

Kerala Tourism - Camping Guidelines

Part I

Camping - Guidelines

Camping is so much more than sleeping in tents. It's a way to rejuvenate your connection to the outdoors, a chance to stay away from concrete jungle and experience the mother nature at its best. The camping has to be safe and secure so that the visitors have a hassle free environment and there by enjoying the activity.

To achieve this goal, a guideline needs to be formulated and must be followed for a secure camping experience. The guidelines are applicable to camping organized by private parties on commercial basis and individuals for recreational purpose. The objective of the guideline is to ensure safety, promote quality and upgraded facilities in camping and its sites.

1. General guidelines

- The Camping organizer must be a registered firm. It shall be a company / society / proprietorship / partnership etc with a registered address and **GST registration**
- The Camp Organizer has to apply for No Objection Certificate (NOC) from Local Self Government Department (LSGD) to operate the camping

The following documents must be submitted to obtain NOC from LSG Department

1. Application for No Objection Certificate
2. Copy of the registration of the firm / organizer
3. Copy of Land Ownership Certificate
 - a) If camping conducts in own land – latest land tax receipt
 - b) If camping conducts in Lease/rented site – copy of lease/rent agreement

4. Site plan of the camping site with clear marking of the boundaries
5. Self affidavit certifying the implementation of the safety measures prescribed in the Safety guidelines

Upon submitting the document, LSG Department gives an acknowledgement receipt for the application and allow the camp organizer to operate the camp for a period of 2 months.

After getting the acknowledgement receipt, the camp organizer must apply for the registration with Tourism Department. The Expert committee shall visit the camping site for the verification. During the site visit, one representative from LSG Department may join the inspection team to verify that the camp organizer follows the safety norms furnished in the Safety Guidelines issued by the Department of Tourism and accordingly they can issue definite NOC.

- The Establishment must have Public Liability Insurance Coverage
- The camping site must have toilets within the premises of the camp site. The camping site must operate with proper waste management system and follow green protocol
- Permanent camping site must have dining area, wash room, luggage storing space, first aid treatment area , covered hygienic kitchen with storage of all groceries, vegetables, meat etc
- The camp site must ensure the availability of clean water and safety lighting (electricity or conventional means)
- For overnight camping , the maximum capacity of the campsite will be decided based on the actual number of tents available and its specifications
- While camping, it is mandatory to respect nature and other people's privacy. Noise should be kept to a minimum, especially at night. Adequate lighting should be provided to ensure safety and convenience, but care should be taken to ensure there is minimum disturbance to neighbours and wildlife because of the lights.

- Encourage local community to be the part of the camping so that they are more aware of the camp surroundings and its conditions.
- The camp organizer must strictly comply with the safety protocol issued by the State Health Department

2. Camping site

It is important to identify a suitable camping site which is ideal for erecting permanent tents and pitching portable tents. For a safety camping, ensure that the camping site is free of potential danger. The following conditions are to be strictly observed while choosing a camping site

2.1. If the Camping is in the vicinity of forest boundary or places where wild animal's presence is expected –

- The site must be studied properly so as to identify (and avoid) wildlife trails to water sources within the camping site, if any.
- Tents must not be pitched along wildlife trails, such as elephant paths
- Desirable to place tent atleast 10 metres from the forest boundary.
- The area between the forest boundary and the camping area must be clear of weeds and bush for proper sighting
- Camps adjoining the forest must maintain 24x7 vigil. Staff must take turns for watcher duty so that there is always a lookout for wild animal incursion. Watchers must be equipped with strong flash lights.
- The camp site should have a warning system for alerting others in case of wild animal incursion
- Proper fire line must be made between the forest boundary and the camping area. The fireline must be atleast 5m wide adjacent to treeline, atleast 10m if it is next to grassland and atleast 20m if it is next to bamboo thickets.
- Tents must be pitched so as to take advantage of natural/in-situ protections (such as a rock face) or a stream, or a small bridge.

