

Madhya Pradesh Commits to Sustainable Tourism Press Release

In a two-day conference on Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India (STCI) in Bhopal, on Sept 25,26, 2018, the Madhya Pradesh Department of Tourism has made a commitment to practice sustainable tourism and adopt the STCI. This workshop was jointly organised by the Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India , the Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI) and Madhya Pradesh Department of Tourism. ESOI is a non-profit organisation that proposes to promote and ensure environmentally responsible and sustainable practices in the tourism industry. It was established in 2008 at the behest of the Ministry of Tourism and is responsible for the Ministry's mandate to operationalize STCI across the country.

The workshop was attended by over a hundred participants that ranged of hotel industry individuals; architects, members from Non Governmental Organisations; students from the Institute of Hotel Management; representatives from the State Biodiversity Board, Ecotourism Board and the Departments of Tourism and Forests respectively.

The workshop aimed at setting corrective and curative measures with regard to tourism practices with ecological sensitivity and conservation of nature and community development in the region. These practices were highlighted by speakers who practice them in their businesses and yet benefit financially along with creating a lighter footprint and supporting the local communities and environment.

In his opening remarks, the Shri Hari Ranjan Rao (Principal Secretary Tourism), gave an overview of the vast range of tourism activities presently being promoted in the state. He was in favour of promoting high value low impact tourism. He also highlighted the issue of regulation versus voluntary compliance questioned how best STCI standards could be applied in the state. Dr.T Iliyaraja (MD, MPSTDC), emphasized the need for carrying capacity studies to reduce the carbon footprint and make tourism more sustainable.

Members from ESOI gave an overview of the impacts of mass tourism and shared with the audience some interesting examples of responsible tourism from across the country. Further, they took the audience through the history of STCI, its significance and applicability. The procedure involved in getting certification under STCI was described in detail.

Panelists and speakers shared with the audience various examples on how best tourism could be made more responsible and sustainable. These ranged from electricity saving devices in hotels; waste segregation; recycling and reuse of wastewater and rainwater harvesting. It was agreed unanimously that capacity building of local communities in the hospitality sector was crucial for better inclusivity.

There was a detailed presentation on the conservation challenges in Madhya Pradesh that included moving away from 'Tiger Centric' tourism and diversifying the wildlife experience.

A participatory exercise that involved participants discussing what they perceive as sustainability goals resulted in an extremely rich discussion around sustainability.

In her concluding remarks, Ms Bhawana Walimbe, (AMD, MP Tourism)pointed out that Madhya Pradesh has a established District Tourism Development Councils headed by the District Commissioner. 30 destinations have been selected for micro-planning. Madhya Pradesh Tourism also formally announced its commitment to STCI.

The workshop not only familiarized participants with concepts of Sustainable Tourism and STCI, but also the understanding of its nuances and applicability. Each participant received a certificate of participation.