

All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours (Guidelines & Regulations)

The Department of Tourism,
The Administration of Union Territory of
Ladakh



ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE (ATV) TOURS IN LADAKH

A matchless experience steering through high-altitude landscape of Ladakh in an ATV is a fascinating experience. Admiring the mesmerizing beauty enroute and swaying through the crisscross routes, riding an ATV sets the spirits high of all thrill seekers.

A favorite sport for thrill seekers, the quad bikes also known as ATVs are a fun way to explore the beauty of Ladakh. Riding the 4x4 beast with the chilly wind in your face and navigating through rugged terrain is amazing.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Tourism, Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh to streamline and promote adventure activities in Ladakh in a regulated manner is issuing the Guidelines & Regulations for carrying out All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours. These guidelines shall extend to the whole of the Union Territory of Ladakh and come into force from the date of its notification.

The Department of Tourism, Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh recommends following the guidelines & regulations for All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours, issued by the Adventure Tour Operators Associations of India (ATOAI) and endorsed by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

These guidelines will act as a defining force with respect to the procedures to be followed, mandatory trainings for guides/instructors, equipment to be used, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), necessary documentation, risk mitigation processes, addressing medical concerns, emergencies, rescue operations, safety briefing, etc. All Adventure Tour Operators (ATOs) shall follow these guidelines while conducting All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

VALIDITY

The 'Guidelines & Regulation for All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours' will remain valid for five (5) years, from the date of its notification. All Adventure Tour Operators (ATOs) are advised to strictly adhere to the terms and conditions of these guidelines and follow its best implementation for the sustainable development of the adventure tourism ecosystem in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

ENCLOSURES

- Annexure 1 – Guidelines & Regulations for All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours in the Union Territory of Ladakh
- Annexure 2 – Implementation Framework for the Union Territory of Ladakh

ANNEXURE 1

GUIDELINES & REGULATIONS FOR ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE (ATV) TOURS

1. INTRODUCTION

ATVs (also known as quad bikes), when operated properly, can be exciting and safe. However, their incorrect use can lead to serious injuries. Though ATVs are very similar to cars & motorcycles, their operation is very different. ATV operation requires a different level of instruction and training. These minimum standards have been outlined to promote safe practices among operators of ATV tours.

2. GUIDES / INSTRUCTORS

Guides supervising participants on All Terrain Vehicles (ATV). Accreditation given by any International Institute may be accepted. Alternatively, the guide should have completed an in-house training program that focuses on the following topics:

1. An introduction to the ATV machine, protective clothing, equipment, and pre-ride inspections
2. Range signals, rules, and warm-up exercises
3. Controls and starts the engine
4. Starting, shifting gears, and braking
5. Turning
6. Riding strategies/risk awareness
7. Riding circles and figures of eight
8. Quicker turns
9. Sharp turns
10. Quick stops and swerves
11. A quick stop in a turn
12. Riding over obstacles
13. Safe and responsible driving practices
14. U-turns and traversing hills
15. Circuit or Trail rides

In addition, all guides must be familiar with (and assessed on) the operating manual(s) of the ATV(s) in which they operate.

3. CUSTOMER TRAINING

ATV operators should always follow the instruction in their Owner's Manual for recommended operating techniques. All participants of an ATV tour must receive a basic training course before their tour commences. The basic minimum training course should cover the following:

1. To mount and sit on the ATV correctly, locate and operate the controls, and dismount
2. Use the brakes properly to bring ATV to a smooth, safe stop
3. To demonstrate basic turning skills by shifting weight properly to maintain balance and avoid the possibility of losing control of the ATV
4. All participants must pay attention to the instructions provided by their guides