- Every campsite must have at least one enclosed, lockable, easily accessible, pucca structure which offers dry and safe shelter (like a storage shed at minimum), where guests can take refuge in case of an emergency
- As far as possible, the campsite must be cleared of fruits and other items which attract wild animals. Examples include ripe jackfruit and fishtail palms which elephants adore.

2.2. Beach – tents must be at least 100 feet away from beach. During high tide times, the camp organizer must ensure that they are placed at safe distance of minimum of 150 feet.

2.3. Cliffs & hill tops – If the edge of the cliff is not protected with safe fencing, tents must be 200 feet away from the danger zone / edge of the cliff. It should not be kept on the open space on hill tops which would be prone to lightning and heavy winds

2.4. Water sources for drinking purpose – tents must be placed 200 feet away from the water source for human purpose

2.5. Rivers with potential danger of flash flood – 100 metres from the river boundary (applicable during rainy season as well as at times when there is warning by the disaster management authorities of potential threat of torrential flow of water)

2.6. Areas with potential danger of land slide - 200 metres (during rainy season the camp should not function / operate at times when there is warning by the disaster management authorities)

2.7 Campsite should not be under or next to large rocks with chance of rock-falling

2.8 It is advisable to avoid pitching tents under or less than 50 feet from High Tension (HT) wires. Campsites under a HT wire should not have any structure more than 14 feet high.

Important: It must be noted that if any specific restriction/ specification issued by Government are in place, those must be strictly followed in addition to the above guidelines

3. Specifications for tents

For a safe & secure camping, please ensure

- All Camp equipment including tents , sleeping bags, ground sheets and liners should be of good quality and should be well maintained
- All Equipment should be disinfected, washed and dried under sun after each usage.
- Number of persons allotted in each tent must be the same or less than its specified capacity
- It is desirable to place tents on a designated elevated platform/plinth. There should be adequate space between the platforms. The passage between the platforms and to common areas should be clear and safe for easy movement.
- Tents that are pitched directly on the ground (i.e. without a plinth) must be sealed on the bottom and sides, with a working zipper on the doorway. It should be possible to seal off the interior of the tent so as to prevent ingress of creepy-crawlies such as scorpions, snakes or spiders.

4. Special safety requirements for water camping (Floating tents)

Floating tents is a form of inflatable raft that allows to camp on water. It is getting popularity across the globe. Unlike conventional tents, its inflatable structure pops up easily without the need for any poles.

- Floating tents must be restrained by one or more tethers attached to the ground and so it cannot float freely.
- The depth of the water in which the tent is floating must not exceed 2 metre
- The tent should be in good condition, Waterproof and wind-resistant
- There should be safe & ease Embarkation/disembarkation arrangement
- Guests who have consumed alcohol (in any form or quantity) should not be allowed to use floating tent
- The buoyancy aids must be available in sufficient numbers and different sizes.

- Floating tents must not be placed in flowing rivers or rivers with chance of flash flood
- Floating tents should not be used in flowing water bodies during monsoon season and at time of heavy rain and wind
- The water camping organizers must pay attention on weather bulletins and guidelines issued by meteorological department / disaster management authorities

5. Camping at Rural Village & interior locations – Camping at rural village is becoming popular these days. So a clear guideline is required. The following guidelines can be adopted in camping at rural areas

- The camp site must ensure the availability of clean water and safety lighting (electricity or conventional means)
- While camping, it is mandatory to respect nature and other people's privacy.
- Noise should be kept to a minimum, especially at night. Adequate lighting should be provided to ensure safety and convenience, but care should be taken to ensure there is minimum disturbance to neighbours and local people
- Sustainable and eco friendly waste management policy must be adopted
- The camp site must be kept clean and tidy. The camping site must be provided with an adequate and safe method of sewage collection, treatment and disposal
- All waste matter originating from the camp / sites must be handled in a manner so as not to create any offence, hazard to health and environment, nor permit possible fly/ mosquito breeding.

