

TRAVEL CORPORATION INDIA LTD
SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN



SUMAN BILLA

Director, Technical Cooperation & Silk Road
United Nations World Tourism Organization

Dear Dipak,

Covid 19 has reminded us all about the fragility of human existence and more than ever, about the need to live in harmony with nature. We need to consider ourselves as guardians rather than owners of Planet Earth.

Tourism sector by virtue of its scale and reach has a very important role to play in the preservation of Mother Earth and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Consumer preferences are rapidly changing towards a more responsible paradigm and governments the world over are devising policies to encourage and enable this change. As stake holders, not only are we to live lightly off the Earth but we are also to ensure that tourism becomes an engine for equitable growth and for fostering fair trade practices that benefits the communities where ever we leave an imprint.

In this context the "Sustainability Action Plan" of the Travel Corporation of India is a sterling example of industry players consciously adopting standards of responsibility to support the environment and the communities at every step of fulfilling their business obligations. The Action Plan is thoughtfully drafted to achieve meaningful outcomes and I hope that this would encourage peers to have such standards across the industry.

S. Billa

Regards,
Suman Billa

PLEDGE BY THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

PLEDGE BY THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

We understand our responsibility towards a more sustainable world. We believe that it is the right of the future generations to experience the beauty and majesty of the planet as we have had the privilege of seeing it.

We promise to stride towards making travel greener, smarter, developmental, and more responsible. Promote quality over quantity and make the right choices to achieve this.

We promise to take full cognizance of current and future economic, social and environmental impacts of our business, addressing the needs of our guests and without compromising on the quality of delivery.

We pledge to spread awareness, educate and train all stakeholders associated with the organisation.



DIPAK DEVA



ERNEST DIAS



SANJAY SHROFF



VINEET MAHENDRU



NEERAJ BHATT



LOVLEEN SAGAR



Contents

1.	Objective	8
2.	What is Sustainability?	8
3.	Committed to sustainability - since 2016	8
4.	Our Commitments	11
a.	The Six Degrees of Sustainability to measure our experiences and excursions	12
5.	Corporate Social Responsibility and Affiliations	14
a.	CSR Principles	14
b.	CSR Goals	14
c.	CSR Initiatives & Commitments	15
i.	Signed Codes of Conduct	15
ii.	Collaborations and Affiliations	15
iii.	Relief Projects	16
iv.	Environmental Protection	16
v.	Looking Inward – Organisation Centric	16
vi.	Looking Inward – For Our Partners and Associates	17
vii.	Going Local	18
viii.	Assessments and Audits	18
6.	Our guide to being a Responsible Traveller	19
7.	Training	20
8.	Communication Strategy	20
9.	Regenerative Tourism – The ultimate goal	21
10.	The Committee for Sustainable Practises	22

Objective

We believe that it is the right of the future generations to experience the beauty and majesty of the planet as we have had the privilege of seeing. With this in mind, we have taken on the responsibility to mitigate any economic, environmental, and social impact arising from tourism allowing prosperity for current and future generations. The objective of the company is to develop a sustainable inbound tourism model without compromising on the quality of experience offered to our guests.

