been given thrust under the socio-cultural responsibility criteria.

In the economic responsibility standards, local employment, purchase of local goods and services and support to local entrepreneurs have been given weightage. Energy conservation, water conservation, waste management, reduction of



Generating local employment is a key thrust area of Responsible Tourism's economic responsibility criteria. A scene from Vaikom. ■ RT MISSION

greenhouse gas emissions and eco-friendly practices come under the environmental responsibility practices that will fetch good gradings.

Kerala Tourism will implement the new classifications through the RT Mission. As in the case of other categorisations like ayurveda centres, house boats and home stays, Kerala Tourism will remain to be the authority, but the RT Mission will carry out the field-level implementation.

### Gradings

Hotels and resorts receiving a score between 250 to 349 out of 1,000 will fetch RT silver grading, 350 to 500 RT gold and 501 and above RT

Diamond. Properties that score more than 80% (228) in the environment category will get RT green certification, according to an RT Mission official.

An inspection committee has been worked out for the RT classifications. Director of Tourism or his representative will be the Chairman and State RT Mission coordinator or his representative the convener.

The environment engineer of the Environment and Climate Change Directorate or his representative, representative of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) and representative of Kerala Travel Mart Society will form the members of the committee.