6. Personnel requirement

- There should be at least one Team leader / camp-in-charge with at least 2 years of experience in conducting tented camps
- Atleast one Activity leader should possess a valid First Aid certificate with atleast one year of experience. Other support staff shall undergo First aid training (in-house or external)

- The Team leader in particular and all staff must be aware of the flora and fauna of the surroundings , especially the presence of the wild animals surrounding the camp site
- The camp must maintain a minimum of 1:10 ratio (staff to guests), with a minimum of 2 staff. For camping site in the vicinity of forest , a 1:6 ratio (staff to guests), with a minimum of 3 staff
- The Team leader in particular and all staff must be aware of the flora and fauna of the surroundings , especially the presence of the wild animals surrounding the camp site
- Camps adjoining the forest must maintain 24x7 vigil. Staff must take turns for watcher duty so that there is always a lookout for wild animal incursion. Watchers must be equipped with strong flash lights. The camp site should have a warning system for alerting others in case of wild animal incursion
- The staff should be well groomed

7. Food safety at the camps–

Cooking at camping site is inevitable. However proper safety measures to be adopted in preparing the food and ensuring quality.

- The core messages of the Five Keys to Safer Food by World Health Organization (WHO) are to be followed at the camp site: (1) keep clean; (2) separate raw and cooked; (3) cook thoroughly; (4) keep food at safe temperatures; and (5) use safe water and raw materials.
- Do not make fire to cook food inside the tent.

8. SOP's and operating instructions

Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) must be followed and briefed to all participants.

- Safety Instructions are properly displayed in a board at the camp site
- Comprehensive list of Do's and Don'ts should be displayed in all prominent areas within the camping site. The campsite and tents

should be thoroughly checked for snakes, scorpions, spiders etc. before every guest check in

- Briefing: Prior to check in / pitching tents, the Team leader must brief guests on the following
 - Facilities and infrastructure at the camping site like reception, washroom, dining area, medical facilities etc.
 - Weather/climate briefing: The Team leader must brief on weather and climate condition like expected heat/ cold/ rain etc.
 - If the camp is in the vicinity of beach / water bodies, mountain etc. then briefing must be done on potential risk of waves, flood , lightning etc
 - Briefing must include emergency situation procedures, and safe assembly point
 - If the camp is in the vicinity of forest or potential areas with the presence of wild animal, the briefing must be done on the following
 - ✓ Wild animals are unpredictable. Venturing too close to any animal is dangerous.
 - ✓ Participants should not roam around the camp surroundings at night
 - ✓ Mothers among wild animals with young ones are easily provoked.
 - ✓ Use of flash can anger even the most docile animals.
 - ✓ Feeding of animals is prohibited. However certain animals can attack even on realising the existence of food. Eg monkeys and langoors can snatch food.
 - ✓ Handling snakes is dangerous
 - ✓ Noise disturbs animals and may provoke them
 - ✓ Guests must also be briefed about any possibility of animal encounters, and the actions to be taken in case of such an

encounter. This includes encounters with large mammals, such as elephants, and also other incidents such as bee stings.

9. Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and risk mitigation

- A risk assessment study should be conducted and documented
- An Emergency Action Plan (EAP) must be prepared and regular training imparted to the staff for the same.
- In case of emergency, like animal attack, flood etc, evacuation routes and Emergency Action procedures (EAP) must also be prepared and documented. The camp organizer must produce the EAP on demand by authorities.
- The EAP should include procedure for guests to evacuate their tents and assemble peacefully in the pucca structure, in case of wild animal incursion into the camp site.
- A proper weather forecasting system to be followed
- Accident data analysis to be prepared and documented

10. Fire Restrictions:

- Before pitching the camp, ensure that the camping area is not under any sort of fire ban by the government authorities.
- Even without fire ban, adequate fire protection must be ensured.
- Ensure that the area is clear of any debris and away from low-hanging branches before starting any fire
- Campfire Area – There should be designated area for campfire with a fire pit or fire ring. The campfire area should be at least 6 meters away from the tents or any inflammable objects
- There should be a fire point in the camping premises where Fire fighting equipments like extinguishers must be available always.
- There should be atleast 1 full bucket (atleast 15 litres capacity) of water less than 10 feet from the fire
- The campfire must not be more than 6 feet in diameter at most. It is advisable to keep the campfire as small as safely possible
- In campsites adjoining the forest, it is advisable to keep the fire burning throughout the night, with constant supervision
- Do not leave the fire unattended until it has gone out completely

- Burning of biodegradable waste/toxic waste is not permitted at camping site
- Before leaving the camp permanently or temporarily, make sure that the fire is put out.
- Fire extinguishers must be available at camping sites.
- Do not make fire to cook food inside the tent.