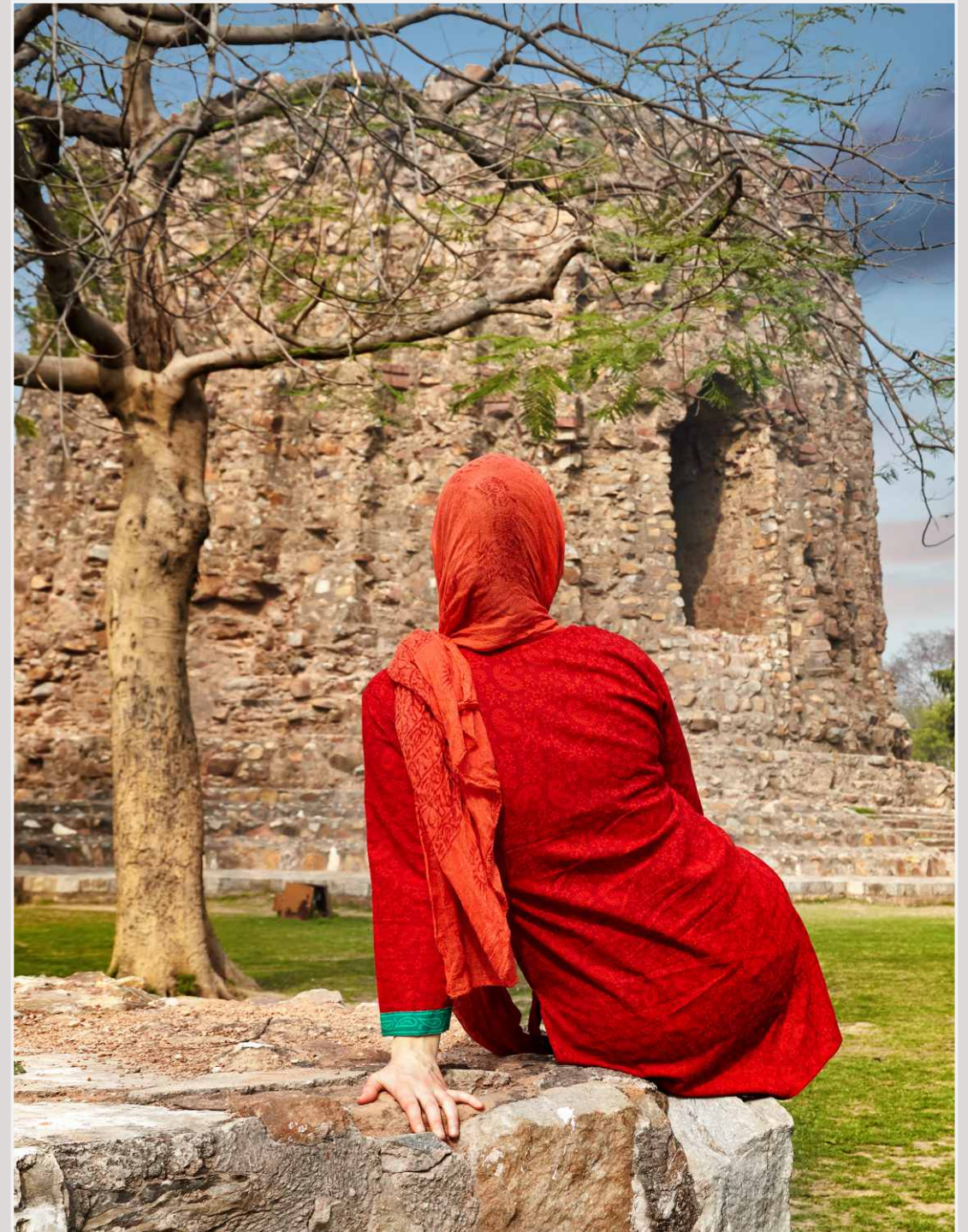
What is sustainability?

The definition of **sustainability** according to Oxford English Dictionary is "The property of being environmentally sustainable; the degree to which a process or enterprise is able to be maintained or continued while avoiding the long-term depletion of natural resources."

According to the **World Tourism Organisation**, sustainable tourism is "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities."

Committed to sustainability - since 2016

As an organisation, **Travel Corporation India Ltd.** has put sustainability at the heart of its tourism endeavours since 2016. It has been an active element of the core travel business. With the launch of the Sustainability Index – a first of its kind in the Indian travel industry in 2016, the company now offers travel products with their sustainability quotient rated.





Our commitments

Corporate Governance: To promote India as a sustainable tourism destination using responsible and transparent marketing practises that ensures economic sustainability.

Human Rights: To encourage opportunities and respect for all groups and reject all businesses related to any human rights violation.

Labour Practices: Adherence to labour laws and adequate compensations to all players involved along with awareness raising training in sustainable tourism that is commensurate to their level of responsibility and the sustainability impacts of the excursion itself.

Active Community Participation: To support and stimulate the local economy, traditions and culture by promoting the development of the communities where we operate.

