



सत्यमेव जयते

GOVT. OF MAHARASHTRA



MELGHAT TIGER RESERVE

AMRAVATI



TIGER CONSERVATION PLAN: ECOTOURISM **(DRAFT)**

Plan Period: 2024-25 To 2033-34

O/o Chief Conservator of Forest & Field Director
Melghat Tiger Reserve,
Camp, Amravati 444602

CHAPTER-1

ECOTOURISM, INTERPRETATION AND CONSERVATION EDUCATION

1.1 GENERAL

Regulated low impact ecotourism has the potential to be a vital conservation tool as it helps to win public support for wildlife conservation. Highlighting the role of ecotourism, the NWAP (2017-31) suggests the following priority actions for management of tourism in wildlife areas.

- Prepare tourism plans based on the prescribed guidelines for promoting sustainable ecotourism in TRs, PAs (including WPAs and CMPAs) and the mountain ecosystems.
- Develop standards and guidelines to prevent damage to wildlife and habitats, in particular to mountain vegetation, wetlands and marine habitats including coral beds.
- Frame rules and regulations for visitors' conduct which should be widely publicised among tourists and tourism agencies as well as prominently displayed on public notice boards in all tourism sites.
- Create a cadre of local communities who can be trained as nature guides and strengthen the capacity of the local communities and the tourism agencies for managing responsible and sustainable tourism.
- Institutionalise a mechanism for ploughing back a part of the income generated from wildlife tourism for management of TRs and PAs and eco-development of the local communities.

The eco-tourism in Melghat Tiger Reserve is based on the comprehensive guidelines for tiger conservation and tourism issued by NTCA. The prescriptions made in the plan are based on the WPA, 1972, FCA, 1980, EPA, 1986 and guidelines issued by NTCA.

The ecotourism, interpretation and nature education plan for Melghat Tiger Reserve focuses on participatory, community based, low impact, educational, eco-friendly, ecologically sustainable, socially and culturally acceptable programmes which are aligned with the objective of tiger and its landscape conservation.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The Melghat Tiger Reserve being an ecologically significant area has envisaged following objectives for ecotourism to be carried out:

- Minimize the impact of tourism on wildlife and its crucial habitat.
- Develop mechanisms to generate revenue from ecotourism for the welfare of local communities, frontline staff and village eco-development.
- Integrating ecotourism and conservation awareness to promote tiger conservation in the landscape.
- Increase visitors concern for nature conservation.
- Create a sense of belongingness and public support for the conservation.
- Create opportunities for the local people through community based ecotourism programs and benefit sharing mechanism.
- Enhance the livelihood of the local people including the unemployed tribal youth by involving them in the tourism activities.

1.3. DETERMINATION OF CARRYING CAPACITY

I. Physical Carrying Capacity (PCC):

This is the maximum number of visitors that can physically fit into a defined space, overtime. (Annex II) It is expressed as: $PCC = A \times V / a \times R_f$; Where,

A -Available area for public use (Road length is preferred as per NTCA)

V/a- 2 vehicles / km²

Rf- rotation factor

(Total touring hours per day / Average time for single tour)

The following corrections were considered to calculate the carrying capacity

- 📍 Only vehicular movements are permitted on forest roads.
- 📍 The closeness between the vehicles is important.
- 📍 There is at most 2 vehicles/km

- 💡 At least 3 hrs required for visiting the allowed track.
- 💡 The park is opened for the entire 12 months of a year and 6 hrs per day.
- 💡 The length of road affected by erosion.

RF= Total touring hours per day/Average time for single tour

=6/3+

=2

PCC=162.2x2x2

= 648.8 visits per day

II. Real Carrying Capacity (RCC):

RCC is the maximum permissible number of visits of to a site once the reductive factors derived from particular characteristics of a site have been applied to the PCC. These reductive factors are based on biophysical, environmental, ecological, social and management variables.

$$RCC = PCC \times (100 - Cf1/100) \times (100 - Cf2/100) \dots (100 - Cfn/100)$$

Road erosion factor, Cf1: The susceptibility of the site is taken into account. Since the MTR is of black cotton soil the almost the entire length is prone to medium and high erosion.

Erosion risk factor with weightage factor 3 and weightage factor 2 for high and medium erosion

$$M1 = 19 \times 2 + 9.5 \times 3 = 38 + 28.5 = 66.5 \text{ km}$$

$$Cf1 = 66.5/162.2 \times 100$$

=41 %

III. Disturbance to wildlife:

In this calculation, the species which are prone to disturbance owing to visitation are considered.

$$\text{Correction factor (cf)} = (\text{limiting months/year}) / (12 \text{ months per year}) \times 100$$

For tiger (cf) = 2/12 x 100 = 16.6%

For barking deer (cf) = 16.6%

For gaur (cf) = 16.6%

$$\text{TOTAL FOR CF} = 16.6+16.6+-16.6 = 49.99 \%$$

Computation of RCC:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{RCC} &= 648.8 \times (100-41/100) (100-49.99/100) \\ &= 648.8 \times 0.59 \times 0.50 \\ &= 193 \text{ visits/day}\end{aligned}$$

IV. Effective Permissible Carrying Capacity (ECC):

It is the maximum number of visitors that a site can sustain given the management capacity is available. Management capacity is defined as the sum of conditions that PA administration requires if it is to carry out its functions at the optimum level. Limitations in management like lack of staff and infrastructure, limit the RCC. For MIR, MC is 64% (The mean management effectiveness evaluation score in NTCA guidelines 15/10/2012)

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Hence, the ECC} &= \text{RCC} \times 0.85 \\ &= 164 \\ &= \text{i.e. 164 vehicles per day for the entire MTR}\end{aligned}$$

V. CEILING LIMIT:

Ceiling level is as per NTCA guidelines ceiling level on number of visitors allowed to enter tigerreserve at any given time. Considering 6 tourist per vehicle at any given time overall 59 vehicles from 7 entry gates can take atour. So number of tourist entering in MTR at any given time will be 354.

