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**GUIDELINE FOR WAIVER OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FEE**

**IN THE EASTERN CIRCUIT**

**ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN**

**TOURISM COUNCIL OF BHUTAN**

**TITLE**

1. This document will be called the Guideline for Waiver of Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) in the Eastern Circuit.

**OBJECTIVE**

1. This guideline is developed to guide and facilitate effective implementation of SDF waiver, outlining the following but not limited to:
2. Eligibility criteria
3. Application procedures
4. Monitoring mechanism and
5. Penalties in case of non-compliance

**EXTENT AND SCOPE**

1. This guideline will be applicable to registered Bhutanese tour operators organizing tours for international leisure tourists in part or full in the eastern circuit.
2. The eastern circuit will cover Lhuentse, Mongar, Trashigang, Trashi Yangtse, Pemagatshel and Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhags.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FEE (SDF)**

1. Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) refers to a fee of USD $ 65 levied per person per night halt. This amount is included in the Minimum Daily Package Rate (MDPR), which is the minimum amount that has to be paid per person per night halt.
2. With the decision to waive off SDF, the revised MDPR for the eastern circuit will be as follows:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Existing MDPR per person per night** | **Revised MDPR per person per night** | **Months** |
| USD 250 | USD 185 | March, April, May, September, October, November (peak season) |
| USD 200 | USD 135 | December, January, February, June, July, August (lean season) |

1. MDPR for the eastern circuit will cover:
2. A TCB certified accommodation facility (minimum 3 star in case of hotels) and meals.
3. A licensed Bhutanese tour guide for the entire duration of stay.
4. Internal land transport.
5. Camping equipment and haulage for trekking tours.
6. There will be additional charges for availing services that are not covered under MDPR.
7. Surcharges for small groups will be based on the existing provisions in the Tourism Rules and Regulations (TRR) 2017.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

1. SDF waiver can be availed for:
   1. International leisure tourists staying overnight or longer in the eastern circuit. Total amount to be waived off will be calculated based on the duration of stay in the eastern circuit.
   2. All forms of tours in the eastern circuit.

**VISA AND PAYMENT PROCEDURES**

1. To apply for a visa, tour operators must:
2. Deposit full tour payment
3. Submit the agreed itinerary
4. Submit a copy of accommodation confirmation with tourist details and
5. Submit any other documents required by TCB.
6. In case of visa cancellation and amendment, tour operators must submit an application to Head, Services Division TCB along with valid supporting documents.
7. In case of force majeure, tour operators must submit an application to Director, TCB along with valid supporting documents.
8. An advance of 50% of the tour payment may be given to tour operators based on request.
9. While submitting invoice for final payment, tour operators must submit the following documents:
10. In case of cultural tour:

* Receipt from TCB certified hotels as proof of stay.
* Receipt from TCB certified village home stays as proof of stay with proper contact details.
* Any other documents required by TCB.

1. In case of trekking (at least two of the following documents):

* Approved itinerary duly signed by the Regional Tourism Office in Mongar, once established or designated agencies at entry and exit points of trek.
* Receipt of porter services with proper contact details of service providers.
* Receipt from TCB certified village home stays as proof of stay.
* Receipt from camp sites if available as proof of stay with proper contact details.
* Any other documents required by TCB.
* In addition to the above two documents, photographic evidence of trek may be submitted.

**Inspection and Monitoring**

1. The Quality Assurance Division (QAD), TCB will carry out monitoring and inspection from time to time with support from the Dzongkhags/Park Offices/Gewog Authorities and other relevant agencies to ensure compliance with the guideline.
2. TCB certified hotels, village home stays, campsites and providers of porter services will provide or facilitate access to documents or information required by TCB for monitoring and verification.
3. The Regional Tourism Office in Mongar, once established, will also carry out inspection and monitoring from time to time in coordination and collaboration with QAD.
4. Immigration checkpoints will provide information to TCB regarding tourists entering and exiting eastern Bhutan to facilitate monitoring and verification.

**PENALTIES**

1. In the event where tours are not conducted as per the approved itinerary, tour operators will be liable for payment of SDF for the duration of stay, in addition to fines as per the Tourism Rules and Regulations (TRR) 2017.

**AMENDMENT**

1. This guideline will be revised from time to time as may be necessary.