Gender Equality: To promote a productive work environment that encourages gender equality in all professional aspects, and a better quality of life for our work team, ensuring the integral health of our staff and that labour relations are within the legal framework.

Fair Operation Practices: To protect all involved parties with fair marketing practices, promotion of sustainable services, and customer privacy.

Environment: To protect the environment by measuring our impact in the office and in the field through the rational use of resources, waste management and greenhouse gas emissions. To denounce harmful practices such as pollution, artificial feeding, and the illegal captivity of wild animals and the extraction of wild plants.

Consumer Involvement: Spread and involve customers in sustainable practices so that they can meet the standards of excellence.

Encompassing our above commitments, we have developed a unique way to measure and quantify the Sustainability Quotient of each product that we offer.

The six degrees of sustainability to measure our experiences and excursions

Criteria 1: Respectful encounters with local traditions and Communities

- Familiarizing customers with local history, culture, religion and traditions
- Encouraging courteous and mutually equitable exchange with local communities
- Avoiding purposefully visiting places which promote voyeuristic tourism

Criteria 2: Caring for the environment

- Complying with rules and regulations governing visits to protected areas
- Giving preference to slow, possibly non-motorized forms of mobility, such as hiking, bicycling and city walks
- Avoiding excursions that contribute to the degradation of the ecosystem, such as excursions outside the marked trails
- Having a "bring it in, bring it out" policy for litter and rubbish such as food packaging and recycling wherever possible
- Maintain small-group size to limit environmental impact in accordance to the carrying capacity of the visited site

Criteria 3: Caring for animal welfare

- Keeping a safe distance to wildlife, reducing production of disturbing sounds and prohibiting feeding while on a safari
- Making sure that the animals are well fed, rested and not in chains while on a tour involving animals
- Not purchasing flora and fauna protected by the International Trade Agreement for Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, or products derived from such species. It is a crime and contributes to its extinction
- Ensuring that no endangered wildlife has been displaced or their habitat destroyed to make way for tourism.

Criteria 4: Provide economic benefits to local communities

- Buying locally produced souvenirs and products
- Eating from local restaurants
- Travelling using local modes of transport
- Providing customers with the opportunity to make a personal contribution to support local conservation or a social project (organisations, clinics, and farming projects)
- Giving preference to locally owned stand-alone properties

Criteria 5: Human Rights & Providing a fair working environment

- Providing equal working opportunity and environment for all, irrespective of gender, race or ethnicity
- Providing proper periodic trainings and tools to all employed staff
- Employing local guides, local experts and local staff where possible
- Ensuring that the drivers get adequate rest, work life balance and do not drive at night (with the exception of airport pick-ups/drop-offs)
- Respecting child rights and not buying any items made by children

Criteria 6: Ensuring Consumer Awareness

- Informing them on culturally appropriate behaviour (e.g. dress code for religious sites, taking photographs of people, language tips, etc)
- Educating them on local flora and fauna and how to minimize any negative impacts through their actions
- Asking them to avoid taking photographs and videos without the consent of all involved parties
- The visited communities should receive a direct benefit, for the trips to be sustainable.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND AFFILIATIONS

CSR Principles

The organisation has been proactively working towards achieving sustainability even before it became a global trend. We have liaised and associated ourselves with like-minded organisation to consciously bring sustainability into our products and work culture. We are the first in the industry to create a measuring system for sustainability.

CSR Goals

Our aim at TCI is to make travel a meaningful activity and experience in social, ecological and economic terms. We attach great value here to open communications amongst all the parties involved, from our customers to our personnel and our hotel partners at our tourist destinations. We want Corporate Social Responsibility to be felt, both within and outside the company; we want to see it practiced at every level in our company; and we want it to be and remain a cornerstone of the TCI corporate culture.

CSR initiatives & commitments



Signed Code of Conduct

- We have signed up to **The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism**. The Code is an instrument of self-regulation and corporate social responsibility that provides increased protection to children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism. We are the first DMC to conduct Child Protection Workshops in Goa and Cochin for its suppliers.
- We also follow **The Supplier Code of Conduct** which specifies minimum ethical requirements for all our suppliers. They have to sign the Supplier Code of Conduct at the time of commencing a relationship with us.