The distribution of vehicles entering in tourism zone in a day is based on

- Infrastructure availability
- Tourism potential
- Staff

The gate wise division of vehicular permission based on the above criteria as follows;

Table-9(a): Entry Gate wise Permissible vehicle Entry

S. No	Entry Gate	Maximum no. of vehicles in a day	Max no. of vehicles at a given time
1	Semadoh zone	40	20
2	Shahanur-Gullarghat-Dhargadh.	40	20
3	Shahanoor - Namala	20	10
4	Wasali-Ambabarwa-Chunkadi	43	22
5	Chikhaldara-Patsalai-Churni- Vairat Sunset Point	40	20
	Total	183	90

1.4 ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

While ecotourism can bring potential benefits to conservation efforts and local communities, it also poses several challenges and problems in the context of the Melghat Tiger Reserve:

- Too much of tourism development infrastructure creates problem by replacing nature with artificial objects and often leads to overcrowding. MTR has very less tourist flow compared to other tiger reserves, hence infrastructure development for tourism in few pockets seems to be the ideal condition. Besides even when the popularity of ecotourism happens, it can lead to overcrowding, especially during peak seasons. Large numbers of tourists can disturb wildlife and their habitats, potentially impacting their natural behaviour and causing stress. Excessive foot traffic can also degrade trails and fragile ecosystems.
- There should be strict regulation on non-biodegradable plastic bags and bottles used by the tourists in the reserve area. Plastic wastes are a sore for the eyes especially in

the pristine areas. The canteens run in the departmental buildings should strictly adhere to it and only recyclable water steel bottles with RO water should be used in the premises of the facility and in the reserve areas.

- In many occasions VIPs and Tourists seek personal attention and special treatment. Some tourists resort to unprofessional acts which leads to the spoilage of pristine and serene atmosphere creating conflict like situation. Ill treatment of staffs is common scenario. Hence staffs need special training for managing tourism.
- Habitat Destruction: Inadequate management and monitoring can result in habitat destruction. Unregulated tourism activities such as off-road driving, littering, and construction of infrastructure can lead to habitat loss and fragmentation, harming the delicate balance of the ecosystem.
- Unsustainable Practices: Ecotourism activities, such as vehicle pollution, improper waste management, and excessive resource consumption, can have a negative impact on the environment. It is crucial to ensure that the infrastructure and practices of ecotourism in the reserve are sustainable and minimize their ecological footprint.

1.5 THE STRATEGIES

1.5.1 IDENTIFICATION OF THE ZONE

1.5.1.1 TOURISM ZONE EXISTING IN MTR IN CORE ZONE AS PER SANCTIONED MANAGEMENT PLAN

The tourism area in core and buffer areas are as follows:

Table-9(b): Present Tourism Zone of MTR

i) **CORE: -**

Sr. No.	Tourism Area	Area	No. of Comptt	Compt No
1	Semadoh tourism Area (mam to check)	70.4 Sq.Km	28	98,99,103, 104, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 130, 131, 132, 145, 146, 148, 149, 150, 151, 154,

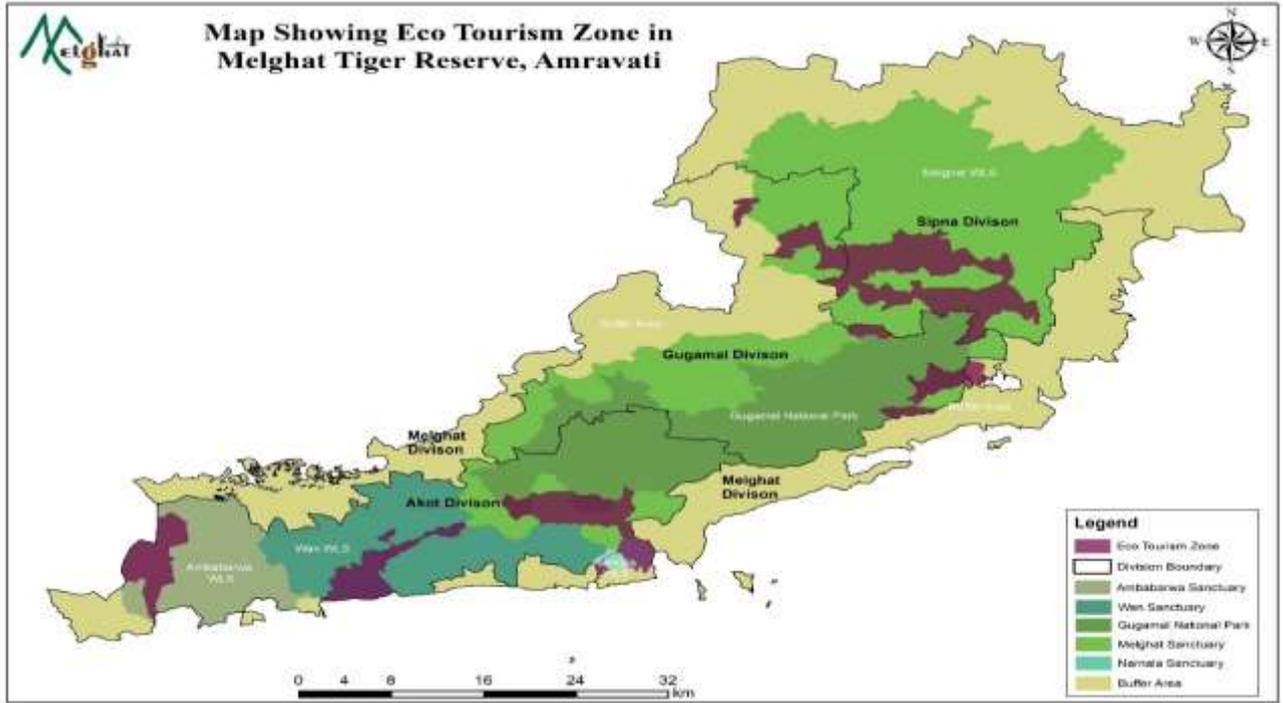
				155, 156,157,158, 161, 162, 233, 235, 236, 241, 242
2	Harisal tourism Area	19.1 Sq.Km.	8	627,629, 630,639, 640,642, 648,649
3	Shahnur-Narnala-Dhargad tourism Area	44.2 Sq.Km.	17	163,164, 165,167, 169, 995, 1005,1007, 1008, 1010, 1014, 1015, 1016, 1017, 1071, 1072, 1100
4	Chikhadhara tourism Area	20.8 Sq.Km.	7	34,36,38, 41,42,784, 789
5	Ambabarwa Tourism Area	34.8 sq km	4	359,360, 361,362
6	Dhakna tourism zone		8	849,850,852,893,892,900,899, 898
		189.3 Sq.Km.	45	