11. Medical facilities

- There should be a first aid kit with enough (unexpired) supplies of emergency medical supplies like
Band-aid (plaster), sterile gauze dressings, sufficient cotton, sticky tape, disposable sterile gloves, pain relief spray (e.g. Volini), dettol or similar anti-diarrhea tablets etc.,
- At least one staff must possess a valid First Aid Certificate, with at least one year of experience
- The AAP must have the contact list of the nearest hospitals, doctors, ambulance providers and medical facilities at all times

12. Waste disposal

- Sustainable and eco friendly waste management policy must be adopted
- The Camp Organizer shall always follow “Green protocol” and “Leave no trace” policy
- The camp site must be kept clean and tidy. There should be sufficient waste bins and provision of facility for segregation of garbage into biodegradable (kitchen waste etc), non-biodegradable (thermo coal products, aluminum foil, cigarette butts etc) & recyclable (newspapers, bottles, cans etc).
- The camping site must be provided with an adequate and safe method of sewage collection, treatment and disposal
- Encourage the use of eco-friendly practices and local products
- All waste matter originating from the camp / sites must be handled in a manner so as not to create any offence, hazard to

health and environment, nor permit possible fly/ mosquito breeding.

- Under no circumstances should any waste be let into water sources such as streams or rivers
- If the tents are pitched in a Non regular camp site without permanent toilet facilities, then avoid pitching a toilet tent or digging a hole near your campsite. For the sake of hygiene, dig the hole more than 50 m away from the water source (river or pond), and the tent. The hole should be 6-inches deep to keep the decomposition of faecal matter at an optimum place. Make sure you throw off the used toilet paper into hole, and cover it with stray leaves and soil once the business is over.

13. Documentation

All Camp organizers must possess the following documents and must be able to present upon demand by the authorities

- Details of team leader and all staff including copies of certifications and experience
- Copies of all Permits , NOC from competent authorities
- Copies of Insurance coverage
- Copy of Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) , Camp layout and fire exit plan
- Current list of emergency contact numbers and medical facilities
- Name and address of guests
- Clearly marked complaint / feedback register should be available at all times
- Feedback from guests to be collected and communicated to KATPS. Camp organizer must exhibit a display board of the major requirements in the safety guidelines and stating that those are followed in the camping site. The board should be visible prominently and with a minimum size of A3 sheet. (12x16.5). It is desirable to provide a QR scanner in camping area so as to reach the feedback directly to KATPS
- Accident data analysis to be prepared

Part II

Registration Procedure for camping

All prospective Tent Camp organizers must be registered with Department of Tourism, Govt of Kerala for conducting Tent camping on commercial basis

Before applying online, the applicant has to get the acknowledgment receipt for the application of NOC from Local Self Government Departments to conduct the camping.

1. Submission of Online Application Form for camping

All applicants can submit online at the following website

www.keralaadventure.org

<https://www.keralatourism.org/business/>

Ensure digital copies of the following documents are available prior to applying

Sl No	Particular	Remark
1	No Objection Certificate	Acknowledgment receipt for NOC from LSG Department
2	Registration copy	Registration copy of the firm- Company/Society/Proprietorship/Partnership/others
3	GST Registration	GST Registration copy of the firm (if available)
4	Ownership/ Lease of the site	If tents are erected in own land – latest land tax receipt
		If tents are erected in Lease/rented site – copy of lease/rent agreement
5	Qualification / Experience	Certificate showing qualification / experience of the employees
6	Insurance	Copy of adequate Insurance coverage for participants & employees
7	First-aid training certificate	First Aid & CPR training Certificate (One third of the employees)

2. Verification

Upon submitting the application along with necessary documents, KATPS will verify the documents. Once the application form and documents are found satisfactory, an “Expert committee” formed at **district level by the Department of Tourism** will inspect the camp site and submit an online report to the Director, Dept of Tourism for registering the camp site through KATPS. The Director, Tourism can approve or deny or ask for further evaluation of the application based on the report of the Expert Committee.

