

# Tourist Guides Federation of South India



(TGFSI)

® Reg No. 303/2007

TGFSI-KT-MIN-001/2024

21-09-2024

**Sri Muhammad Riyaz  
Minister for Tourism  
Kerala**

Dear Sir,

**Sub: Recommendations and Suggestions for improving the Tour guide services**

We take this opportunity to thank you for convening a meeting of tour guides working in Kerala.

Tourist Guides Federation of South India ( **TGFSI** ) , is the largest organization representing the Regional Level Tourist Guides ( IITG ) ,under the Ministry of Tourism in Southern region. Our members in Kerala include some of the most experienced tour guides in our country.

Apart from bringing up certain important issues faced by us, we also need to bring to your notice areas where we need further quality upgrading and better working conditions.

The relevance and need of qualified and professional tour guides are of utmost importance in the development of tourism in the world. Tourist guides are the key organ in connecting the visitor to the destinations through its their personal skills and knowledge. All major countries which are ranked high in tourism industry always ensure the quality, authenticity and dignity of tour guides in their country.

In our country also, the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, used to select and train tour guides under AMSAR ac of 1959. Understanding the importance of this profession in creating a better impression of our country

to its visitors, the Ministry used to keep high standards in issuing licenses to the tour guides in our country.

Changing trends in tourism globally is, from just do sightseeing tours to experiencing the destinations they visit, created the need of highly skilled tour guides. Understanding this demand many major tour operators in the world have started investing in identifying and training tour guides in those countries they send travelers. Even in India biggest group tour operators like M/S Gate1 Travel USA, Overseas Adventure travel, USA, SAGA holidays UK and many others have been doing this for last few years. In fact, it is due to the realization that the quality of tour guides they employ is what determines the future of business of those companies.

But with Indian tour companies, this change in trends have made very limited impact. Except for a few companies many of them still engage either no guides or someone who are not qualified in order to stay cheap in the market.

It is high time that we be more alert on changing global trends in tourism industry and update our resources accordingly.

We suggest the following initiatives to assess and upgrade the quality of tourism in our state.

1. **Recognition :-** Though both national and state level tour guides are produced by the respective ministries, there is no follow up action on getting feedback on how effectively the tour guides are functioning in the state. In fact, our tourism dept has no statistics on how many tour guides are working the state? how many tourists are handled by each guide? What salary do they get? How many tour operators use the services of recognized tour guides? Etc.
  - a. Being the only stake holder who are directly engaging with travelers and destinations, Tour guide representatives must be added to all tourism stakeholder's meetings organized by Kerala tourism.
  - b. We suggest Kerala tourism must ensure only approved tour guides are used in the state.
  - c. Tourism Police officers must be empowered to verify the Identity cards of tour guides in all destinations to avoid the travelers being misguided by the touts.
  - d. Keep a notice displayed in all tourist centers, airports etc informing the travelers to be vigilant, to engage only approved tour guides
  - e. Use always approved tour guides during the visits of dignitaries and other important people visiting our state.

- f. Approved tour guides must be allowed work inside all monuments in the state. For e.g. Kuthiramalika palace, does not permit a approved guide to take the tourist inside. They use their own staff. A tourist who already is assigned with a private guide, will have to wait until a group of visitors sufficient for the palace staff to start the tour. Often the visitor does not understand what the guide is given due to their lack of training, language skills etc.

2. **Quality upgradation program** :- It is highly important that the tour guides in a destination must be skilled to handle their visitors. Updating their skills in disseminating information, language skills, familiarity with new programs and destinations coming up new in the state must be updated to all tour guides periodically.

- a. There must be regular refresher programs, seminars on various tourism skills, products and destinations must be organized by Kerala tourism at major centers. People who are experienced and qualified must be engaged for doing this program
- b. There must be FAM tours and workshops conducted by all DTPCs for the tour guides in the state to educate and promote the tourism destinations in the respective districts.
- c. When we shift our marketing targets to new countries, tour guides skilled to speak those languages is very important. In fact, one of the major reasons why our marketing efforts to promote our destinations did not show results is the lack of language tour guides. Institute like KITTS must be asked to conduct language courses for tour guides regularly.

