OFFICE MEMORANDUM

The Ministry of Tourism has formulated the Guidelines on Safety and Security of Tourists for State Governments/Union Territories and Tips for Travellers.

2. These Guidelines are offered to the State Governments/Union Territories and other relevant authorities to stress the importance of safety and risk management, assist in identifying best practices and encourage closer cooperation. The Guidelines are indicative references that may be useful to States in sharing or adopting the best practices and design their domestic measures to better protect tourists at home and abroad. In addition to these guidelines “Tips to Travellers” are also offered to make their visit to Incredible India, a memorable experience.

3. The guidelines and Tips for Travellers are enclosed for information and necessary action.

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To
All State Tourism Secretaries/Union Territories.
Ministry of Tourism  
Government of India  
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Guidelines on Safety & Security of Tourist for State Governments/Union Territories and Tips for Travellers

Introduction & Rationale

Tourism is an important economic activity that provides significant contribution to the economic growth in India. As per the 2nd Tourism Satellite Account of India - 2009-10, the Tourism sector in India contributes approximately 6.77 percents to its GDP. The contribution of tourism to total Employment of the Country both direct and indirect is 10.77 percent. Sustaining the role of tourism as a major engine to economic growth and that the tourism potential is fully tapped requires ensuring establishment of a safe environment for all tourists on a non-discriminating basis. Away from their home and exposed to increased threats to their life, health, or personal integrity, foreign tourists may be a particularly vulnerable group as a result of disrupted communications and lack of knowledge of local customs and laws.

Safety is an essential part of the tourist product and, in this sense, is intertwined with the quality of tourist service. Ensured safety signifies higher quality of tourist service, but it is the commitment to the high quality standards at each point of the tourism service supply chain that may ultimately guarantee the intended safety.

India and the tourism industry in particular continue to be prone to emergencies caused by natural, man-made, or other hazards. These challenges need to be managed adequately, with national emergency structures and processes designed with clear understanding of the special needs and concerns of the travel and tourism sector.

The following Guidelines are offered to the State Governments/Union Territories and other relevant authorities to stress the importance of safety and risk management, assist in identifying best practices and encourage closer cooperation. The Guidelines are indicative references that may be useful to States in sharing or adopting the best practices and design their domestic measures to better protect tourists at home and abroad. In addition to these guidelines “Tips to Travellers” are also offered to make their visit to Incredible India, a memorable experience.
Context

India is pursuing safety and respect of tourists' interest and rights seriously. Subject to their individual circumstances, the State Tourism and Union Territory Administrations continue to work with the respective tourist associations and tour operators to enhance their understanding of these instruments, in particular, the code of Safe and Honourable Tourism.

We should continue to explore the utility of engagement with other agencies, including National Security Agency, National Disaster Management Authority, Ministry of Home Affairs and Health Ministry, on issues pertaining to safety of tourists. State Governments may wish to take into consideration the existing security/safety frameworks developed by them.

While a number of strategies and frameworks to ensure safe travel and tourism were devised at the national level and there is room for more targeted action by the State Governments as they strive to establish an economically integrated, robust, and secure community in their respective States.

Action items for the State Governments/Union Territories

1. Pre-travel arrangements

A variety of risk management systems are in place in the India which may have proved their efficiency in providing assistance to tourists in time of emergencies.

- States should encourage risk assessment and management by the private sector before the travel commences through comprehensive insurance schemes and financial guarantees of the tour operators. In the event of emergency or non-performance of a tourist service provider (including tour operator insolvency), the Tour Operator, in cooperation with the relevant authorities of the tourists' country of origin and the State Governments, should be therefore able to provide assistance which will cover essential transportation and repatriation services, accommodation and meals, medical treatment, legal services, and rescue operations in case of terrorist attacks or natural disasters.

- State Tourism Administrations should compile and exchange best practices of establishing appropriate regulations ensuring comprehensive protection of tourists through which may include insurance schemes.
2. **Travel Information on Calamities/ Situations by the State Governments**

Providing timely and verified information on risks and security threats to tourists is essential to building a systemic approach towards tourists safety. Traveler information typically offers information about safety and security issues, and practical tips on health, local laws, local customs, as well as entry and exit requirements.

- The States should maintain a transparent and balanced mechanism for generating Travel Information on Calamities/ Situations in their States.

- Traveller information should be accurate and avoid ambiguous language, bias, political, and commercial considerations. Information contained in travel advisories should be published on a central, easy-to-use, and widely known website, where these would be regularly updated. Travelers should be encouraged to consult the advisories prior to their departure.

- Public announcements of threats and risks in travellers information should, whenever possible, be specific about the geographical location of the problems and include maps and indications of distance. Online mapping of all travel risks and threats allowing for feedback from tourists is particularly useful.

- It is a good practice to grade traveler information across various clearly defined levels. A reasonable grading scheme could include concise wording which contains clear advice, e.g., "Exercise normal safety precautions," "Exercise a high degree of caution," "Reconsider your need to travel," or "Do not travel."