3. Expert Committee

The Expert Committee refers to the Committee approved by the Director, Department of Tourism formed at state level for evaluating adventure activities proposed by the applicants.

The structure of the Expert Committee as follows:

1	Chairman	Deputy Director , District Office, Department of Tourism
2	Convener	Secretary, District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC)
3	Member	Representative of Kerala Adventure Tourism Promotion Society (KATPS)
4	Member	Technical Expert

Technical Expert: The Director, Tourism may nominate a person as Technical Expert to join the Expert Committee. The Director may choose a person listed in the “Expert Committee panel” approved by the Government for inspecting adventure tourism activities (As per GO (Rt) No. 19/2012/TSM dated 23/01/2021)

The Expert committee will ensure that the site inspection report preparation and submission is completed within 30 days from the date of receiving the online application. The Expert committee will submit an online report to the Director, Dept of Tourism for registering or denial.

Director, Department of Tourism reserves the right to deny the registration of the applicant if the Tent camp organizer does not comply with the safety measures as specified in the “Tented Camping Guidelines” published by Department of Tourism. In such case the application fee paid for registration will not be refunded

4. Validity of Registration

The registration is valid for 2 years. On expiry of the registration period, the camp organizer must renew the registration for next two years. The application for renewal must be submitted atleast 45 days before the expiry of the current registration period.

5. Appellate Authority

Applicants not satisfied with the response of the KATPS, may write to the Appellate Authority. The Appellate Authority will be the Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala

The applicant may approach the Appellate Authority in the following situations:

- In case of No response : Information not received within 40 days of the date of filing of the application
- In case of denial

6. Grievance Redressal Procedure

The below is the procedure for any grievance redressal:

Applicant first write to Chief Executive Officer, Kerala Adventure Tourism Promotion Society (KATPS) and KATPS assigns a Reference Number to the applicant when he registers his/her Grievance

If the applicant is not satisfied with the response of KATPS, he may appeal with Appellate Authority quoting the Reference Number

7. Penalty and Procedures

7.1. Random Inspection

The Chief Executive Officer of KATPS or Secretary, DTTC or a person designated by the Director – Department of Tourism reserves the right to inspect the safety aspects of the tented camp and the equipments used at any time without prior notice.

7.2. Grounds for penalty:

Any Adventure Activity Provider

- a. Who causes harm/injury/death to a tourist/general public/third party on account of their actions/ irresponsible behaviour/negligence or the activities being operated in unfit condition etc.
- b. Not complying with the norms of operation or violating prescribed safety standard
- c. With adverse report on police verification of the camp organizer and staff employed

7.3. Penalty

The errant Operator shall be, based on gravity of deviation shall be suspended for a period of one week for a first violation or willful default of Adventure Activity Based Tourism Guidelines. If prima facie, there is subsequent violation or willful default of Tented camping Guidelines, his/her Registration may be suspended for such period as deemed fit by the Chief Executive Officer, Kerala Adventure Tourism Promotion Society (KATPS).

7.4. Appeal:

First appeal: Any person / organization aggrieved by an order made by the Chief Executive Officer of KATPS under penalty, within fifteen days from the date on which the order was communicated to him, prefer a first appeal to the Director – Department of Tourism (Appellate Authority)

Second appeal: If person / organization is not satisfied with the response of Appellate authority, then they can appeal to the Secretary - Department of Tourism as a second appeal. The second appeal must be made within 30 days from receipt of order from Appellate authority.

8. Registration Fee

Registration fee for Tented camping: Rs.5, 000/- per application per camping location (including all taxes).

- The registration fee must be paid up on submitting the online application.
- The registration fee is non refundable in case if the application is rejected due to non fulfilment of the Minimum requirements prescribed in the guidelines for registration.

