

## **Standard Operating Procedure(SOP) for Tourism at North Cinque Island**

### **I. Background:**

The Wildlife Sanctuary does not have any human habitation and is covered by dense tropical wet evergreen and littoral/ mangrove forest near the coast supporting rich floral and faunal diversity. The Wildlife Sanctuary is very rich particularly in avian biodiversity and is having pristine forest untouched by human intervention.

The island is also bound by coral reefs which are the habitat of variety of fishes, corals and other marine fauna. A lighthouse is also situated on the Island, maintained by the Department of Lighthouse and Lightships. The island exists in two parts joined by a beautiful sandbar bound by sea on its both sides.

The Cinque Island Wildlife Sanctuary has an area of 9.53 sq km is situated in South Andaman District and had been declared as a Wildlife Sanctuary vide Notification No. 113-86/CF/WL/50-Vol. I dated 16.2.1987.

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is a detailed step by step procedure document designed to allow responsible tourism activity while ensuring visitors safety, environmental protection & operational efficiency in the North Cinque Island. The SOP shall be applicable throughout the year for operators to carry out responsible tourism activity, subject to clearance from the Port Authorities for plying of the vessels. The SOP outlines procedure for getting wildlife permit for vessels/ships, compliances which the stake holders shall follow. The operator shall brief all the visiting tourists of the details of SOP, on the way from Port Blair to North Cinque Island.

## **II.Purpose:**

The purpose of framing of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Cinque Island is to ensure that operations in terms of issuing wildlife permit, vessel/ship permit, vessel/ship tickets, ferrying of tourists, basic amenities and facilities, environmental protection & conservation/ waste management etc. are managed efficiently, safely and sustainably.

## **III.Terminology:**

- i. **“Administration”** means the Andaman & Nicobar Administration.
- ii. **“Forest Department”** means Forest Department of Andaman and Nicobar Administration.
- iii. **“Directorate of IP&T”** means Directorate of Information, Publicity and Tourism of Andaman and Nicobar Administration.
- iv. **“Avian Biodiversity”** means variety and variability of bird species in the Island.
- v. **“Wild Life Sanctuary”** means protected area notified through a gazette in this name and designated for the Conservation of Wildlife and their habitats.
- vi. **“Sand bar”** means submerged and partially exposed ridge of Island, gravel or other sediment that forms in a coastal area.
- vii. **“MS Act”** means Merchant Shipping Act” (vessels/ships registered under MS. Act).
- viii. **“Permit”** means an official document or authorization granted / issued by Forest Department (Regulatory authority) allowing to visit Cinque Island.
- ix. **“Tourist”** means a person or group of persons “visiting the destination for pleasure, adventure, water sports” from any part of India or outside India: Tourist also means a person who travels for pleasure or other reasons which:
  - a. In relation to a foreigner shall mean a person visiting Andaman and Nicobar Islands on a foreign passport, the purpose of whose journey is

leisure, recreation, business conferences, holidays, health, study, water sports, meeting; and

- b. In relation to domestic traveler shall mean a person who travels to Andaman and Nicobar Islands from outside Andaman and Nicobar Islands or within Andaman and Nicobar Islands to a place other than his usual place of residence and stays at the hotel or other accommodations, establishments (such as Tourist Bungalows, Guest Houses, Paying Guest Houses, Lodges, Youth Hostels) or such other places for the purpose of leisure, recreation, business conferences, holidays, health, study, water sports, meeting.
  
- x. **“Carrying Capacity”** means maximum number of visitors / tourists an area can accommodate at one time without causing environmental damage or reducing the quality of the visitors experience.
  
- xi. **“Prohibited”** means that something is formally or legally forbidden and not allowed under specific rules, regulations, or laws.
  
- xii. **“Organic waste”** means biodegradable materials derived from food scraps, other biodegradable.
  
- xiii. **“In-organic waste”** means substances/ materials that are not biodegradable.
  
- xiv. **“Operator”** means an individual/ firm/ organization/business entity having valid license / registration with statutory agency/ department to operate the ferry service having the vessels/boats/ship under given class which can sail to the Cinque Islands.
  
- xv. **“Amenities”** means the features, facilities or services provided to enhance comfort, convenience or enjoyment. This include physical facilities, services, utilities etc.

- xvi. **“Waste management”** means the collection, transportation, processing, recycling and disposal of waste materials.