Collaborations and Affiliations

- We are the **first Indian DMC to have received a CSR certification for Incoming Operator issued by TourCert**, a private German, non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation which awards tourism businesses on basis of Corporate Social Responsibility principles with the CSR Tourism certified logo.
- We are in the governing council of the **Responsible Tourism Society of India** which focuses on promoting environmentally responsible and sustainable practices in the tourism industry across the country.
- We have signed the **"Women's Empowerment Principle"** disseminated by the United Nations. This is a seven-step guide that business and other sectors can take to advance and empower women
- We work with **Literacy India**, a non-profit organisation, with the objective of empowering underprivileged children and women by making them self-sufficient. Some of the projects that we have worked on with them include the creation of sacred Mouli thread used to greet our guests, jute and Denim bags used to handover induction kits, miscellaneous paper bags for incentive purpose made from old recycled newspapers.



Relief Projects

- **2018:** In August 2018, Kerala and its people suffered terribly due to floods. As an extension of the Company's CSR initiative Mr. Dipak Deva, handed Mr. K.J. Alphons, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Tourism our contribution of Rs. 10 lakhs towards **Chief Ministers Relief Fund for the people of Kerala.**
- **2017:** We worked with Abari, a socially oriented research, design and construction firm based in Nepal on a **CSR Project using the Nepal Relief Fund.** Donations were made to the cause by our colleagues and associates to support the people affected by the devastating earthquake on April 25, 2015. This joint effort saw to the rebuilding of a classroom block at Saraswati Secondary School located in Dhulikhel. It was officially inaugurated and handed over to the school authorities in a ceremony at the school in Feb 2017.
- **2012:** The organisation in association with Ecosphere, a Spiti-based social enterprise, took the initiative to build **Solar Bath Houses for the Buddhist Nunnery at Pangmo** village. The initiative served a two-pronged objective of minimising harmful black carbon emissions and ensuring dignity and personal hygiene for the nuns at the monastery.



Environmental Protection

- We have joined the **Beat Plastic Pollution** drive and instead offer reusable steel water bottles. These personalized water bottles can be carried back as a souvenir of the tour.
- **We recycle all the discarded papers** and old newspapers. These are sent to Literacy India who in turn create customised paper bags for the company.



Looking Inward – Organisation Centric

- We apply the policies of Reject, Rethink, Reduce, Recycle and Upcycle
- We have a **water and electricity saving programme in all our offices.** We

promote among our staff good water saving practices, installing water saving taps in our corporate office and offering specialized training that reinforce the company's water and electricity saving policies.

- We **avoid the carbon dioxide emissions** that cause environmental damage and pollution through initiatives like encouraging car-pooling and using public transport.
- We have a strict **Policy on Sexual Harassment (PoSH)** that involves a committee to address the issues raised by employees of the organisation.
- Over the years, we have been committed to providing **equal work opportunities and closing the pay gap.** We also have a **flexible work policy** to help employees balance work and personal life.
- We conduct regular and thorough **training and development** modules for our staff and partners for skill enhancement. We always train our staff on quality issues and responsible tourism practices.



Looking Inward – For Our Partners and Associates

- We conduct training for all associate offices and partners to sensitise them with our stringent codes of sustainable practices.
- We **collaborate** with trained guides and drivers to provide sustainable service without reducing quality.
- We **comply with the regulations** governing the touristic activities, specifically those referring to the environment, wildlife, archaeological heritage, and social security.
- We offer our customers the opportunity to **participate in conservation** and community development initiatives.
- For select FTOs, we offer personalised steel water bottles that can be carried back as a souvenir.



Going Local

- We collaborate with Zing N Zest - an organisation created and run by **village women** for organic bakery products which are offered on tours.
- A lot of our products are designed around **promoting local businesses** through various interactions like cooking demonstrations, farm visits, NGO visits, and so on.
- All amenities, souvenirs, and kits offered to guests are sourced from **local enterprises** supporting economic and social upliftment of marginalised or underprivileged sections of the society.



