

# Operational guidelines for rural tourism and homestays



Department of Tourism  
Government of Arunachal Pradesh



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# Introduction

Sadhana Deori, IAS Secretary, Department of Tourism,  
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Arunachal Pradesh is the largest of the eight north-eastern states of India. The state borders Bhutan to the west, China to the north, Myanmar to the east and the state of Assam to the south. The Himalayan range begins in Arunachal, rising from the Patkai and Mishmi Hills. Seven great rivers, namely the Dihing, Lohit, Dibang, Siang (referred to locally as the Brahmaputra), Subansiri, Kameng, and Tawang, flow through Arunachal Pradesh. These rivers are met by hundreds of rivulets, flowing from numerous valleys with lush primary forests of great variety – tropical semi evergreen, tropical wet evergreen, sub-tropical, pine, temperate, and alpine. These forests are home to some of most diverse mountain fauna in the world.

One of the most remarkable features of Arunachal Pradesh is its diverse population. Originating from different land-linked countries and states, the communities have over time developed their own distinct cultures and ways of life suited to the local environment. They have long been a self-sufficient society that can meet their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter using their own resources. It was not until 1897 that the British colonizers entered the region eyeing the rich natural resources and driven by anthropological interest. They stayed only two days at the time, making short visits in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1944, the first government outpost was set up and the Assam Rifles was stationed to protect it. The area of present-day Arunachal Pradesh formed a part of the Northeast Frontier Tract of Assam in the colonial period. In 1954 it became part of the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). Arunachal Pradesh became a Union Territory in 1972 and finally a State in 1987.

Our tourism initiatives in Arunachal Pradesh are geared towards conserving its rich history, culture and natural heritage. We seek to empower local communities to protect and promote these valuable assets. We will encourage both hosts and visitors to practice responsible tourism and to pursue modern development without giving up old sustainable ways of life. Working in partnership with communities, we seek to promote conservation approaches that use local knowledge and wisdom that has evolved over centuries.

# Conservation and tourism

Tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to conservation and socioeconomic development. Sustainable tourism is tourism that enhances the living standards of the host population, which in turn encourages more tourist 'guests' to visit each year, while also conserving the natural environment for the continued enjoyment of the hosts and guests. All of this requires careful management.

If nature-based solutions are to succeed, there must be a clear link between tourism development and the conservation of nature. Local people and the tourism industry need to appreciate the economic and intrinsic value of the protected area as a tourist destination. The goal is to attract visitors and use the revenues generated for local conservation and economic development. If the tourism industry is to compensate for the non-development of relatively pristine sites it will need to generate significant revenue for the benefit of those expected to sacrifice potential development gains. Further, tourism approaches should uphold principles of gender equity and social inclusion. Also required is a good strategy and plan that can help the government to develop and implement ecotourism friendly plans, policies, laws, rules and regulations.

Tourism could aid conservation in the following ways:

- Generating revenue that can be re-invested in conservation and ecological restoration
- Changing the prevailing commercial and regulatory conditions in favour of sustainable tourism development
- Improving the livelihoods of communities living in and around protected areas and biodiversity rich areas through wildlife and rural tourism
- Improving visitor management and education to raise conservation awareness and minimize the adverse impacts of tourism
- Generating support for the conservation of threatened species and habitats





# Why rural tourism

More than half the population of South Asia, in particular India, live in rural areas. Tourism can play a key role in reducing poverty in these areas. It has the potential to generate income for mountain communities, women and indigenous people. Tourism encompasses a wide range of enterprises, ranging from large-scale business to small cottage industries, and can provide jobs to many people. Recent trends in South Asia indicate that earnings from tourism have contributed to improving people's livelihoods. Tourism also has much potential for the economic empowerment of women as it is one industry where women's contributions are on par with men.

With its remarkable natural beauty, cultural diversity and rich history, Arunachal Pradesh has great potential for rural tourism. Arunachal is home to more than 26 major tribes and more than a hundred sub-tribes. Ways of life that date back centuries continue to thrive in certain parts of the state. In several remote areas, people still obtain their food, clothing and shelter directly from nature, or "backyard biodiversity"; they worship trees and rivers and have faith in "biodivinity". Rural tourism can help promote these distinct cultures, generate income for the local population, and improve the lives of the communities.