Thus a total of **191.20 sq.km, i.e, 19120 ha** of the core area of Melghat Tiger Reserve is the identified tourism zone and it constitutes **12.74 %** of the total notified core area which is as per NTCA requirement of less than 20% of core for tourism purposes.

ii) **BUFFER:-**

Sr. No.	Tourism Area	Area	No. of Compartment
1	Harisal tourism Area	18 Sq.Km.	7
2	Dhakna Tourism Area		9(742,745,747,847, 851,894,895,896,897)
3	Tarubandha Tourism Area		10 (762,763,761,760,759, 844,845,837,834,756)
4	Chaurakhund Tourism Area		
5	Popadkhed Tourism	23.72 Sq km	10

	area		
6	Bhawai – Makhla Tourism Area	21.58 Sq km	9
7	Gawilgadh Tourism area	50.92 Sq.km	4



Map-9(a): Ecotourism Map of MTR

1.5.1.2 INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT- AMENITIES & FACILITIES

Accommodation available in Core and Buffer zone of MTR is furnished below;

Table-9(e): Updated List of Ecotourism infrastructures in MTR

Sr. No.	Name of Nature Camp	Circular Hut/ Eco Hut	A - Type Hut	Dormitory	Suites	Tent	Bamboo hut
Core Zone							
1	SemadohSankul	06	04	04	-	-	
2	Kolkas	07	-	02	04		
3	Wasali	04	-	02	-	-	
4	Rangubeli(FRH)	-	-	-	02	-	
5	Hatru	-	-	-	02	-	
Buffer Zone							
1	Harisal	04	-	-		-	01

2	Shahanur	06	-	02	02	06	
3	Aamzari	04	-	01	-	08	
4	Chiukaldhara	-	-	-	06	-	

No new constructions will be carried out on forest land. The existing structures will be renovated in eco-friendly manner.

TOURISM ACTIVITIES IN MELGHAT TIGER RESERVE

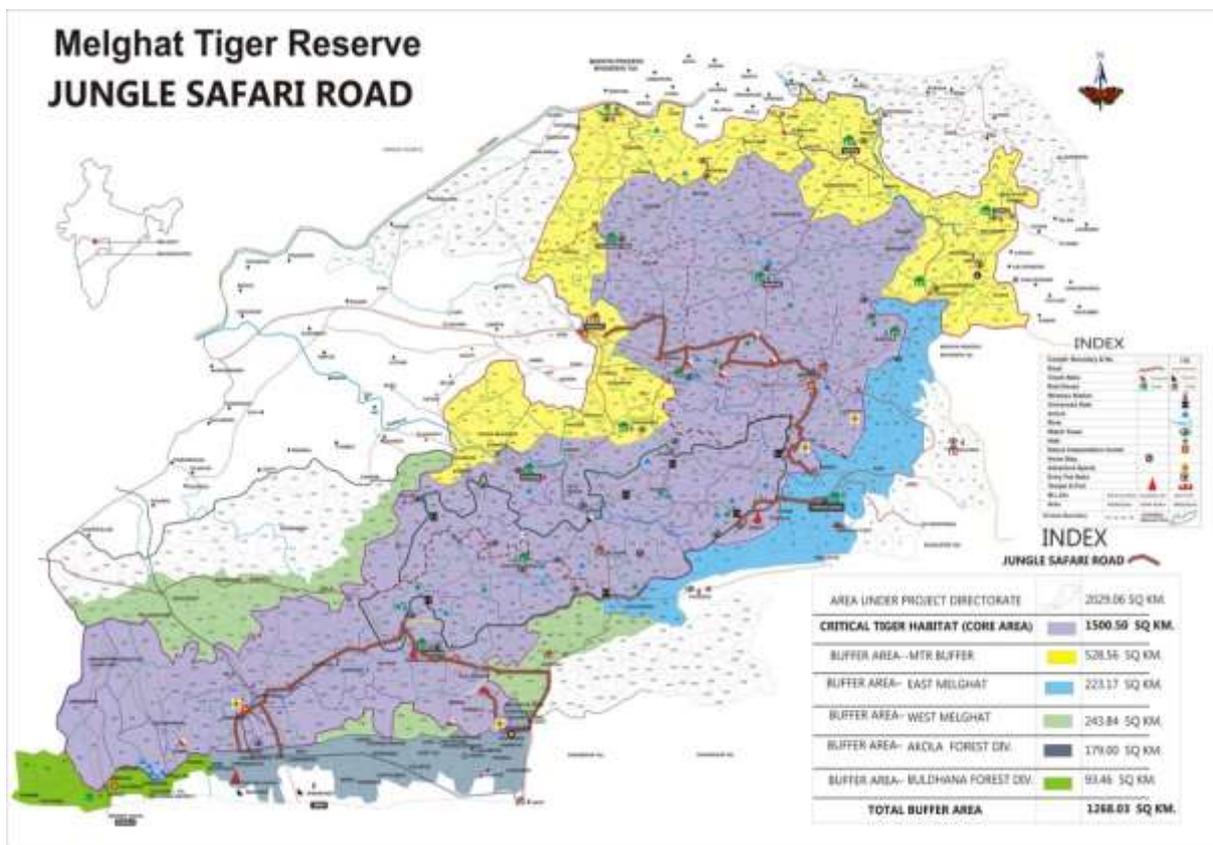
Currently, the Following tourism activities are being operational in MTR:

- A. Nature stay & Interpretation Centre
- B. Jungle Safari
- C. Guided Walking Trails
- D. Elephant ride
- E. Adventure Tourism
- F. Cultural Tourism

A) NATURE STAY & INTERPRETATION CENTRE

Night stay facilities amid in the nature has been developed in Melghat for unique experience of the tourists while close to nature. Stay facilities has been developed in 9 places both in the core as well buffer. Detail has been given in the **Table-9(e)** as above.

