

Guideline For Hiking, Trekking, Nature and Heritage Walk

For Registration with Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority

Definition

- 1.1. Hiking** is defined as an activity moderately easy walk on a well-marked trail, usually half-day to one-day tours. The difficulty will vary from area to area and its terrain.
- 1.2. Trekking** is defined as a moderately difficult walk which is longer and contains more difficult terrain than hiking. These trips usually last two or more days.
- 1.3. Nature & Heritage Walk** is defined as a trail encompassing the exploration of nature and heritage areas with a guided explanation of the surroundings, the local ecology, and the history of the heritage.

Hiking, trekking, nature, and heritage walk may be carried out along private or public (state) owned land. There may be different in legal requirements, guidelines, and visitor facilities between both public & private lands. These treks and paths could be undertaken by embarking on the experiences of themselves, or will have to procure a qualified/ certified guide or an assigned “Trekker/Tracker”.

2. General Guidelines

2.1. Paths/Trails

- 2.1.1. A paths/trails shall be selected to give an opportunity to savour the natural scenic beauty in an area with good, unpolluted clean air.
- 2.1.2. A paths/trails shall in addition to the natural scenic beauty may have special places of interest (such as archeological, cultural and heritage sites) which would provide an added attraction.
- 2.1.3. A paths/trails and a hike may be combined with basic touristic activities such as; bird-watching, soft mild adventure, nature, cultural and heritage exploration etc.
- 2.1.4. The paths/trails may be located entirely in a privately owned area or in a public area or a combination of both.
- 2.1.5. Paths/trails may come-across or would have been established in public lands such as Forest Conservation Department (FCD), Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWLC), Irrigation Department (ID), Archaeological Department (AD) and Coast Conservation department (CCD) etc.
- 2.1.6. As some paths/trails could be sensitive bio-diversitically or geologically, obey the Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and existing rules and regulations of respective authorities.
- 2.1.7. The paths/trails for nature and heritage walk shall be clearly marked on a map, of suitable scale, sign, and signage boards, clearly indicated starting and ending points.
- 2.1.8. The service provider shall establish the availability of communication facilities (mobile

communication, radio communication etc.) along the planned paths/trails.

- 2.1.9. Possible choice of multiple paths/trails of varying degrees of difficulty and lasting for different time periods could be available for the potential hikers, trekkers and nature and heritage walkers to select from.

2.2. Paths/trails in privately owned lands

- 2.2.1. A clearly identified path shall be established with the required demarcations.
- 2.2.2. In case of walking paths, the ground along the path may be developed to provide a comfortable walking surface for the convenience of those who are not so young and will be more comfortable walking on fairly uniform surfaces.
- 2.2.3. The paths/trails surfaces needed to be practically possible, to retain the natural quality and shall be modified or improved where absolutely essential to ensure safety and convenience.
- 2.2.4. In case of walking paths surfaces improvement and signage setting-up, utilize natural stuffs (compacted gravel, lime, pebbles etc.) and avoid the use of artificial stuffs to the maximum level.
- 2.2.5. No go zones if any, identify and fix relevant signs whilst avoiding possible risk by arranging barriers. A second set of signage warning any person who willingly or unknowingly venture in to such area shall be placed at conspicuous positions not more than 50m from the established path.
- 2.2.6. Adequate clear path maps (overall map/zonal map) may be placed along the paths/trails to communicate the participants about the possible pathways which will facilitate getting the best use of the available paths/trails.

2.3. Paths/trails in Publicly (state) owned lands

- 2.3.1. The paths/trails may be established/utilized whilst all necessary approvals have been obtained from the respective authorities such as the Forest Department (FD), Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWLC), Irrigation Department (ID), Archaeology Department (AD) and Coast conservation department (CCD) etc.
- 2.3.2. Paths/trails in public property shall be established only with explicit approval of the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ).
- 2.3.3. All guidelines and directions provided by the AHJ shall be fully complied with during the setting up of the path and its subsequent use.
- 2.3.4. Minimal disturbance to the natural eco-systems shall be ensured during the utilization of the paths/trails.
- 2.3.5. Improvement to the walking surface along the pathway shall not be undertaken or carried out unless where absolutely essential. (Eg. Crossing muddy areas, small waterways, very

large gradients etc.)