**iv. Single Window System:** A Single Window System has been set up in the Directorate of IP&T (Ground floor) to issue requisite permit i.e Wildlife Sanctuary Permit and number of passengers which a vessel/ship operator will take to North Cinque Island for day tourism. The single window system is to be manned by officials of Forest Department and Directorate of Information and Publicity with the purpose to issue the permits to the operators and allocation of number of passengers to each Vessel/Ship totaling up to the allowed number of visitors in accordance with the given carrying capacity of visitors to the Cinque Island.

The Single Window System will function from 08:30 AM to 05:00 PM (01:00 PM to 01:30 PM lunch break) during all 07 days in a week. The Wildlife Sanctuary permit fee shall be Rs 100/- per person (for Indians-i.e. 12 years and above) and for foreigners it is Rs.1000/- per person(adult)& Rs. 500/-per person (for children below 12 years). **Annexure A1& A2.**

All requisite permits and allocation of total number of passengers to be carried by each boat / vessel/ ship for ferrying tourists to visit Cinque Island will be issued from the Single Window System. **Annexure B.**

The operators who intend to operate such vessels/ship shall apply 3 days in advance with details of passengers to the Single Window System for obtaining the requisite permit and the allocation of number of passengers to be carried by each Vessel/ship. The number of passengers allocated to each Vessel/Ship shall be done on the basis of first come first serve basis and will be capped at a total number of 372 passengers for maximum Four MS Class Category VI Vessels/ships with minimum passenger capacity of 100 each having total of 14 officers plus crew members (6 officers plus 8 crew)for each vessel/ship totaling 56 officers and crew members. In case of larger vessels/ships with larger capacity for carrying passengers the number of Officers shall be minimum 6 per vessel/ship plus varying crew members, however the total

number of passengers being taken to North Cinque Island in more than one vessel/ ship not exceeding three vessels/ship shall be capped at 372.

- **Foreign Nationals:** Foreign Nationals intending to visit the Cinque Island Wildlife Sanctuary must apply online as per the A&N Gazette Notification No.38 dated 29.11.2022. These tourists can then book their tickets on the boat/ ferry which has adequate number of allocated seats for the visitors to the Cinque Island. Link of the same has been provided on Website of the Forest Department, Andaman and Nicobar Administration.

**v.Carrying Capacity & Timings:** The carrying capacity of maximum 372 person/ tourist have been determined on a daily basis from 08:30 AM to 04:00 PM, for 07 days a week.

**vi.Vessel/Ship Permission:**

- Only certified/ registered MS Class Vessel shall be allowed to operate regular ferry services to and from the Island.
- Vessel Permission shall be issued to appropriate class of ship for operating on payment of the required fee.
- Provide safety briefings to tourist before departure, emphasizing emergency procedures and other regulations/ compliances etc.

**vii.Safety Measures:**

- a. Visible signage indicating emergency contact persons on the Island, there designated place of deployment and other relevant information, keeping in view of safety as a priority shall be put on by Forest Department.
- b. No Go Zones shall be clearly specified by the Forest Department on the Island.
- c. These signage shall be made of eco-friendly material preferably wood.

- d. Forest Department would assign staff to monitor tourist activities and enforce guidelines.
- e. Directorate of IP&T shall deploy adequate number of life guards in consultation with the Forest Department.
- f. Safety of the visitors from any fatal accidents shall be the sole responsibility of the operator and the operator shall indemnify the visitors for the same.

**VIII. Conditions for Vessel/Ship Operators:**

- a. All Vessels/Ships are prohibited from traveling at speeds exceeding 3 knots per hour when near shorelines, coral reefs, mangroves, diving areas, or any other area specified by Authority.
- b. Vessels/Ships operators must arrange their own small boats or dinghies to transport tourists from the mother vessel to the island.
- c. Vessels/Ships operator must take back ALL organic or inorganic waste generated on the island.
- d. Vessels/Ships operator must have facilities for first aid medical care for tourists. The operators will be squarely responsible for all medical needs of their tourists.
- e. The Vessels/Ships operator must bring back, the number of sack given to every operator at Port Blair depending on the number of passengers they are carrying. The operator must deposit all the sacks of marine plastic gathered from the island at designated DRC at their own cost on every trip to the Island as part of conservation responsibility.

**IX. Permitted Activities:**

- a. The operators can organize snorkeling and scuba diving activities in and around the Cinque Island at Dive Spot ear marked by the Directorate of IP&T.
- b. The operators can organize activities like beach volley ball, beach hand ball, beach soccer and kayaking in designated areas defined by the Directorate of IP&T.
- c. The operators can organize painting and photography workshops.