3. **Wages:** Tour guides wages in our country is presently decided by concerned associations of Tour operators and Tour guides. But this exercise is not legally binding majority of tour operators do not consider the agreement. Many times, tour guides will have to be at the mercy to accept whatever is given. Tour guiding is a profession which depends on seasonal demand. Every year the fluctuating chances of getting a reasonable no of days' work is extremely difficult.

- a. We request Kerala tourism must initiate a platform where the tour guide rates are fixed and at a benchmark fee is announced.
- b. Kerala tourism should create a portal for tour guides where every month they need to update the assignments done, details of the operator, no of tourists and the fee charged etc. This will enable the state tourism dept to get an account of tourism activities in the state.

4. **Tour Guides Insurance scheme:** - Tour guiding is a profession which needs extensive travel in all modes of transport. We have to do it as

part of our responsibility. It involves a lot of risks too. But Our lives are not covered under any insurance. Travelers, Vehicles they travel are all covered except the tour guide.

- a. In this scenario we request Kerala tourism to initiate an insurance coverage for all approved tour guides in the state.

We are also committed to the fact that the overall development of Tourism in our state is the key. We have the following suggestion to improve the quality of our tourism destinations

Tour guides are the most important contact for a traveler visiting a destination. Apart from learning and experiencing the place, they also leave their feedback in person to the tour guide first. It is important that we have a system to evaluate such feedback and use it for enhancing the quality of our destinations.

1. **Tourism Research and Product development:-** This is the key for a sustainable business model. If we look back since 1990s, apart from House boats, Ayurveda, no other product was created by Kerala. Unfortunately, we have not encouraged any kind of studies or research so far. It is highly important to collect field information, data of infrastructure, carrying capacity of the product or destination, requirement of trained manpower, socio-economic and ecological impact etc. But we don't have any facility or system to collect this. Though KITTS was started with this intention in 1989, the focus of this institution is only on academic programs.
  - a. KITTS must be converted as a Tourism Research station where data on all tourism activities are collected and made available for product developers in tourism.
  - b. A tourism resources library must be started in the state
  - c. Kerala is a destination with year-round festivals. but we are not able to produce a festival calendar for at least 5 years and must be updated every year.
2. **Tourist Facilitation:** - This is one of the most important factor which create an impression on a traveler when they visit. Kerala tourism had Tourist Information Centers at all airports, major railway stations etc. But almost all are closed these days. Many times, the staff employed do not have any enthusiasm to provide information or they don't have any training to do so. travelers were often given some brochures. Not even a good tourist map is there to offer.
  - a. Information centers must be opened where tourists are arriving. It must be open at least from 8 am to 8 pm.

- b. There must be trained staff who can speak at least English and Hindi
- c. There must be pamphlets of all the districts with destinations, activities etc.
- d. Information centers must act as booking centers for all tourism activities in the state. For e.g. Boat booking in Periyar. Many times a traveler during peak season time gets disappointed for not getting a boat ticket. This happens only after they travel and arrive there.
- e. Tour guides also can be considered at the information counters

We, the Tourist Guides Federation of South India (TGFSI), ensure our wholehearted co- operation and services in all your efforts in building Kerala tourism at greater heights

for TGFSI

JAYACHANDRAN V G

**President**

Mobile. 9447053698

Email. [president.tgfsi@gmail.com](mailto:president.tgfsi@gmail.com)

Valiayzhikam, TXP/XIV/452, Thekkecheri, Kanjaveli. P O, Kollam 691602

Telephone: +91-9447053698 Email: [president.tgfsi@gmail.com](mailto:president.tgfsi@gmail.com) /  
[secretary.tgfsi@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.tgfsi@gmail.com)