- State Governments should consider making the traveler information a part of a larger system of inter-agency coordination and communication with the tourism business community.

- The States/Union Territories should consider establishing a 24x7 365 days 'Tourist Help Line'

- A 4 Digit toll free telephone line to be set up for information on Natural Disaster/ Calamities etc
3. **Identifying and locating tourists in times of emergency**

Ability to identify and locate tourists in times of emergency is critical to providing them with the necessary assistance in a timely fashion.

- In order to facilitate the identification of tourists in emergency areas, relevant authorities in States should consider putting in place administrative arrangements to be able to get quick access to the data on tourists from the tour operators.

- More importantly, with the advantage of increased information technology sophistication and access to Internet, social media, and various means of communication, States should consider developing online travel registration tools for collecting data on tourists visiting their states.

- Travel registration of tourist should be voluntary and available on a widely known and well positioned website preferably linked to the traveler information service. Relevant authorities should ensure the privacy of the data which could be used to contact and locate the registered tourist in case of emergency.

- States are encouraged to take practical steps to exchange best practices/models for establishing online registered travel services.

4. **Government communications and interagency coordination**

Tourist product involves a complex chain of service providers, where each provider should be responsible for safety/quality. But a key, coordinating role in ensuring safety, can be performed by the Governments (relevant agencies) and Tourism Industry Associations.

- Work towards maintaining efficient communication at various levels:
  
  (a) Interagency coordination within Central Governments, involving Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Tourism, Enforcement and Emergency Management Agencies, Tourism Business Associations;

  (b) Coordination of relevant agencies between State Governments;

  (c) Communication of relevant agencies or local jurisdictions with the tourists in emergencies.
• State Governments should explore closer cooperation among their relevant agencies to enhance the information exchange on security issues pertaining to tourism.

5. Regulation of service providers (Transport Services)

• Relevant regulatory authorities should exercise oversight of transportation service providers so their operation is properly licensed and vehicles and services meet essential safety standards. An indicative list of these standards may comprise:

(a) Compulsory use of seat belts;
(b) Availability of space navigation equipment (GPS or other);
(c) Driving instructions with strong language on speed and driving time limitations;
(d) Compulsory requirement for a second driver in case of long-distance journeys;
(e) Restriction on travel at night time, etc.
(f) Encouraging introduction of women drivers.

6. Regulation of service providers (Accommodation Sector)

Hotels may be encouraged to have:

(a) Separate Women floor
(b) Dedicated Lady House Keeping Staff
(c) Regular training of staff with the theme "I respect Women"

Leisure/recreational services

• Relevant regulatory authorities should pay particular attention to ensuring compliance of service providers with the safety requirements at swimming, diving, water skiing, and similar facilities. Such recreational facilities where tourists may be exposed to higher-than-average hazard should be fully prepared to provide for the safety of tourists. Tourist Guide Certification Authorities or relevant industry associations should apply strict criteria for professional training and skills of guides if the travel takes place in the areas of heightened risk to life and health of
tourists. Detailed guidelines for Adventure Tour Operators are available on www.tourism.gov.

7. **Insolvencies and dispute settlement**

State Governments should work with tourist industry players through reviewing regulations, enforcement or strengthened commitments of the tourist business associations to ensure that in case of insolvency of the travel organizer the tourists are not subject to penalties, threat to personal integrity or integrity of their belongings or victimized in any way. All disputes arising from insolvency of the travel organizer should be settled between businesses engaged in providing tourist product with the mediation of the relevant Government Agencies where appropriate. Creation of post of “tourism Ombudsman may be considered by the Tourism Departments of the State Governments and Union Territories.

8. **Enforcement**

- In case of threat or damage to health or personal integrity, foreign tourists must be able to seek protection from the concerned State enforcement agencies or indemnity through the courts.

- Given the significant economic contribution of tourism, State Governments should consider establishing special units within their enforcement agencies to deal with crimes against tourists at the most popular tourist destinations.

- State Government enforcement agency should be open to sharing the necessary information with the enforcement agency of the tourists’ economy of origin.

9. **Note on implementing the Guidelines**

The State Governments should consider practical and focused action to implement various provisions of the Guidelines with following considerations:

1. To implement Guideline 3, “Identifying and locating tourists in time of emergencies,” it is suggested the exchange of best practices/models for establishing online registered travel services.

2. To implement Guideline 4, “Government communications and inter-agency coordination,” it is urged the State Governments explore the feasibility of establishing a ‘State emergency contacts’ for tourism. This will probably
require designating a contact points in the State Tourism Administrations who may be responsible for:

- Verifying and circulating early warning information on any kind of emergencies which may affect both inbound and outbound tourists;

- Ensuring the accuracy and timeliness of travel advisories;

- Maintaining online communication channel in case of emergencies and assisting intra- and interagency communications;

- Address any other issues pertaining to information on tourist safety and security.