- 2.3.6. Any such improvement shall be carried out using only naturally occurring materials in the area. Use of such material however is subject to approval by the AHJ.
- 2.3.7. Clear signage using naturally occurring materials shall be located in clearly visible but unobtrusive manner.
- 2.3.8. No go zones if any, identify and fix relevant signs whilst avoiding possible risk by arranging barriers. A second set of signage warning any person who willingly or unknowingly venture in to such area shall be placed at conspicuous positions not more than 50m from the established path.
- 2.3.9. Adequate clear path maps (overall map/zonal map) may be placed by Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) or may undertake with the supervision of AHJ along the paths/trails, to communicate the participants about the possible pathways which will facilitate getting the best use of the available paths/trails.

2.4. Services to be provided

- 2.4.1. A clear map of the hiking path with a list of 'Dos' and 'Don'ts' must be handed to each participant after explaining the content, this shall also contain a list of attractions that can be observed along the path and any rare and exotic fauna and flora.
- 2.4.2. A guide well versed in the locality, fauna and flora shall be available to be hired by the participants if they so desire.
- 2.4.3. Hiker, trekker, nature, and heritage walker particularly armatures and foreign guests shall be encouraged to obtain the services of a guide.
- 2.4.4. The use of a designated/assigned guide shall be made mandatory where the hiking path is located in a public area.
- 2.4.5. A pack of essentials including a bottle of water, a snack depending on the duration of the paths/trails, and basic first aid material must be given to all participants who obtain the services of a guide and to others who undertake the hike in consultation with the place of stays.
- 2.4.6. Service provider shall ensure the group/clients have adequate hydration and sustenance and/or provide accordingly.
- 2.4.7. All participants shall be clearly informed/communicated of the Leave No Trace (LNT) policy. A manned station at the entry and exit point will greatly assist in implementing the above.
- 2.4.8. The approximate distance and the time estimation shall be communicated to all participants before they undertake and commence.
- 2.4.9. In case of emergency, service provider shall be learned and aware the execution of relevant Procedure according to the contexts (incidents/accidents).

- 2.4.10. Participants shall be encouraged not to deviate from the established paths/trails for their own safety and for the wellbeing of the wildlife in the area.
- 2.4.11. Where the presence and confrontation of wildlife is possible on the paths/trails, all participants shall be well informed prior to undertaking of the paths/trails and the steps to be taken in the unlikely occurrence of such an incident.
- 2.4.12. Ensure the methodology shall in place to all persons who undertake the paths/trails returns safely back.
- 2.4.13. Hiker, trekker and nature and heritage walker shall be learned and aware execution of search and rescue operations at required context.
- 2.4.14. Participants shall be discouraged from undertaking the paths/trails alone and a minimum of two persons (buddy hiker) must be present for their own safety and security.
- 2.4.15. The service provider for hiking, trekking, nature, and heritage walk Tours shall have adequate number of staff trained on different paths/trails and knowledge and the skills of wilderness first aid and elementary first aid, lifesaving, survival techniques and terrain navigation etc.
- 2.4.16. Service provider shall obtain demographic details of the clients (participants) signed medical and indemnity form.
- 2.4.17. Service provider shall ensure public liability insurance, travel insurance and dully filled accident management report.
- 2.4.18. The service provider and staff shall have adequate professional training and experience.
- 2.4.19. It is desirable for the guide to have a relevant qualification (NVQ, SLITHM or any other accredited training body) and professional experiences.
- 2.4.20. All emergency contact numbers (such as hospital, doctors on call, police station, fire brigade rescue unit, armed forces, and relevant local authorities) of parties to be contacted in case of an emergency must be always available with the guide as well as at the communication base station.
- 2.4.21. All essential hiking, trekking equipment's and accessories shall be made available for the paths/trails hire by the well in advance.
- 2.4.22. Where overnight camping is required during the paths/trails shall be dully addressed.