B) WILD LIFE AND JUNGLE SAFARIS



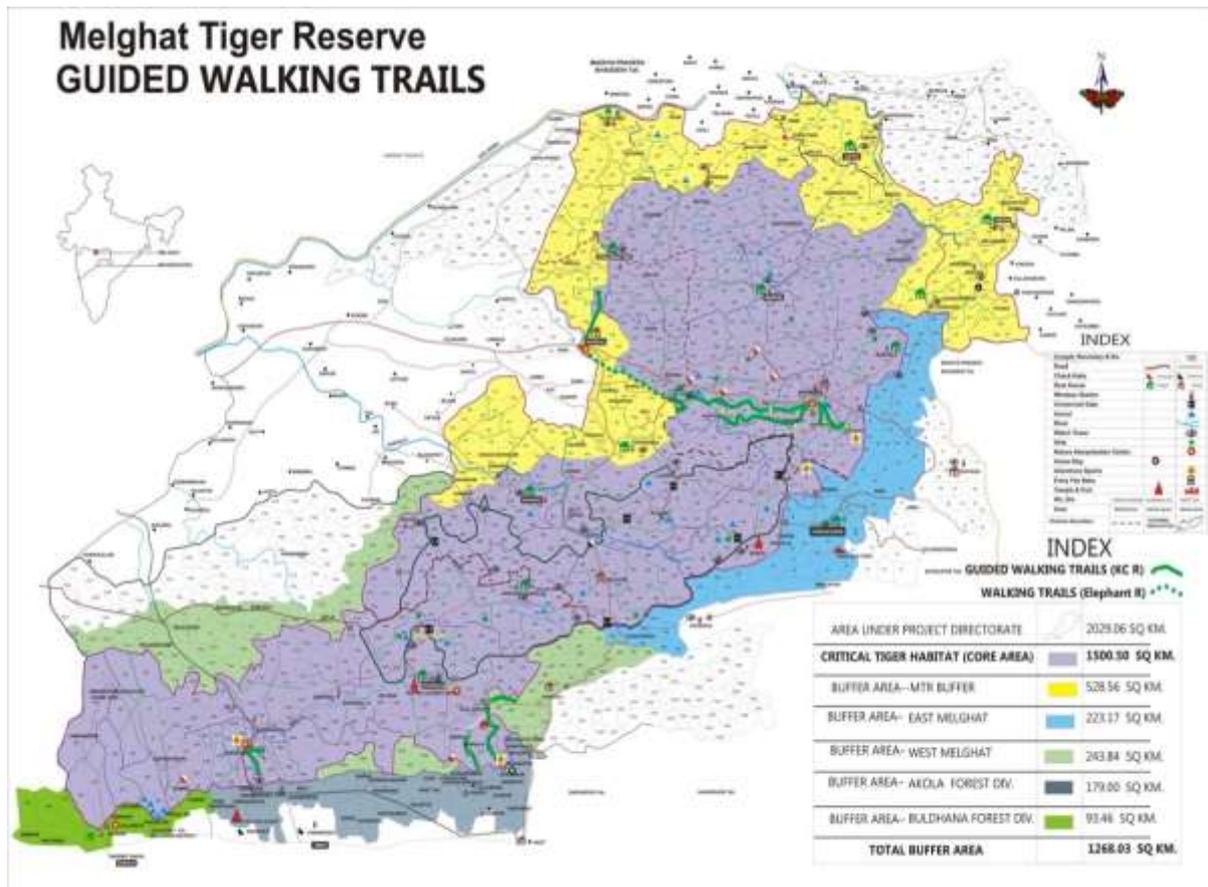
Map-9(b): Jungle Safari Route of MTR

Jungle Safaris is the integral part of the tourism. Gypsies and other vehicles are available by local people and by forest department. The visitors are given entry into the tourism zone only through vehicles registered with the management. Local people will be encouraged to buy their own vehicles with adequate financial help from Melghat Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation

C) GUIDED WALKING TRAILS (TREKS)

Melghat is a trekker's paradise. Undulating hills, valleys, rivers, streams, waterfalls and pristine forest offer many breath-taking vistas for trekkers. Melghat area has several identified walking trails. These trails are as good as treks. Guided walking tours are being carried out on these trails.

Treks are identified and named on the basis of their inherent strength e.g. Timber trail, Bird trail, Herbal trail, Elephant trail, Important landmarks etc. with adequate signages. The distance is depend upon the age class and interest of the tourist. Trails are being laid along fascinating sites like waterfalls, demonstration plots, panoramic view points etc. The guide service are made compulsory and no one is allowed to roam alone. Separate fee is levied for guides.



Map-9(c): Guided Walking Trail & Elephant walking Trail in MTR

D) ELEPHANT RIDING

Currently 4 departmental elephants are stationed at Kolkaz eco-tourism centre which is used for tourism purpose. Enthusiastic tourists are taken into a ride to the nearby forest and accordingly fees are charged from the tourists. Safari is allowed both in the morning and also in the evening time. Morning 9.00 A.M to 12.00 A.M & Evening 4.00 P.M to 6.00 P.M is kept for the ride.

E) ADVENTURE TOURISM:

Few of the adventure activities has been incorporated in Melghat Tourism. In Aamzari Nature camp, Chikaldhara facilities like Zip line, Bunji Eject, Monkey crawling facilities has been installed to attract the tourists. Similarly, in Semadoh small small adventure activities like Burma Bridge & Net crossing & Tyre climbing etc. are developed. Local EDC people are trained by the professionals for safe handling of tourist as well as equipment. In Harisal ecotourism centre adventurous activities like Kayaking has been developed.

F) CULTURAL TOURISM:

Melghat has famous historic cultural spot like ancient forts & temple. Presently, as a part of cultural tourism Narnala fort & Gavilgarh fort are opened for tourists.

D) PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR TOURISM:

- 💡 Gates need to be renovated in most of the safari entry points as identified in Eco Tourism Zone which includes Shahnur gate, Wasali gate, Baramanda gate, Pipalpadao (Khapra) gate, Gadga gate, Kuwapati gate, Vairat safari gate, Harisal gate.
- 💡 Tourism vehicles need to be purchased and registered with EDCs for increasing registered vehicles in the tourism gate
- 💡 View lines need to be developed for at least 50m on either sides of tourist roads for better visibility and also micro grass habitat on these view lines.
- 💡 Existing stay facilities and Eco friendly tents need to be repaired and maintained in all the tourism complexes identified in the eco tourism zone.
- 💡 Interpretation centres need to be developed in each of the tourism complexes
- 💡 Adventurous activities like river crossing, rock climbing and rappelling, water sports are proposed to attract more tourists.
- 💡 For development of cultural tourism the following sites are identified for cultural tourism:
 - i. Shahanur: In Shahnur Tourism zone, there is NIC & tourism facility where through cultural shows tourist will be given exposure to tribal dance, arts, handicrafts, painting, etc. Light and sound show will be set up at Shahanur.
 - ii. Harisal: Introduction to local tribal culture will be given through NIC, home stay, Bamboo hut, etc.
 - iii. Chikhaldara: Home stay facility at Aamzari, Shahpur and Lavada village will be provided.
 - iv. Narnala: It is a famous historical fort. Exhibition of tribal art through pictures, paintings, handicrafts will be arranged.
 - v. Gavilgarh fort: A museum/ interpretation centre showing cultural heritage shall be developed.
- 💡 Because the overall tourism footfall is less in Melghat Tiger reserve, there is not much pressure on wildlife. Also tourism in Vairat and Narnala is majorly landscape tourism

and most of the wildlife stay in valleys during the season. So Monsoon tourism needs to be allowed for these areas.

