

Annexure 2.2

Detailed Recommendations for Managing Tourism in Ranthambhore National Park

- (1) ALL DIESEL VEHICLES to be BANNED.
Only CNG and petrol vehicles to be permitted.
- (2) BODAL GATE to be OPENED FOR TOURISTS.
This will deflect the increasing pressures, and help in providing some peace to the Park.
- (3) TOTAL CAPACITY of THE PARK
At present 35 vehicles, 20 Jeeps / Gypsies and 15 Canters are allowed in the existing 7 routes. After examining the various pros and cons it is the considered view of the committee to permit 40 vehicles over 7 routes suggested below. The vehicles to be allowed will be 16 registered Jeeps / Gypsies including 3 reserves, 12 private Jeeps / Gypsies and 12 Canters (small size, petrol or CNG with capacity of a maximum of 12 persons excluding driver and guide). The 12 Private 4x4 vehicles to be permitted on a first come first serve basis. It must be ensured that hotel owned vehicles and other local private vehicles do not misuse this facility.

AREAS FOR USE

No restrictive routes will be applicable any more. Seven valleys / areas should be opened and in each a vehicle is permitted for 4 HOURS in the morning and 4 HOURS in the evening. Bird-watchers can watch birds, animal-watchers animals, tree-watchers trees etc. etc. In the valley permitted there is full freedom to stop, see and watch except as far as tigers are concerned. When a tiger is found in the valley 3 vehicles can see it. When the 4th comes the 1st leaves. Forest personnel must monitor this system. All rules must be enforced by surprise checks.

- 1) Singh Dwar – Kachida – Anantpura - Bakaula
- 2) Singh Dwar - Jogi Mahal Gate – Padam Talao – Rajbagh (left) – Malik Talao – Lakarda – Semli and back
- 3) Singh Dwar – Sultanpur – Guda – Nalghati – Kemsakund
- 4) Singh Dwar – Nalghati – Rajbagh (right) – High point – Lakarda – top road – return
- 5) Guda – Lahpur – Gilai Sagar – Thumka – Berda – Lahpur - Guda
- 6) Bodal - Guda – Nalghati – Rajbagh – Malik Talao – Lakarda – Takia Kua – Singh Dwar and out
- 7) [SMALL ROUND] Singh Dwar – Khemsakund – Kamal Dhar – Padam Talao – Tamba Khan – Singh Dwar (Reserve)
- 8) Bodal – Guda - Lahpur Road – Indala – Lahpur - Bodal (Reserve)

In each of the seven areas vehicles are free to **move back forth** 2 kms or 20 kms (6-8 vehicles each) or more. All vehicles are locked into the area but can leave when they want within the prescribed time limit. An exact gate system to be worked out so that overlaps are minimal and no vehicle can escape from its designated area.

(5) IMPLEMENTATION

All gate and vehicle formalities, areas, tickets and forms etc. to be handled outside the Park entrance by Forest Department only.

(6) EXTRA STAFF

For tourism a minimum of 24 special staff with/ ACF and/ Ranger are required. Special training will have to be given to them in order to sensitize them and make them good enforcers of the rules.

(7) WALKING TRAILS

Permit and encourage bird-watchers, tree-lovers and others to go on specified guided walks in buffer areas including Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary or to forts or ruins since both history and natural history are rich in the area. This especially so for the outside, on the periphery. Places like Mansarovar Lake and other wetlands and river systems should form a part of the tourist trail.

(8) EXPERTS

On all Tourism issues consult independent experts – Do not use Ad-hoc means of creating rules. Keep rules with a consistency and do not change them every few months.

(9) GUIDES

6-month to 1-year training courses for guides are essential. Certificate after completion should be given by the Park Authority. Identity Cards etc. must be worn in the Park. The same must be true of all vehicle drivers.

(10) VEHICLE MANAGEMENT

- a. After areas are designated for all vehicles will carry a number or colour code to be easily checked that there are no area violations.
- b. 5 Routes are totally independent and 2 others have slight overlaps.

- c. Advance booking of all vehicles shall be made only after 15 days with full payment.
- d. It is compulsory to have a guide with each and every vehicle entering the Park.
- e. It must be ensured by park authority that tourists traveling in the vehicle are same as per the bookings. Responsibility shall rest with the guide as well as the booking/travel agent.

