

Motorcycle Tour Operators (Advisory)

Department of Tourism,
Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh



ADVISORY FOR MOTORCYCLE TOUR OPERATORS

1. INTRODUCTION

1. Motorcycle touring is a lot of fun and is filled with a sense of freedom, as against a car, but can also be a fairly high-risk activity. Therefore, needs to follow a set of rules and practices to keep all involved safe especially in a commercially organized group riding scenario where all participants are a disjointed group. Adventure activities by their very nature involve some risks, these regulations are being introduced to ensure that tour operators who offer motorcycle adventure tours, have basic safety and operating standards in place.
2. These regulations will give both foreign and domestic tourists confidence that appropriate steps have been taken to keep them safe and mitigate the risks involved.

2. APPLICABILITY

These regulations will apply to operations and services of travel agencies and tour operators, who organize or sell, motorcycle tourism related services to public for business purposes.

3. OBJECTIVE

To increase safety consciousness among tour operators as well as enabling tour operators to determine safety standards which apply to motorcycle tour operations and expeditions.

4. ADVENTURE GUIDE/INSTRUCTOR – BASIC MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

1. Who is an Operator? Any person whether employer, a principal, or self-employed person who provides an adventure activity to a person directly or indirectly for a payment, the purpose of which can be educational/ recreational/ business and deliberately exposes the participant to a risk of a possible serious harm.
2. Basic Qualifications/Requirements. A tour guide/instructor should possess these basic minimum qualifications/ experience:
 - Driver's License: Operator should have held a full motorcycle license for a minimum of 5 years, and have adequate experience of riding in all types of terrains in India - Himalayas, Coastal, Deserts, National parks, etc.
 - Should preferably have completed a basic motorcycle safety course from a recognized Institute.
 - Should have basic knowledge of the working and running repair of a motorcycle, that is being used in the expedition.
 - Should have valid first aid and CPR certification.
 - Have adequate computer skills and ability to handle/operate a GPS.
 - Have basic map reading skills and ability to use a compass.
 - Have customer handling and motorcycle group management skills.
 - Possess adequate know how of traffic rules and general rules and regulations of area of operation.
 - If the customer group does not speak Hindi or English, the operator must have a Guide who speaks the language of customer rider.
 - For an expedition that is more than 4 days or operates in remote areas or had a group size more than 7 riders, a backup logistic truck may be provided. This could carry additional baggage, mechanical spares, reserve fuels etc.

5. EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

Based on the type of expedition and its duration, there is a comprehensive list of equipment that may be carried on a guided tour. Some basic essentials are listed below which, the operator must have and a recommended list for the client. The instructions to this effect must be conveyed to the customer, well in advance so that they come suitably prepared.

1. A suitable motorcycle according to the route planned. They could bring their own or may be rent it from the provider.
2. Suitable apparel according to the weather and safety gear to include certified safety helmet, high ankle boots, gloves, riding jacket, rain gear, etc.
3. Communication equipment radio/ mobile/satellite phones (if applicable).
4. Marked Maps, GPS with pre-fed maps and route-distance charts.
5. Handy tools and spares to carry out basic wilderness repairs including puncture repair kit.
6. First aid kit and if operating in a high-altitude area an oxygen cylinder and emergency contact numbers in case assistance is required for causality evacuation.
7. Recording and photographic media with adequate batteries and power banks.

6. EQUIPMENT CARE, MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTION

1. Operators must ensure that the vehicles used to provide a service are maintained to a standard that complies with or exceeds the servicing program specified by the manufacturer. Road worthy condition of the vehicle to be certified for each trip, norms to be fixed to ensure the Physical fitness of drivers whenever necessary.
2. A complete comprehensive review by a specialist should be done before every ride to ascertain top condition of engine, body, brakes, lights and tires before letting a vehicle on rental/tour.
3. The inspections should include the following:
 - All controls, cables, lights and battery.
 - All fluids engine, coolant, clutch and brakes.
 - Tires, chain/belt and sprocket, suspension.
 - All major systems e.g. electrical, fuel, ignition and engine, etc.
4. Additionally, a system of daily checks should be in place to ensure optimum availability of a safe motorcycle during the day of ride.