4. EQUIPMENT

1. **ATV Machine:** ATVs are subject to considerable wear and tear owing to the nature of their use outdoors. Therefore, only use an ATV from a reputable manufacturer and ensure maintenance is undertaken as per operating manual instructions.
2. **Helmet:** The single most important piece of protective gear riders must wear is a helmet, which can help prevent serious head injuries. Wearing an approved motorcycle helmet does not reduce essential vision and hearing. Use either a full-face or three-quarter (open face) helmet. Helmets must be properly fitted to the participant – they should be snug, comfortable, and securely fastened.
3. **Face Shield or Goggles:** If the ATV tour is in a jungle or areas with dense foliage, a face shield or goggles should be used to prevent eye injuries.
4. **Gloves:** Gloves should be of a quality that will help prevent your hands from getting sore, tired, or cold, as well as offering protection in the event of a spill/fall. Off-road style gloves, available at leading motorcycle and ATV dealerships, provide the best combination of protection and comfort. They are padded over the knuckles for added protection.
5. **Footwear:** The minimum protective footwear is a pair of ankle-length shoes or boots with low heels to help prevent feet from slipping off the footrests.
6. **Clothing:** It is important to protect your skin from scratches. A long-sleeved jersey/sweater, shirt or T-shirt, and long trousers are requirements for rider protection.

7. **Spares & First Aid:** It is recommended that guides carry an appropriate first aid kit and tool kit during an ATV tour. Examine the tool kit that came with your machine.

5. INSPECTIONS & MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES

Before commencing each trip, Guides must carry out an inspection of any ATV to be used by themselves or their customers before each ride. An inspection will minimize the chance of injury or malfunction and ensure long-term usage of your ATV. The ASI uses the following basic T-CLOC checklist: (T-CLOC stands for Tyres and Wheels, Controls and Cables, Lights and Electrics, Oil and Fuel, Chain/Drive Shaft and Chassis).

6. SOPs & OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

SOPs have to be formulated for the conduct of the training program and the same should be approved by the Department of Tourism, Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh. The following rules should apply to all participants and guides during an ATV tour:

1. All participants must wear a helmet and other protective equipment.
2. Always keep both hands on the handlebars and both feet on the footrests of the ATV during operation.
3. Avoid paved surfaces – ATVs are designed to be operated off paved roads.
4. Avoid public roads unless the machine has been specifically manufactured for this purpose and complies with the relevant automotive licensing requirements for road use.
5. Never allow riding under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
6. Never carry a passenger unless the machine has been specifically designed and manufactured to do so.
7. Ride only on designated trails and at a safe speed as mandated by the manufacturer of the machine.
8. Extreme care must be taken not to undertake random off-roading as it has a deep impact on the ecology of the area, especially in regions like Ladakh.

7. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN

1. Children under the age of 18 require parental consent to ride ATVs and adult supervision.
2. ATVs are NOT toys and children aged below 18 years should only ride the right ATV for their age.
3. Always follow the manufacturer's minimum age recommendations which will be shown on the ATV or in the Operating Manual.

8. DOCUMENTATION

The following is the basic minimum documentation required:

1. ATV and associated equipment purchase documentation, including warranty, service & maintenance history documentation.
2. Owner's / Operating Manual for each ATV.
3. Training and assessment log for all guides.
4. First aid certificates for all guides.

9. RISK MITIGATION

A basic risk assessment should be conducted on any trail intended for the use of ATV tours before participants are permitted to use such a route. An Emergency Action Plan must be in position and regular training imparted to the staff for the same.

10. EMERGENCIES AND RESCUES

A first aid kit must be available and the venue/route itself must be easily accessible. In addition, a detailed emergency procedure must be written that includes contact numbers of the available emergency services. Evacuation routes and emergency procedures must also be included in the company's risk assessment.

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. Rules and speed limits
2. Wearing protective gear
3. ATV controls operation and pre-ride checks
4. Rider responsibilities and risk awareness
5. Group riding procedure to include lane position, following other vehicles, headlights, signals, and parking
6. Handling dangerous surfaces and any special riding conditions
7. Indemnity bond by the participant
8. Avoiding alcohol before/during the ride

9. Staying hydrated and rest stops.

12. MEDICAL CONCERNS

These are of two types: personal and accident-related during the ride.

1. For personal medical conditions, clients should be advised to carry medication and inform the ride leader.
2. For accident-related concerns, the ride leader should have a plan in addition to a First Aid Kit.