- 💡 Organization of Wildlife Film Shows, Slide Shows, and Exhibitions in Nature Interpretation centres, TV or film shows would be regularly organized for visitors, thus exposing them with PA values and the need for its conservation. A mobile exhibition with well-equipped Audio-Visual equipment can be established. The AV aids would be used mainly in villages on the eve of festivals, congregations, function etc. to make them aware about the need of conservation.
- 💡 Thematic exhibitions would be organized on important occasions like wildlife week, world forestry / Environment / Biodiversity days, Weekly Bazaar days.
- 💡 Wilderness Talks / Lectures Tables on Wildlife could be organized at all the Interpretation Centres, for organized groups. The Interpretation Centre at Amravati and Timber shed facilities at Paratwada could be used as auditoriums for films, lectures, talks etc. Such shows could be organized in colleges and schools of the vicinity and also ashrams schools in villages etc.
- 💡 Research Oriented Trips For students of zoology, Botany, Medicine and environmental sciences could be taken for field study. The prior arrangement could be made with colleges.
- 💡 Hides and watch towers provide good wildlife sighting experience in buffer areas. Many hides and watch towers have been already established in buffer tourism zone and near camping sites. Few more can be established. Small groups of up to 6 persons could be permitted to use hides and watch towers. Guide will be compulsory for a group of 3 or less persons. Similarly, machans at few prospective and safe points would be offered for stay for a limited duration during night hours in buffer areas.
- 💡 Nature camps for children need to be taken at a larger scale in Melghat Eco Tourism Zone and following activities need to be taken -
 - i. Cultural programme like tribal dance in each nature camp.
 - ii. Binoculars to be provided to nature guides of nature camps
 - iii. Regular upgradation of basic amenities at all tourist spots
 - iv. Development of Audio tours for children.

NEW TOURISM PACKAGES

The following eco-tourism activities are envisaged

- Package tour cum trekking in pre-defined routes for wilderness visits in selected locations of the buffer zone with specially designed vehicles.
- Package tour for children.
- Short nature walks with appropriate interpretation.
- Butterfly park at Simadoh.
- Eco-interpretation.
- Education talks and power point presentations by experts.
- Wildlife documentaries.
- Nature camps and eco-awareness camps.
- Witness captive Elephant Management
- Machan and watch tower views.
- Paid Nature camp visit for day tourists.
- Birding and bird watching excursions.
- Camping in tents at specified camp sites.
- Nature photography and guided tours.
- Cultural tourism and peep into local tribal's lifestyle.
- Competitions for school students.
- One day with Mahout.
- Trekking.
- Package tour for wild venture for eco-tourists
- Agricultural/farming and rural tourism.

Along with recreation, conservation efforts may be showcased to sensitize the public regarding hardships faced by staffs, wildlife management and habitat management with specific regulation of criteria for selection by the management from time to time.

- A day with Forester
- Participation in scientific activities like wildlife census, Fireline management etc.,

1.5.2 HOUSEKEEPING OF DEPARTMENTAL ELEPHANTS:

There are three elephants which are kept by the department in the Kolkaz camp. All the elephants are quite aged and over 50 years of age. There are two regular Mahout who takes care of the elephants. However, there are other casual employees who works under Mahouts guidance to look after the elephants. These elephants are basically used for protection activity and in rescue and rehabilitation of other wildlife. They are also used for tourism activity. The tourists can have elephant rides. There is a system of feeding and bathing the elephants for which charges are to be paid. The elephants inspite of being old aged are quite healthy and are taken care of properly. They are fed three times a day with multi grain chappatis and also with fruits and other supplements. During night time they are released to fed by themselves in the jungle areas. The vaccination and deworming programmes are carried out regularly and there is regular check-up of the elephants in every 15 days by the Veterinarian stationed at Parathwada.

1.5.3 INTERPRETATION PLAN

Interpretation and conservation education facility is presently available at Semadoh Nature Education and Interpretation complex. A museum at Chikhaldara and Nature Interpretation Centres at Amravati, Harisal and Gullarghat are also there. However, these need to be completed in order to fulfil their objective. They would be adequately augmented in order to highlight the theme attributed to them along with other tourism oriented facilities. The existing building at Chikhaldara which houses the museum include arrangement for reception, information kiosk, library facility, audio visual aids, informative boards and signages, stalls for exhibiting artifacts, diatomas and other subsidiary facilities etc.

The exhibits and displays in the NIC would be periodically changed in order to accommodate various aspects associated with value to conservation, biodiversity, tribal culture, forest protection and other wildlife management activities etc. Adequate measures would be taken to maintain all these facilities in place for the benefit of visitors. A number of thematic brochures, leaflets would be brought out including information about trek routes, nature trails, need based publications like eliciting people's support for the fire protection, conservation of nature etc. Existing checklist of birds would be reprinted with suitable illustrations. Existing Checklists of medicinal plants, butterflies and moths, fishes, places of interest, religious tourism may also be revised periodically. Suitable publicity material like T-Shirts, Caps, Stickers, Posters, Badges, Momentous etc. may be designed and created with an objective of spreading the message of conservation of nature and attributes of Melghat Tiger

Reserve. As far as possible, this would be facilitated by involving local people. Souvenir shop for selling these articles shall be established near the interpretation centres dotting the Melghat Tiger Reserve area.

Nature Interpretation Centre, Amravati:

The Nature Interpretation Centre at Amravati plays an important role of interpreting the nature to urban people and accordingly orient them and also make them aware about nature conservation by adopting suitable themes.

Museum and Orientation Centre, Chikhaldara:

The establishment for tourist's nature orientation at Chikhaldara holds tremendous potential, this being a well-known hill station where people coming from far off places would be motivated by adequately exposing them about various aspects of nature.