## What is rural tourism?

- Rural tourism is tourism based in rural areas
- It enables visitors to actively participate in the life of a village
- A key feature of rural tourism is homestay, a form of accommodation whereby a local family hosts travellers in their home

## Rural tourism activity should have the following characteristics

- It is located in rural areas – villages or small towns
- Tourists stay in small-scale traditional homes with local families
- Tourists engage with and show respect for local people and culture
- Tourists participate in local activities, such as farming operations or gathering wild edibles



# The homestay concept

Homestays are ideal for rural tourism. A homestay allows villagers to host their guests under their own roof and share their food, culture and lifestyle. As in most of South Asia, in Arunachal Pradesh the kitchen fire – or the hearth – is the central element of a traditional home. Family members and guests gather around the fire to relax, cook, chat and eat their meals. The fire not only keeps the place warm, it also keeps the house free of insects, reptiles and other smaller animals. The rural home is the creative outcome of strong backyard biodiversity, which is reflected in the traditional architecture and building materials sourced from the local environment. Daily meals in the villages still include foods gathered from nearby forests and rivers, which reflects the community's knowledge of sustainable use and management of resources. A homestay will allow the locals to earn an income while sharing these sustainable ways of life with the visitors.

However, most tourists come from urban backgrounds and are used to basic comforts like running water, a bed with mattress and a commode toilet. Therefore, while formulating the State Rural Tourism and Homestay Policy, we have tried to strike a balance between the traditional and the modern. Our goal is to allow visitors to experience village life while also having access to basic amenities.



# State policy on homestays

In the context of Arunachal Pradesh, a homestay is as an accommodation facility provided for visitors within an existing traditional private home owned by a local. The owner of the homestay should be residing in it and managing the operation. Any additions made for the convenience of visitors should be in line with the traditional design.

The state policy for homestays is reflected in the Guidelines for the Promotion of Homestays in Arunachal Pradesh. The state government recognizes the importance of homestays in promoting community-based tourism. The current guidelines have been revised to ensure that homestays with good services and facilities get registered under the Department of Tourism, Government of Arunachal Pradesh. The revised guidelines will allow tourists to get the most out of their homestay experience and help the Department to maintain the standard of homestays throughout the state.

The guidelines have been prepared to make the process of homestay registration simple and accessible to all, and to provide equal opportunity to the diverse communities in the state (see Annex). The main objectives of the guidelines are to:

- Bring direct economic benefits to local villagers in areas with high tourism potential in the remote parts of the state
- Ensure credible, consistent and uniform quality of services and facilities for visitors
- Reduce the negative impact of tourism on traditional culture and local environment
- Link tourism with the conservation of rich biological diversity of the state
- Empower the community to promote sustainable tourism for their own economic development
- Ensure that the government supports local villagers in the promotion of homestays



# Standard requirements

Homestay owners willing to operate must fulfill the standard requirements set by the Department of Tourism, Arunachal Pradesh.

The following processes and steps are involved in registering homestays:

- Consult with the local District Tourism Officer (DTO)
- Fill in the relevant form and submit all necessary documents along with the nominal registration fee to the DTO
- Follow up on the process with the DTO
- Get a Government-approved registration certification
- Register with the homestay owners group and reach out to authorized local and national tour operators (communicate through social media platforms such as WhatsApp)

## Homestay management : Basic requirements

Homestay owners must meet the basic requirements set by the Department of Tourism, Arunachal Pradesh. These requirements can help ensure that the hosts and guests both have a good experience, and that tourists will continue to visit the area.

### Type of house

A homestay should be opened in a traditional house that reflects local culture and architecture. A signboard should be placed in front of the house.