13. BASIC MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR GRANT OF RECOGNITION TO OPERATORS

1. The agency must own ATVs and all accessories and safety gear as specified above. The ATVs must be well maintained, serviced and in perfect working order with the required documentation.
2. The agency must have at least two full-time trained ATV guides duly qualified (specified above) / knowledgeable about conducting ATV activity safely, group dynamics, rules, communication skills, repairs/punctures, etc. They must possess valid First Aid / CPR certification.
3. The operator must have SOPs for conducting ATV trips and an Emergency Action Plan for all trips.
4. A detailed risk assessment must be carried out before conducting ATV trips.
5. A list of hospitals in the vicinity of the tour should be carried out by the ATV guides.
6. A detailed SOP for inspecting ATVs, documentation, and safety gear before conducting trips must be in position.
7. The agency must have a registered office.
8. The agency must be registered with the local tourism authorities.
9. Local-level certification for ATV Operators. This is desirable and can be implemented at State Government Level.
10. The company must follow a strict 'leave no trace policy and conform to high sustainability standards.

ANNEXURE 2 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE UNION TERRITORY OF LADAKH

1. CONSTITUTION OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

The Department of Tourism, Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh shall, by notification/ order will constitute a 'Technical Committee' for All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours with the following members:

Composition of the Technical Committee	
Director (Tourism), UT Ladakh	Chairperson
Chief Wildlife Warden / Representative, Wildlife Department	Member
Principal ISM, Kargil Branch	Member
Principal FCI/ IHM, Leh	Member
Representative of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF)	Member
Representative of the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) for All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours	Member
Representative of the Ladakh Association for All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours	Member
Assistant Director (Tourism), Concerned	Convening Member

2. FUNCTIONS OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

The Technical Committee shall meet once every year before the start of the tourist season in the Union Territory of Ladakh, and shall be responsible for the following:

- Inspect and certify the equipment with the operator from a safety point of view.
- Scrutinize the credential of the personnel responsible for conducting ATV tours, the medical fitness of the guide, and conduct their physical test to ascertain their expertise.
- Ensure that the operator and the guide shall follow all safety procedures indicated in their rules.
- Identify new areas/ routes/ tracks for ATV tours in the Union Territory of Ladakh.
- Notify the exact stretches on the identified areas/ routes/ tracks where the operation can be safely conducted, considering the area's environmental sensitivity, critical wildlife hotspots and fragile water systems.
- Formulate a plan for containing the environmental impact strictly inside the designated activity area.
- Forecast the potential ecological impacts and ensure a plan for eco-conditioning to minimize the impact and offsetting the potential environmental impact.
- Ensure preparation and implementation of a Risk Management Matrix, and Emergency & Evacuation plan.
- Ensure preparation of a plan for tourist awareness and education.
- Determine the capacity of each track every year before the start of any operation.

3. CONSTITUTION OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEE

The Department of Tourism, Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh shall, by notification/ order will constitute a 'Regulatory Committee' for All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours with the following members:

Composition of the Regulatory Committee	
Assistant Director (Tourism), Concerned	Chairperson
Wildlife Warden or Representative, Wildlife Department	Member
Representative of the District Disaster Response Force (DDRF)	Member
Representative of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO)	Member
SHO/Choki of the Concerned Area	Member
Representative of the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) for All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours	Member
Representative of the Ladakh Association for All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours	Member
Officer in-charge of the Department of Tourism, UT Ladakh at Sub-Division and Tehsils	Convening Member

4. FUNCTIONS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEE

The Regulatory Committee shall meet once every year before the start of the tourist season in the Union Territory of Ladakh, and shall be responsible for the following:

- Overall control for regulating the ATV operations, in coordination with the concerned stakeholders and associations.
- Surprise inspections during the ATV operations to ascertain adherence of the guidelines, assess the quality & condition of equipment being used and assess the ecological impact, to help develop adaptive management strategies. The Regulatory Committee shall constitute a joint inspection or verification team with the Department of Youth Services & Sports, UT Ladakh and Adventure Sports Association, if any.

- Establish a mechanism for receiving and addressing complaints, concerns, and feedback from local communities, tourists, and stakeholders.
- Any other functions concerning ATV operations in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

5. CLAIM ON ACCOUNT OF ANY MISHAP

The Department of Tourism, or any other Department/ Authority of the Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh shall, in no way be responsible for any claims on account of any mishap.

6. SHOW CAUSE NOTICE

If any operator, guide, or personnel responsible for conducting ATV operations is found to be violating these Guidelines & Regulations for All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Tours, appropriate action shall be taken by the Department of Tourism, Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh.

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