- d. The operator can organize guided tours of the Cinque Islands to educate the visitors about local ecosystem and conservation efforts.
- e. The operator can organize guided tours of the Cinque Islands for bird watching activities.
- f. The operator can organize regular clean up events by plogging and beach combing activities involving tourists in preserving the beach/sand bars.
- g. The operator can organize workshops about importance of protecting fragile ecosystem.
- h. Any other activities which do not impact on the ecologically fragile environment of the Cinque Islands in any manner after taking necessary permission from the Forest Department.

**x. Prohibited Items and Activities:**

- a. Firearms, lighters or any inflammable items which may cause fire in the forest is not allowed.
- b. Setting or leaving any fire burning in the island is strictly forbidden.
- c. Hunting, trapping or removing any wild animals and birds is prohibited.
- d. Using chemicals, explosives or any substances that could affect wildlife is prohibited.
- e. Use of loud sound system will not be allowed.
- f. Visitors are not allowed to carry Pet animals.
- g. Feeding animals in the island is prohibited.
- h. Littering is not permitted inside the Sanctuary.
- i. All clauses of Wildlife Protection Act and associated rules are to be strictly adhered to.
- j. Keep noise to a minimum to respect other tourists and local wildlife.
- k. No camping facilities in the sanctuary is allowed.
- l. Tourists are advised to take back any organic/inorganic waste generated.

## **XI.Amenities and facilities:**

- a. Sun lounge/Beach Chair, Beach Mats, Beach Umbrella, Towels, Reusable water bottle, Beach Bags (Jute/Cloth) etc. will be made available for tourist on payment basis.
- b. Lifeguard will be deployed on the Island for safety of tourists.
- c. Tourist Guide shall be provided at the Island who can brief about Biodiversity and its conservation aspects of the Island.
- d. Due to the scarcity of water in the Sanctuary, Vessels/Ships operators must make their arrangements for water and other basic amenities.
- e. Food if required by tourists must be arranged by Vessels/Ships operators themselves.
- f. Food may be served at the Island but ALL leftovers must be strictly brought back by the operators.

## **XII.Do's and Dont's:**

- a. Avoid accidental damage to the corals
- b. Don't walk on the coral beds.
- c. Don't chase the marine animals, as it may startle them.
- d. Don't use harsh chemical lotion while into water as it may affect the ecology.
- e. Movement of Tourists shall be within the designated areas.
- f. Supervise children: Ensure that children are always supervised by an adult.

## **XIII. Monitoring Mechanism:**

- a. A committee Chaired by Secretary, IP&T, with DFO Wild Life, Concerned DFO South Andaman Division, Chief Port Administrator, Director Shipping Services, Representative of Secretary PBMC shall monitor the tourism activity on a monthly basis and ensure compliance of the SOP.
- b. The committee shall submit quarterly report to Commissioner-cum-Secretary IP&T and PCCF for perusal and intervention.
- c. In the circumstance of any operator violating the provisions of SOP, the



operator will be penalized with a fine of Rs 10000/- for first offence, in the eventuality of second offence the penalty of Rs 30000/- shall be imposed. If the same operator continues to violate the provisions of SOP the permit to the operator will be suspended for next 90 Days of the current operating season.

- d. In the circumstance of any visitor violating the provisions of SOP, the visitor shall be penalized with a fine of Rs 1000/- per violation. In case the visitor refuses to pay the penalty, the same will be charged from the operator.
- e. The money shall be deposited in the account of Forest Department to be used for conservation purposes in the Cinque Islands.
- f. The committee shall also look into the proper levying of the penalties and utilization of the fund so collected for conservation purpose.

#### **xiv.Waste Management:**

Littering is not permitted inside the Sanctuary, the operator and the visitors shall adhere to “leave no trace principle” and every Vessels/Ships going to Cinque Island shall collect and carry back the drifted sea waste on the Islands and deposit it at a designated Port Blair Municipal Council, DRC for proper waste management. Each Vessels/Ships visiting the North Cinque Island shall bring back at least 8 sacks of marine plastic and other waste measuring a minimum of 40 Kgs of solid waste per trip.

#### **xv.Review and Revision:**

The above mentioned SOP will be reviewed and updated as and when required basis.

#### **xvi.Feedback mechanism:**

An online feedback mechanism be put in place and collect data from tourist / customers/ stakeholders to analyses and act upon to improve services, processes etc. This will help enhance the visitor experience, address issues, and ensure continuous improvement.

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