Nature and Wildlife Interpretation Centre and Museum, Semadoh:

The nature interpretation complex at Semadoh, presently acting as hub of tiger reserve, would cater to both rural as well as urban people coming down from Chikhaldara as well as from Paratwada and Dharni areas. This complex holds elaborate and exhaustive nature interpretive themes encompassing varied aspects.

NEW PROPOSAL TO BOLSTER NATURE INTERPRETATION PROGRAMME:

A. Education Strategies and Awareness Programme

The Park would develop its own environmental education and awareness (EEA) strategy and plan. It needs for its design and implementation.

The team from District Cultural Department under the District Administration can be used for creating awareness among people by doing street plays, acts, dance, songs etc. about Melghat and its diversity. Deputy Directors of MTR can coordinate with District Administration and concerned line department for the same during Fire season, festival seasons and important celebration days related to would include identification of the different issues and target groups to be covered by the program; the nature and type of activities for each target group; the programs to link PA interpretation centers with extension and education; linkages with other EEA programs of NGOs, universities, and schools, and institutional, informational, research, training, man power, financial and organizational Forest and Wildlife etc.

Rallies and flagmarches in coordination with NSS units and Eco-clubs of various schools and colleges should be organized in sensitive areas to create awareness and sensitization among local people.

Activities to be undertaken:

- i. Community interaction for conservation awareness
- ii. Orientation on bio-diversity conservation and the Eco- development Project
- iii. Educating farmers, women folk, youth, school children and teachers about village eco-development activities, improving skill and change in attitude towards propagation of non-conventional energy devices.
- iv. Educating the elected representatives of the local self Government to involve themselves in the project.
- v. Building a rapport between the villagers and the PA authorities.
- vi. Conduct street plays in different villages using local folk media, to build up an awareness of the project.
- vii. Conduct rallies to spread the cause of conservation
- viii. Need based training system (Ecotourism/Grassland management/Orchid management/Tribal culture etc.)

B. Education Programs for School Children

Educating school children in TR neighbourhoods on the values and importance of PAs is an effective strategy for getting broad-based long-term support for conservation. School children and youth can be brought to the TR to provide them with an experience and understanding of its role and importance; or the conservation message can be taken to the classrooms (through lectures and talks, audio-visual presentations etc.). The former could use day visits to the TRs and nature camps; or it could involve groups (particularly of higher grade students) in short assignments to get them involved in TR activities (such as setting up nature trails, animal surveys and census, establishing botanical collections or study topics of interest, etc.). These programs would require simple and inexpensive accommodation facilities such as dormitories or tents.

C. “BaghaSathi” Initiative

In this initiative a group of volunteers from among the school students around the tiger reserve on the “Catch them Young” principle will be selected. The objective is to motivate them towards conservation of forest and wildlife so that they will spread the message among their friends, relatives, elders and villagers and resist them from the pernicious practice of poaching of wild animals. Continuous follow up with the volunteers, taking them for nature excursion, group discussion etc. are some of the activities to be taken up.

D. Mass Media Campaigns for Creating Public Awareness

The use of mass media in developing countries has shown phenomenal growth in recent years. India’s rapid advance in opening up its markets and liberalizing its economy, is likely to increase enormously the use of radio, television, print media and other communication media. The mass media can and should be used for urban receivers. At this level, schools and universities, policy makers, and bureaucrats can all be successfully reached through distance education and general programs; the wide reach of mass media gives it enormous potential for disseminating and educating the general public and national and state level decision makers of the country. At the rural level, however, being tailored to local-specific issues, it has less flexibility in providing education and awareness.

Use of social media like **Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp groups, Telegram** groups etc. can be used for wide publication of developmental works and creation of mass awareness among people to know the importance of Melghat and its attributes.

1.5.4 REGULATION, MONITORING & EVALUATION

1.5.4.1 ENTRY FEE AND OTHER FEES:

The rate of entry fee for vehicle, persons, fee for camera, elephant ride fee, guide fee etc. in core can be revised by Field Director, Melghat Tiger Reserve as per provisions in the operating manual/ rules under Tiger Conservation Foundation.

The rates for various facilities and entry fee will be as follows:

Table-9(f): Current Tariff for various ecotourism activities inn MTR (SWAPNIL TO FILL)

SR. NO.	Activity	Fees / Rents / Fare in Rs.(per person)
1	Entry fee	600/- or 400/-per vehicle
2	Vehicle Safari (excluding guide fee& vehicle entry fees)	1800/-, 2000/-, 2500/-
3	Guide Fees	350/-
4	Camera fee	DSLR-400/-, Point & Shoot- 200/-, Video camera- 500/-
6	Zipline (200mtr) Banji Ejection	300/-per person 200/- per person
7	Monkey Crawling/Net crossing/Parallell Bridge/ Ladder/Burma Bridge/Zipline- 50 mtr.(Combo Package)	300/- per person
8	Elephant ride/Safari	800/- per ride for 4 person max. for half an hour.
9	Elephant Bathing & feeding	25/ person
Semadoh Nature Camp		
12	A type Cottage (Double Bedded)	2500/- per room
13	Circular Cottage(Double Bedded)	2000/- per cottage
14	Dormitory(16 Bedded)	500/- per bed
Aamzari Nature camp		
15	Suites(at Chikaldhara)	2000/-
16	Cottage	1500/-
17	Tents	800/-
18	Dormitory	500/- per bed
Kolkas Nature Camp		
19	Upper VIP suites	3000/-
20	Lower Cottages	1500/-
21	Dormitory	500/- per bed
Harisal Nature Camp		
22	Cottages	1500/-
23	Ethnic Bamboo hut	2000/-
Sahanoor Nature Camp		
24	Eco huts	1200/-
25	Eco Tents	1200/-
26	Dormitory	500/- per bed
Wasali Nature Camp		
27	Dormitory	500/- per bed
28	Cottage	1500/-

All the above rates are reviewed annually by Field Director, MTR.

1.5.4.2 SUBSIDIZED VISITS:

Student while fostering educational extension activities related to environment, forest and wildlife want to enter Tiger Reserve the entry fees rate will be subsidized. As per Wildlife (Protection) Maharashtra rules 1975 the powers vest in State Government. The subsidized rate to be proposed should be 50% of existing rates.