7. SOP'S AND OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS AND DOCUMENTATION

All operators must have in place a system of standard actions to be taken for various contingencies to ensure a satisfactory and consistent response to a situation and help provide a safer expedition environment. It is not possible to have a SOP for all possible contingencies, but at a basic level should cover following situations:

1. Pre ride checks and briefings to include local traffic rules.
2. Actions to be taken in case of motorcycle failure/ accident.
3. Medical emergency response, minor/ major injury and evacuation.
4. Lost party member tracking and retrieval.
5. Group riding rules including night riding.
6. Motorcycle and safety gear inspection.

8. DOCUMENTATION

1. All necessary government registrations, clearances and permits for tour operations.
2. Driving licenses, motorcycle documents.
3. All insurances (both for equipment and personnel).
4. Carnets and overland permits (as applicable).
5. International driving licenses.

9. RISK MITIGATION

Risk management and mitigation in its broadest term is to understand the risk involved in a particular activity and to take appropriate steps to reduce or nullify the same. For example: hot weather riding, following can be done to mitigate the risk involved – cover up, hydrate, avoid caffeine, replace electrolytes, start early stop early and cool down. Similarly rainy weather, cold weather, Himalayan trail, etc. requires specialist handling of riding group.

There are two types of risks - subjective and objective. Subjective are inherent to the rider's attitude. Objective are created by environmental, motorcycle, road and rider health conditions, these are the ones that tour operators need to focus on. Additionally, a written risk assessment should be carried out for each excursion/ tour. Involving identification and analysis of all contingencies and dangers involved, actions should be taken to mitigate these and participants should be informed of these special circumstances.

10. EMERGENCIES AND RESCUE

Emergency on a motorcycle tour can be majorly of two natures - equipment failure/ accident or medical nature e.g. a minor fall may just require first aid or a serious injury may require evacuation. Therefore, depending on severity of both detailed action plan/ SOP should be available with the ride leader, including things like contact numbers of emergency services, to implement.

11. SAFETY BRIEFING

A pre ride safety briefing covering all aspects of risks and action to be taken both by conducting staff and the participants should be covered in detail, some aspects are highlighted below:

1. Local traffic rules, speed limits and documents to be carried on person.
2. Wearing of protective gear.
3. Motorcycle controls, operation and pre-ride checks.
4. Rider responsibilities and risk awareness.
5. Group riding procedure to include lane position, following other vehicle, head lights, signals and parking.
6. Handling dangerous surfaces and any special riding conditions.
7. Night riding and fatigue.

8. Indemnity bond by participant.
9. Avoiding alcohol prior to/during the ride.
10. Staying hydrated and rest stops.

12. MEDICAL CONCERNS

1. **These are of two types:** personal and accident related during the ride. For personal medical conditions the client should be advised to carry sufficient medication and inform about the same to the ride leader. For accident related the ride leader should have a plan in addition to a well-stocked First Aid Kit.
2. **Infections:** An antibacterial disinfectant soap/ sanitizer should be recommended to keep infections at bay.
3. **Inoculations:** When travelling in rural areas have vaccinations against cholera and tetanus. Consult your local clinic for up-to-date information.
4. **Acute Mountain Sickness:** This applies to tours in Ladakh and high-altitude rides. Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) is an illness that can affect travelers at high altitude (typically above 10,000 feet or 3,050 meters). Tour leaders must have full knowledge of handling customers in such an environment - precautions and emergency procedures.

13. BASIC MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR GRANT OF RECOGNITION TO OPERATORS

1. The agency must own or have the ability to hire suitable, registered motorcycles and all accessories as specified above. The motorcycles must be well maintained, serviced and in perfect working order with perfect documentation/ insurance.
2. The agency must have at least two full time trained motorcycle trip leaders duly qualified/knowledgeable about leading motorcycling trips safely, group dynamics, traffic rules, communication skills and field repairs/punctures etc. They must possess valid First Aid/CPR certification.
3. The operator must have SOPs for different itineraries/ motorcycling trips offered and Emergency Action Plans for all trips.
4. A detailed risk assessment must be carried out by the trip leaders with the backup team prior to conducting any trips.
5. A list of hospitals, police stations and workshops along the route should be carried by the trip leaders.
6. A detailed SOP for inspecting motorcycles, documentation and safety gear prior to conducting trips must be in position.
7. The company must follow a strict 'leave no trace' policy and conform to high sustainability standards.