

World Responsible Tourism Summit Kerala, 2023

Revised Responsible Tourism Declaration

Kerala Supports the International Responsible Tourism Charter signed on 6th of November 2022 at Magna Carta, United Kingdom

Responsible Tourism is about ‘making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit. It is not a form of niche tourism, rather, it is an approach that must be incorporated and practised in all forms of Tourism.

Kerala has demonstrated that Responsible Tourism can be very good for business given the increasing demand internationally from all source markets for experiential Tourism. In 2023, Kerala was ranked 13th by the New York Times among the must see places around the world. Kerala Government requests the support of the Tourism industry in marketing Kerala so as to attract tourists who will enjoy what it has to offer from the communities. The RT Mission will seek the support of Panchayats and other local bodies to invite visitors phrased in the language of hosting guests.

The Responsible Tourism mission, needs to continue to build on its success by extending responsible tourism activities across the whole state to benefit the local communities the fruits of sustainable development. This includes all the existing programs and Responsible tourism classification work. The Mission will continue to innovate in its participatory work with the communities and the industry as it is doing in STREET Project, PEPPER Project, Maravanthuruthu and Aymanam, which has been set up as

the first model RT village. Others will follow the footsteps of these projects.

The challenge is to use Responsible Tourism to support local communities for sustainable Development. “We take holidays in other people’s homes” and we must respect their villages and streets. Resilient places for people to live in and ideal places for people to visit can only be developed by the coordination of government departments working together with communities.

Given that destinations belong to the communities who live there and the businesses based there, the RT mission will work with other ministries, authorities and specialist to deliver and maintain the infrastructure for the local communities and their guests. The RT Mission will work with Panchayats, tourism businesses within and beyond the state to develop standard operating procedures and operational guidelines to deliver great places of live in and great places to visit. Safety is an important priority in all aspects of RT Mission work for hosts and guests.

Responsible Tourism in Kerala is about empowering local communities through encouraging women entrepreneurs, the Kerala Agri Tourism network, the ethnic cuisine Project, the Art and culture forum, training and skill development and online marketing.

This work has been recognised internationally. Kerala has won 19 International Tourism.Awards.

Kerala Government has outlined the main principles, which will be incorporated within the new declaration as follows:-

1. Guiding Principles for Economic Responsibility

- Assess economic impacts before developing tourism and exercise preference for those forms of development that benefit local communities and minimise negative impacts on local livelihoods (for example through loss of access to resources), recognising that tourism may not always be the most appropriate form of local economic development.
- Maximise local economic benefits by increasing linkages and reducing leakages, by ensuring that communities are involved in, and benefited from, tourism. Use tourism to assist in poverty alleviation by adopting pro-poor strategies.
- Develop quality products that reflect, complement, and enhance the destination.
- Market tourism in ways which reflect the natural, cultural and social integrity of the destination, and which encourage appropriate forms of tourism.
- Adopt equitable business practises, pay and charge fair prices, and build partnerships which may share and minimise risk, and recruit and employ staff recognising international labour standards.
- Provide appropriate and sufficient support to small, medium and micro enterprises to ensure tourism-related enterprises thrive and are sustainable.

2. Guiding Principles for Social Responsibility

- Actively empower and involve the local community in planning and decision-making and provide capacity building to make this a reality.
- To achieve greater gender equality, safe destinations for women as hosts and guests. The RT mission will cooperate with panchayats, UN women and Equations, gender equality elements, in all its work programs.
- To deliver equality of access for the differently abled hosts and guests. The RT mission will endeavour to deliver equal access for people living with any kind of disability. As far as possible, with current technology, all tourism activities and experiences should be accessible for all, that is barrier free tourism.
- Assess social impacts throughout the life cycle of the operation – including the planning and design phases of projects - in order to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive ones.
- Endeavour to make tourism an inclusive social experience and to ensure that there is access for all, in particular vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and individuals.
- Combat the sexual exploitation of human beings, particularly the exploitation of children.
- Be sensitive to the host culture, maintaining and encouraging social and cultural diversity.
- Endeavour to ensure that tourism contributes to improvements in health and education.
- Promote innovation in the tourism sector in economic, social and environmental aspects to enhance local community's benefits

- To ensure the local communities respects the culture, lifestyle and language of the guests and vice versa.

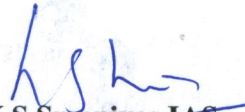
Guiding Principles for Environmental Responsibility

- Climate Change presents serious challenges for communities in Kerala. The RT mission places a high priority on reducing green -house gas emissions and recognises that with other ministries, communities need investment to adapt to the consequences of climate change generated beyond Kerala.
- Assess environmental impacts throughout the life cycle of tourist establishments and operations – including the planning and design phase - and ensure that negative impacts are reduced to the minimum and positive ones are maximised.
- Use resources sustainably, and reduce waste (particularly plastic) and over-consumption. And also use the 3 R's – Reduce, Reuse and Recycle to reduce waste and upcycle wherever possible. Priority should be given, for environmental and cultural reasons, to the restoration and reuse of existing buildings rather than new build. If new build is necessary, it should use local, eco material. A comprehensive Design policy should be adopted.
- Management and restoration of sustainability of natural diversity. Assessment of the carrying capacity and the type and nature of the tourism that the destination environment can support. Respect the integrity of the vulnerable ecosystems and protected areas. To avoid disturbing the wildlife

- Promote education and awareness for sustainable development – for all stakeholders.
- Raise the capacity of all stakeholders and ensure that best practice is followed, for this purpose consult with environmental and conservation experts.
- Working with other government ministries to promote green principles – in construction, design, architecture, protocols for waste management, organic farming etc in tourism destinations and thus making and developing carbon neutral destinations.



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