(11) DECEMBER 15 — JANUARY 15

The tourist inflow is maximum during the winter season mainly because of the influx of foreign tourists. It also coincides with local winter holidays. This heavy flow of tourists is putting a strain on the existing tourist facilities and there is an increased demand for more and more facilities. This increased rush and increased demand is misused by vested interests in taking undue advantage and exploiting the tourists. To discourage this heavy flow of tourists during these months we recommend that the entry fee to the tourists and the vehicle entry fee should be doubled and it is left to the discretion of the Field Director to increase the number of vehicles to accommodate the rush, and use the specified reserve routes/areas.

(12) PUNISHMENTS

To check the illegal activities like fake bookings, jumping off the allotted routes and any other illegal practices, strict deterrents must be in place. The erring vehicle should be banned for 15 days or fine of Rs.15,000 for first offence. Ban for one month or Rs. 30,000 for second offence. On the third offence the vehicle and the driver should be banned for ever from the Park. Guides will be held responsible totally in the case of private vehicles.

The route violations and any other are not possible without the connivance and tacit approval of the Nature Guide. Hence we recommend heavy penalty on the Guides too. Rs.2,000 or ban for one week, Rs. 5,000 or ban for one month and for the third violation a ban for ever from the Park.

(13) OTHER PLACES

Other tourism attractions like Khandar Fort, Rameshwar Ghat, Chambal River etc. should be popularized.

(14) ENCOURAGING LOCAL VILLAGE PEOPLE

Tourism is a thriving business in Sawai Madhopur town. As most of the hotels and other infrastructure facilities are situated within the city limits, the vehicles associated with tourism are mostly owned by the hoteliers and tour operators. Hence the tourism benefits are accrued to these business people. This results in no rural employment. Therefore a special preference should be given to village youth immediately adjacent to the Park to be registered for both taxis and for guides. Special incentives to create modest Bed & Breakfast facilities may also be encouraged for local villagers in order to engage them in tourism.

HOTELS

A haphazard development of hotels has been taking place around the immediate periphery of RNP. Much of the area from Sawai Madhopur town to Kotalpura village is now a line of hotels and there are many more trying to spring up. All this is mainly because of ad-hoc decisions taken at the end of the 1990s. Today the situation is chaotic. This committee therefore recommends till a policy for construction of hotels in the area is worked out by a committee of experts no further hotels should be permitted. It is equally important to undertake a study on the carrying capacity of the Park in order to create reliable information for understanding the “need or not” for any more hotels.

(15) CESS ON BED NIGHTS

A cess of 15% on the room rate only will be charged from all hotels in the 5-kilo metre radius of the National Park. This money will be divided equally between the Staff Welfare Society Fund and a Village Development Fund (to be set up).

(16) SPECIAL NOTE

Between July 1 and October 1 (when the RNP is closed) the Park management will use the vehicles of all owners registered with the Park as taxis for fire fighting, better protection and any necessary monitoring of the Park. This will be a voluntary donation of the vehicles by their owners for specified periods of time in order to strengthen the protection activity of the Park. Guides will also be taken on a voluntary basis during this period.

(17) TOURIST INTERPRETATION CENTRE

A Tourism Interpretation Centre is seriously lacking in Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve. It should be immediately created so that there is a greater understanding of the park, its ecology and its problems for the visitor. This centre should be bilingual and should cater to school going

and non school going children from all the villages that surround the park. This process will facilitate a greater awareness regarding the needs of this National Park, both to the visitor and the local villager.

(18) STAFF WELFARE SOCIETY

A Staff Welfare Society should be solely responsible for the sale of post cards, calendars, books and any other items that the visitor buys. The money that accrues from such sale can be used by the staff for medical facilities and in times of other emergencies.

(19) MEETINGS

Every 3 months the Park administration should hold meetings in order to update all those involved with tourism on the general state of affairs. This will prevent any 'non-inclusive' attitudes from developing.

This model plan has been prepared after the committee has made detailed assessment of other tourism models in different tiger reserves especially the Kanha Tiger Reserve where the rules are even more relaxed, than what have been suggested above.

Please note – Two of the members of the SEC were very keen to close tourism for two years in both STR and RTR in order to focus on the protection activities in and around the Reserves and revive the tiger population in both areas. But the Chairman, SEC persuaded them that in the interest of the local economy they should withdraw their view.