1.5.4.3 REGULATION OF TEMPLES PILGRIMAGES IN MTR:

- I. All transit camps and places of stay for such pilgrimage and entry inside shall be restricted to nominated days in a year and only restricted to existing premises of pilgrimage. Management should co-ordinate with temple authority to develop a system for controlling number of pilgrimages so as to maintain the ecological integrity of the area.
- II. All rules relating to tourism facility including noise, building design, use of alternative energy and fee passage to wildlife shall apply to such pilgrimage facilities.
- III. Revenue sharing with local community and channel a minimum of 10 percent of gross revenue collected in to development of local communities through the Gram Sabha.
- IV. There are following religious and festival events happening in MTR:
 - a) Dhargad Shivmandir Yatra organized in the month of Shravan every year.
 - b) Narnala festival organized every year in the month of February.
 - c) Wari - Bhairavgad Temple

More than 25000 pilgrims visit every year. Suitable arrangements will be made. Training to persons from Forest Department as well as from VEDCs will be given for mob handling. Sanctity and eco-friendliness will be maintained. Suitable eco-friendly measures will be established to minimize the negative impacts on ecosystem. Awareness among Yatris will be created.

- V. Proper signages will be erected. Routes Will be laid out so as to cause minimum disturbance to forest and wildlife. Continuous patrolling and vigil will be done at war footing. The local EDC shall be involved in the process of control & management of people, vehicle etc, entering the protected areas during these yatra. Help will be taken from other departments to manage crowd. Guidelines for temple boards/local NGO by governments both state and central will be taken into consideration.

1.5.4.4 REGULATION OF TOURISM AREA IN MTR:

Though 12.66% area of core is permitted for low impact eco-tourism following regulations should be implemented.

- ⇒ Core Management should not manipulate habitat to inflate animal abundance for tourism purpose.
- ⇒ The water holes, cement-troughs should not be constructed near tourist routes but should be constructed away from road.
- ⇒ Visitor shall keep a minimum distance of more than 20 meter from all wildlife.
- ⇒ Cordoning, luring or feeding of any wildlife in eco-tourism zone by any person is prohibited.

1.5.4.5 REGULATION OF VEHICULAR TOURISM OF CORE ZONE:

- I. The vehicles (Gypsy/Canter) to be used for wildlife safari will have to be registered with Melghat Tiger Conservation Foundation. While registering vehicles the preference will be given to first EDC then local owner and then others. The EDC will be promoted to purchase tourist vehicle by Melghat Tiger Conservation Foundation. The vehicle registered should be allowed on rotation system. This will be regulated by Management of MTR so that all vehicles registered with Foundation get opportunity of employment.
- II. Conduct of visitors, while inside wilderness areas like Sanctuary should be governed by some easy and simple to follow set of rules about which the visitor should be clearly and prominently informed before entering into forests for wildlife viewing, undertaking nature walks like trekking or even while staying in tourist accommodations. The visitors should also be informed about pros and cons of undesirable misconduct.

1.5.4.6 REGULATIONS OF TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE IN CORE AND BUFFER:

CORE: No new tourist infrastructure (i.e. places for stay, canteen/ restaurants) will be constructed in core zone. Any type of tourism infrastructure including toilet block, interpretation centre etc. should not be erected on relocated village sites.

BUFFER: Eco friendly tourist stays, small low impact community stay/ home stay by local villagers, local community, village Eco-development Committee or Gram panchayat can be set up. The regulation of tourism infrastructures in buffer will be governed by following rules.

- ⇒ No tourism infrastructure of permanent nature except gates, toilets, check nakas, signages can be setup on forest land in notified buffer area.
- ⇒ The existing tourist infrastructure should be environment friendly low impact, aesthetic including solar energy, waste recycling, rainwater harvesting, natural cross ventilation, proper sewage disposal and merging with the surrounding habitat.
- ⇒ All new tourist infrastructure should be environment friendly, low impact, aesthetic architecture 50% of their energy consumption should be met from solar and biogas resources. Waste recycling rainwater harvesting arrangement should be made in each facility. The facilities set up should have natural cross ventilation, proper sewage disposal arrangement the structure should merge with surrounding habitat. Tourism facilities shall adhere to pollution norms (noise, solid waste, air and water etc.) and other respective laws or rules for time being in force.
- ⇒ The existing resorts, private hotels and government rest houses will ensure eco-friendly practices by
 - Prohibiting plastic use
 - Installation of rainwater harvesting structures
 - Use of biogas, solar and wind power for energy needs
 - Compliance of the directions given by LAC and Field Director, MTR
- ⇒ There shall be a complete ban on burying, burring or otherwise disposing non-biodegradables or toxic waste in the buffer area of Tiger Reserve. Proper plan for disposal of, degradable waste shall be developed and strictly implemented.
- ⇒ Asbestos should not be used in any tourism facility set up in buffer, Existing Asbestos should be replaced by suitable material.
- ⇒ Barbed wire fencing should not be erected around any tourism facilities. Existing Barbed wire fencing should be replaced by suitable material.

- ⇒ All the tourism complexes, resorts, home stays, community stays, Government rest houses, canteens, restaurants should not use wood as fuel for any purpose other than for small camp fire.
- ⇒ All tourist facilities falling within buffer zone of tiger reserve shall be reviewed regularly by Local Advisory Committee for environment clearance, area of coverage, ownership, type of construction, number of employees etc. LAC should take appropriate action for noncompliance and suggest mitigation and retrofitting measures if needed.
- ⇒ Existing tourism facility in core/ buffer run by Forest Department or FDCM will be renewed, landscaped and refurbished. The expenditure to be incurred on such work should be met from Eco-Tourism Development (State/ District. Plan) TSP state plan, CAMPA, tourism development fund received from MTDC or Central Government.
- ⇒ Tourist facilities and tour operators shall not cause any disturbance to animals in core or buffer.
- ⇒ All the resorts or operator at tourism facilities in buffer of Melghat Tiger Reserve should give priority to employ worker from the same village where facility is situated or from neighbouring village.
- ⇒ The resort management/ tourism facility management should impart training to local villagers in skill development.
- ⇒ Conservation fees as per existing rules and regulations need to be collected from tourism structures operated in buffer areas.

1.5.4.7 REGULATION OF OPENING & CLOSURE OF MELGHAT TIGER RESERVE FOR VISITORS:

As monsoon renders the roads in tourism zone as well as other roads difficult to ply on as also in view of the fact that monsoon induces most of the biological activities including breeding for most of the species, and therefore, with a view to keep the areas undisturbed, the trips for wildlife viewing as well as ecotourism routes would be kept suspended from 1st of July to 30th of September every year. As monsoon recedes, repairs of roads and accommodations would be taken on priority in order to cater to tourist needs.