- The contact points within this network may be expected to maintain close coordination with the respective tourist business associations.

10. Conclusion:

Safety Guidelines are dynamic in nature and need to be modified based on ground realities. It is strongly recommended that every State Government/Union Territory should have a “Crisis Management Cell” comprising of major stakeholders.
Dear Traveller,

Namaste!

Welcome to Incredible India.

We hope you have a pleasant and enjoyable stay in our country. We have listed below some tips which would help in making your visit a memorable experience.

Before coming to India:

- Please get information about India through the India Tourism Office in your region or the Indian Missions or contact our website www.incredibleindia.org. You may also contact your local Travel Agent / Tour Operator.
- Please ensure that required Visa formalities and all travel documents are complete.
- Some areas in North and North-East India require special permits for travelling. Complete the necessary paper work to visit these places.
- Please ensure that your travel bookings are made through approved tour operators, travel agents and recognised websites. Please check our website www.incredibleindia.org, for more details.

Safety & Security of Tourists:

- While in India, purchase air/rail/bus tickets through authorised travel agents/tour operators only.
- It is advisable to hire transportation of any type from licensed operators only. The approved list of such operators is available on our website www.incredibleindia.org.
- In case of taxis and auto-rickshaws, it is advisable to hire them from the pre-paid booths, wherever available. Otherwise, insist on going by the meter. It is advisable to note the number of the taxi / auto rickshaw.
- It is safe to travel in India. It is, however advisable to take some precautions like avoiding isolated places and going out alone late in the night.
- Please avoid developing familiarity with strangers.
- Use public transportation / transportation hired from approved and licensed operators at all places. Do not take / accept lifts from strangers.
Clothing:

- Travel as light as possible. Clothing and laundry in India are both quite inexpensive.
- Some parts of India are still traditional and conservative. It is therefore advisable to dress appropriately.
- Dress codes for religious places can include covering your head, being barefoot etc. Check with the local tourism office or the concerned authorities.
- Make sure to pack some woollens if you are travelling to North India, in the winter months. It can get cold in the mountains even during summer.
- You may like to carry hats and dark glasses for protection against the sun.

Social Interaction:

- Being from a different country, chances are that you might attract some attention, especially in the smaller towns.

Toilets:

- It is advisable to use clean toilets available in places such as hotels and restaurants.

Beggars:

- Do not encourage them by giving money, etc..

Food and Drink:

- Drink only bottled water. Many popular brands are available. In restaurants insist that they bring a sealed bottle to your table.
- Check for expiry dates on the water bottles/ beverages.
- Freshly cooked food is advisable.
- It is advisable to eat non-vegetarian food only in good restaurants.
- Good quality vegetarian food is easily available at restaurants and hotels all over the country.
Shopping:

- Try to shop only in government handicraft shops, where the prices are fixed and the quality is certified. If that is not an option, check the prices at a few shops before making a choice. Bargaining is acceptable, particularly in markets and smaller shops.

- Insist on your credit card being swiped /imprinted in your presence in case payment is made by Credit. Please obtain a proper receipt for all purchases.

Tipping:

- In hotels and restaurants, tips are not normally included in the bill.
- Some hotels include service charges on their bills. In such cases tipping is not necessary.
- Tipping of taxi drivers is not customary.

Sightseeing:

- Some temples do not permit any leather articles at all on their premises.
- It is advisable to check local customs and traditions with the tourism office or concerned authorities, while visiting religious places.
- Many museums in India are closed on Mondays and Site Museums near archaeological monuments, on Fridays.
- The dry summer heat can drain you completely. Drink lots of water and fluids.
- During summer, remember to use sunscreen and wear sunglasses to screen out harmful rays.
- Photography is not always permissible. At many places it is permitted only at a fee. There is usually a higher fee for using a video camera.
- Smoking is not allowed at public places/Airports/ bus stations and public buildings. All properties of the Indian Railways including trains and railway stations are strictly non smoking zones.
- English is spoken at almost all tourist centres, but you can also hire Government-trained and approved guides who also speak foreign languages.

Others:

- Keep extra photocopies of the relevant pages of your passport and photographs. These will be required for permits, filling out forms, etc.
- Taxi and auto-rickshaw fares are liable to change and therefore do not always conform to readings on meters. Ask the taxi/auto rickshaw driver for the latest rate card and pay accordingly.

- Insist on the taxi/auto meter being flagged down in your presence and check the readings regularly to ensure that the fare is correct. In case there are no meters or the meters are dysfunctional, settle on the fare in advance.

- In cities you can change most major foreign currencies and brands of travellers' cheques. Most big cities have ATMs. The ATM network in the country is expanding and in some states, you can find them even in smaller towns.

- Emergency Tel. Nos.:
  - Police Control room: 100
  - Ambulance: 108
  - Fire: 101

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