## Pre-arrival checklist

- Clearly communicate with visitors or tour operators about the exact location, arrival time, nearest landmark, and other details
- Confirm the number of guests (national or international) and drivers expected to stay and the number of nights
- Ensure that the rooms for guests, drivers and/or guides and the washrooms are clean
- Ensure that towels, toiletries, water jugs, dustbins and other basic items are in place
- Ensure that there is water supply in the rooms and that clean drinking water is available
- Note the food preferences of each guest (veg, non-veg, or vegan) and any dietary restrictions



## Arrival checklist

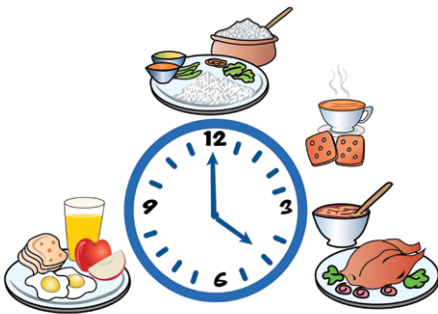
- Welcome guests according to local customs and traditions
- Keep the orientation short and precise
- Provide guests with the arrival form or register
- Give a tour of the house to help familiarize guests with the setting
- Always be warm and friendly with the guests
- Refrain from asking too many questions
- Respect the guests' privacy and preferences



## Post arrival checklist

### Food

- Remember the guests' food preferences and dietary requirements.
- Ensure that the food is well cooked and hygienic
- Serve three meals per day
- Serve meals in traditional style



### Safety and security

- Advise the guests to always close the door to their room
- Advise the guests to take responsibility for personal belongings
- Keep the number of the local hospital or doctor handy for a medical emergency





## Guest-host interactions

Introduce your family members to the guests

- Spend time with the guests and respond to their questions and comments
- Engage the guests in traditional activities such as weaving, harvesting, wet rice cultivation, and singing of traditional songs
- Share local costumes with guests



## Environmental sustainability

Homestays should take the following measures for environmental sustainability:

- Establish a proper waste management/disposal system
- Give priority to recycling – use recycling bins; buy recycled paper and use both sides; and, use cloth bags instead of plastic
- Use composting methods to manage household wet waste and improve soil quality
- Incorporate energy and water saving techniques into daily life and request the guests to do the same
- Use solar lights and solar energy as far as possible



# Record-keeping

Keeping good records is essential for any type of business. It is a way of creating a knowledge base to help the homestay business grow and develop. Homestay owners should keep a record of guests by maintaining a register and keeping a copy of the Inner Line Permit (for domestic tourists) and the Protected Area Permit (for foreign tourists). A sample of the register is provided below:

Name	Nationality	Last place visited	Inner Line Permit (for Indian nationals)
			Protected Area Permit (for foreign nationals)





# Gender responsible homestay tourism

It is important to involve women, minorities and local people in tourism enterprises in order to achieve economic, environmental and social development through tourism. The rural poor, women in particular, are often burdened with housework and face numerous social constraints. Homestays can be a means of empowering them; a homestay allows the women of the household to engage in a tourism enterprise and earn an income in their own home. Many homestays in rural areas are now managed by women. Women carry out all the responsibilities such as arranging accommodation, cooking and serving food, performing cultural activities, and guiding guests during sightseeing and trekking. They also run handicraft shops, souvenir stores and tea houses in their villages.

The success of rural tourism mainly depends on community participation including the active participation of women. The homestay guidelines therefore emphasize the following aspects of gender responsible tourism:

- Promote the meaningful participation of women in homestay tourism
- Promote equal access to opportunities in tourism for women
- Promote fair and equitable sharing of benefits from tourism
- Oppose gender-based exploitation and discrimination in the tourism sector
- Promote women's voices and leadership



# Homestay registration process

## Initial steps

All homestay promoters should register under the Department of Tourism after due recognition and recommendation by the deputy commissioner.

- Interested individuals should submit an application to their respective DTO along with supporting photographs for recommendation
- After receiving the application, the DTO and the Homestay committee members under the DTO will inspect the applicant's house and facilities being offered, and take a photo of the house
- As per the recommendation of the Homestay Board, the applicant will be informed about the status of their application. The applicant will then have to fill in a homestay form and submit it along with other relevant documents to the DTO
- A certificate of recognition may be issued initially for a period of one year by the Director of Tourism with prior approval of the Secretary of Tourism upon payment of the required amount via challan in favour of the Director of Tourism, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar to be deposited under the Head of Accounts, Arunachal Pradesh, 1452 –Tourism
- The certificate will be renewed each year following proper verification by the concerned authority
- A copy of the tourist arrival report and visitors' feedback is to be furnished by the homestay to the DTO's office on a quarterly basis for further submission to the Director of Tourism