Assessments and Audits

- We conducted a **Human Rights Impact Assessment Project** in October 2013 in India. The project was carried out in New Delhi, Jaipur, Trivandrum and Cochin.
- We conduct **periodical audits** to review our past performances and map out areas of improvement for the future.

Our guide to being a responsible traveller

Being a responsible traveller is easy if one follows these simple Dos and Don'ts.



DOs

- Choose suppliers that guarantee quality and respect for human rights and the environment
- Use natural resources, such as water and energy wisely
- Try to minimise generation of waste
- Dispose trash in the cleanest possible way
- Always consider recycling
- Wherever possible, use non-polluting modes of transport
- Reduce your carbon footprints
- Respect local communities and their traditions
- Eat, drink, travel and shop local



DON'Ts

- Do not engage in any and all forms of voyeuristic tourism and experiences
- Do not use air conditioning unnecessarily
- Do not use non-biodegradable and polluting substances
- Do not purchase souvenirs that violate human rights, especially child rights
- Do not encourage any form of human rights violations
- Do not engage in any activities that promote / condone sexual exploitation
- Do not feed or harm wild animals of any kind
- Do not deface or damage heritage monuments



Training

The organisation will conduct regular and thorough training programmes for all involved players in the tourism industry to ensure that the highest standards of sustainability are understood and implemented by all. We endeavour to keep our staff and partners constantly updated with the latest developments in the field of responsible and sustainable tourism.

Communication strategy

A yearly communication will be sent out to all partners in the form of a detailed dossier. The annual **Art of Travel** magazine will also include a section dedicated to our sustainable endeavours initiated during the year.

Regenerative tourism – the ultimate goal

The culmination of all these efforts is to move from a sustainable to a **regenerative model** of tourism where we can preserve the destinations for future generations in a better condition than today.

The organisation is taking steady strides towards making travel greener, smarter, developmental, and more responsible. We are promoting quality over quantity and making the right choices to achieve this futuristic concept.

We are unequivocally dedicated to promoting and developing products and practices that support the sustainable model of tourism.

We urge all our partners and clients to join us in our endeavour to heal the planet and undo the damage already done. Let us work together to build a future for tourism where responsible practices leading to sustainability is the **only way of life**.

As Sir David Attenborough rightly said, “No one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced.”



The committee for sustainable practises

A committee has been formed, with effect from 27 September 2020, with all stakeholders of the organisation to monitor, train, and sensitise the staff and to be the custodians of sustainable practises within and outside the organisation.



Committee Chairs

Dipak Deva, Managing Director
Email: dipak.deva@sita.in

Lovleen Sagar, Senior Vice President
Email: lovleen.sagar@distantfrontiers.in



Committee Members

Harpreet Bhatia, Vice President
Email: harpreet.bhatia@sita.in

Ruchika Singh, General Manager
Email: ruchika.singh@sita.in

Anuja Jain, Deputy General Manager
Email: anuja.jain@govacation-india.com

Robin Raj, Deputy General Manager
Email: robin.raj@sita.in

Tejashri Simha, Deputy Manager
Email: tejashri.simha@sita.in

Soma Paul, Deputy Manager
Email: soma.paul@distantfrontiers.in



UN Women – We have signed the "Women's Empowerment Principle" disseminated by the United Nations. This is a seven-step guide that business and other sectors can take to advance and empower women.



The Responsible Tourism Society of India – We are in the governing council of the Responsible Tourism Society of India that focuses on promoting environmentally responsible and sustainable practices in the tourism industry across India.



TourCert – First Indian DMC to receive a CSR certification for Incoming Operator by TourCert, a German private and not-for-profit organisation that awards tourism businesses on basis of CSR principles.



The Code.Org – Signed The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. First DMC to conduct Child Protection Workshops in Goa and Cochin for its suppliers. All partners sign The Supplier Code of Conduct specifying minimum ethical requirements.



Literacy India – We partner with Literacy India, a non-profit organisation, with the objective of empowering underprivileged children and women by making them self-sufficient.