However, following areas needs an exception from this: a) Vairat Safari and b) Narnala Fort safari for the reasons follows:

- 1) The tourism in Melghat is very low that disturbance to wildlife is minimal (unlike prominent tiger reserves) all throughout the year barring the holiday season.
- 2) Attraction in Melghats are the hilly trips during monsoon and the above two safaris have good roads even in this period thus ensuring visitor safety.
- 3) There are very limited business opportunities for local people other than the revenue from such monsoon safaris in this season

1.5.4.8 REGULATION FOR VISITORS

Conduct of visitors, while inside wilderness areas like Sanctuary should be governed by some easy and simple to follow set of rules about which the visitor should be clearly and prominently informed before entering into forests for wildlife viewing, undertaking nature walks like trekking or even while staying in tourist accommodations. The visitors should also be informed about pros and cons of undesirable misconduct.

DO'S:

- (i) Shooting with camera with proper permit.
- (ii) Observing silence, desisting from playing of radios, tape recorders, blowing of horns etc.
- (iii) Moving in forest with proper permit.
- (iv) Must be accompanied by registered guide.
- (v) Avoiding movement in restricted areas.
- (vi) Sticking to the instructions of the guide/forest personnel.
- (vii) Using bio degradable material.
- (viii) Observing rules regulations and orders in force in accommodation areas or areas designated for tourists.
- (ix) Booking in advance of the tourist accommodation.
- (x) Timely payments of all the fees due.
- (xi) Driving at a controlled speed and respect the rights of way for wild animals.
- (xii) Showing courtesy, respect and cooperation for reserve rules and staff on duty.

DON'TS:

The following is the list of activities, which will attract action under provisions of various laws. The visitors are advised to desist from such type of activities, which may constitute offence under relevant Acts and Reserve rules and for which they may be charged for misconduct.

- i. Smoking of Cigarette, Cigar or Bidi, kindling of fire or leaving fire un-extinguished in forests.
- ii. Playing of music, radio, tape recorder, making unnecessary noises at undesirable volume.
- iii. Moving in forest area without proper guide.
- iv. Non-following of regulations like getting down from vehicle.
- v. Littering on forest floor or accommodation area with garbage or throwing non-biodegradable material.
- vi. Teasing, pelting stones, hurling objects etc at wild animals or chasing, yelling at wild animals.
- vii. Inflicting injuries or cutting of trees, plucking of plants, its parts, uprooting plants.
- viii. Using camera without proper permission.
- ix. Using flashguns, flashlights in night.
- x. Speeding of vehicle beyond the desired speed limit.
- xi. Contaminating or poisoning of important habitat resources like waterholes, Saltlicks, wallows etc.
- xii. Moving in restricted area and after closure period.
- xiii. Use of perfumes or strong smelling chemicals.
- xiv. Accompanying with pet animals.
- xv. Carrying arms.
- xvi. Picking and bagging of anything lying on the floor of forests.
- xvii. Trapping, plucking or carrying off any flora, fauna or their part.
- xviii. Indulging in alcoholism or drugs.
- xix. Indulging in immoral activities.
- xx. Bribing officials or government personnel.
- xxi. Not paying dues in time.
- xxii. Causing disturbance in the campus.
- xxiii. Non return or stealing of articles from library, accommodation, museum etc.

- xxiv. Causing damage to property of MTR.
- xxv. Drawing graffiti or painting walls, trees etc.
- xxvi. Camping in forests without proper permits.
- xxvii. Wearing indecent clothes or indecent behavior that will hurt local culture.

Violation of any of above restriction will be penalized by fine not less than Rs. 500/- and may extend up to Rs. 2,5000/-. In case violation is done by registered Gypsy/ canter owner or guide along with fine, his authorization to enter Tiger Reserve tourism zone will be suspended for minimum 7 days, which may extend up to one month. Any offence of serious nature like being drunk during safari, inappropriate behaviour towards women etc shall be a reason to permanently remove a guide/driver from employment. Any violation done by tourist should be reported to nearest park authority by tourist guide immediately failing he will be treated as violator himself. Feedback registers also need to be maintained and actions need to be taken by park authorities without any delay.

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1.5.4.9 MONITORING & EVALUATION

Periodic review by Local Advisory Committee (LAC)

A local Advisory committee has been formed by Govt. of Maharashtra by the GR no. WLP0523/173/F-1 dated 21th September 2023 to review the tourism related activities in MTR.

The functions of LAC are:

- a) To review the tourism strategy with respect to the tiger reserve and make recommendation to the state Government;
- b) To ensure computation of reserve specific carrying capacity and its implementation through periodic review;
- c) To ensure site specific norms on buildings and infrastructures in areas inside and close to tigers reserve, keeping in view the corridor value and ecological aesthetics;
- d) To advice local self-government and state government on issues relating to development of tourism in and around tiger reserve.
- e) Monitor half yearly all tourist facilities in and around tiger reserve vis-à-vis environmental clearance, area of coverage, ownership, type of construction, number of employees etc. for suggesting mitigation and retrofitting measures if needed.

- f) Monitor regularly activities of tour operators to ensure that they do not cause disturbance to animals, while taking visitors in to the tiger reserves;
- g) To encourage tourism industry to augment employment opportunities for members of local communities.

The Field Director, MTR, Amaravati shall ensure that the committee meets atleast at 6 month interval and must be before the commencement of tourism season.

Tourist Feedback and its Evaluation

Feedback helps in rectification of deficiencies and further improvement of a programme. A good feedback also boosts the enthusiasm of the people involved in implementation of that particular programme. Many factors, which determine a person's enjoyment of a visit to the Park, result from the courteousness and efficiency of staff, provision of information, quality and safety of amenities. To know more about the tourist's opinion, a questionnaire would be most appropriate. Feedback facilities will be made available in the following forms.

1. Visitor books will be made available at all booking counters& Nature stay and Nature interpretation centre of Melghat TR.
2. Feedback format to be uploaded in the official website Melghat TR where the visitor can fill up the form online.
3. Offline feedback is in place and provided to the tourists in nature camps. Fortnight review of the feedbacks should be checked by the ACF (Ecotourism) and monthly by Deputy Director for further improvement of the facilities of the stay.
4. Feedback for day tourism has been provided to the day tourists as one form per vehicle. They are submitting the duly filled feedback form at the exit gate. The feedback form basically about the day tourism facilities, nature guides and driver.