## List of documents required

- A completed application form
- Scheduled Tribe or Permanent Resident Certificate
- Passport size photo – 3 copies
- Photos of the house, rooms, kitchen, bathroom and the surroundings
- Challan amount as per the categorization under Head of Account, 1452 Tourism
- Educational certificates
- Land possession certificate or allotment paper of the land

## Criteria for approval

The committee will approve the applicant's request to run a homestay based on the following criteria:

- The applicant is 18 years or older
- The location of the house
- The quality of the house and surrounding areas in terms of facilities and hygiene
- Accessibility and connectivity (distance from the highway/main road/link road and telephone, mobile network, internet, etc.)
- The committee also needs to ensure that the environment of the house and the neighbourhood is conducive for running a homestay

## Post registration

After getting registered under the Department of Tourism, the homestay owner has to do the following:

- Submit tourist arrival details to the DTO office
- Keep a record of the guests/tourists by maintaining a register and keeping a copy of the ILP (for Indian tourists) and PAP (for foreign tourists)
- Maintain a register for gathering feedback from visitors
- In case of change in contact details, inform the DTO in writing



# Annex

## Classification of homestays

Based on the facilities and quality of the accommodation provided and the total marks scored at the time of inspection, homestay units will be classified into three categories:

Homestay category	Appropriate fees
Class 'A' (Diamond House)	INR 3000 (per year)
Class 'B' (Gold House)	INR 2000 (per year)
Class 'C' (Silver House)	INR 1000 (per year)

## Re-registration process

Two years after the initial registration, a homestay owner can apply for re-registration for another two years.

- The DTO will inspect the homestay and assess its performance, and based on satisfactory results recommend it for renewal
- Homestay owners seeking re-registration must attach the details of the guests/tourists they have had along with copies of the tourists' PAPs/ILPs
- A certificate of recognition may be issued for another two years by the Director of Tourism with prior approval of the Secretary of Tourism upon payment of INR 3000, to be deposited under 'Head of Accounts, Arunachal Pradesh, 1452 – Tourism'. The certificate will be renewed every two years after proper verification by the concerned authority

## Homestay requirements

Facilities	Requirements
<b>Location</b>	
Sites	Of high tourist interest (biological and cultural richness, wildlife watching potential, etc.)
Ownership	Resident of village and staying in the house with family
Approach road	Clean and clear trail to homestay with proper signage
<b>Accommodation and facilities</b>	
Accommodation capacity	Not more than four rooms, accommodating not more than eight, including children below five years
Structure and design	Room should be within or adjoin the house of the owner and traditional in design/decor
Furnishing	Two beds with one table and two chairs in one room

Linen	Clean and comfortable mattresses, pillows, bedcovers, towels for each room
Drinking water	Boiled/filtered water and clean glasses
Lighting	Ideally alternative energy e.g., solar lamps with a candle and matchbox as a backup
Ventilation	Sufficient number of windows with ventilation in the room
Housekeeping	Bed covers, pillow covers and towels must be replaced after every four days and should be cleaned after the departure of the guests
Security	The room should have a proper lock and key
Waste management	A waste bin should be provided in the room and in the compound

## **Facilities**      **Requirements**

### **Host and guest interaction**

Reception of guest	One member of the house should be able to receive the guests and clearly orient them on available facilities, schedules of various activities, and local customs and traditions
Luggage pickup and drop-off service	There should be manpower in the house to assist the guests to carry their luggage from the roadhead to the house during arrival and departure
Interaction with guests	One member of the house should be able to interact with the guest – respond to questions, ask if they need anything, show them around, etc

### **Food and beverage**

Skill	One member of the house must be trained to cook decent quality meals.
Food items	Simple but nutritious meals with at least one traditional item should be provided in a hygienic manner
Serving of food	To be served in traditional style and preferably in traditional utensils maintaining high standards of hygiene

### **Toilet and bathroom**

Location	Separate or shared but not too far from the room. Should be well ventilated
Facility in toilet and bathroom	Indian/European style with a wash basin and adequate clean water. Hot water should be made available on request
Hygiene	Toilet should be cleaned regularly
Approach path	Must be clean and have clear signage, and should be properly lighted at night

### **Other facilities (optional)**

Air conditioning/ heating	
Internet	
Laundry	





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