



Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation

COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM • PALGHAR & NASHIK DISTRICTS

Tourism Readiness Toolkit

for Community-based tourism entrepreneurs

A guide for developing culture-based
tourism together



Presented by Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation under
the initiative Developing ICH-based Experiential Tourism in the
Palghar and Nashik Districts of Maharashtra

Foreword

The Tourism Readiness Toolkit is a practical guide to help communities prepare for and participate in culture-based tourism, presented by Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC). It supports local entrepreneurs and community members in transforming their villages into the nucleus of tourism.

Through simple explanations and hands-on activities, the toolkit helps communities identify their strengths, map local assets, design experiences, and interact with visitors in a confident and respectful way. It promotes a responsible and community-led approach, ensuring that tourism respects local values while creating shared economic opportunities and transforming villages into cultural tourism destinations.



Tourism & Culture, Together

Tourism is not only about exploring natural and architectural landscapes but also about experiencing the cultural heritage of a region.

When tourism is led by communities, it can support cultural continuity, strengthen local identity, and encourage meaningful exchange between visitors and hosts.

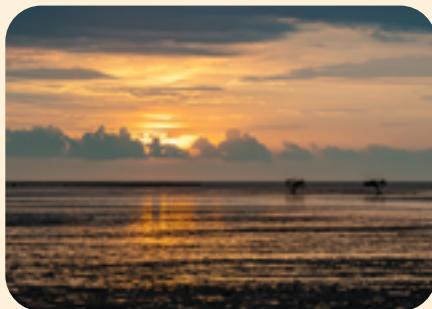


Tourism provides a tremendous opportunity to support local economic development, while breaking down barriers between people. Harnessing creativity and technological innovation, as well as safeguarding heritage, is essential for promoting responsible and sustainable tourism to support and unify communities for years to come.

– Mr Xing Qu, UNESCO Deputy Director-General, at the third UNWTO/ UNESCO Global Conference on Tourism and Culture, 2018

Learning from Real Experiences

Gholwad, a serene coastal village known for its chikoo orchards and honey, was once limited to traditional tourism. After MTDC's intervention to develop ICH-based tourism, the community began showcasing its deeper cultural strengths, such as traditional bamboo craft, local cuisine, traditional dances, and its unique cultural confluence. A community museum, built with artefacts donated by locals, is now emerging as a key attraction. This shift has also opened new livelihood opportunities, with women artists starting small shops, households offering food, and locals taking pride in sharing their stories, showing how community-led efforts can transform how a village is experienced without losing its cultural and historical significance.



About the Toolkit

A planned and responsible approach to culture-based tourism

Who is it for?

Designed for community-based tourism entrepreneurs who want to participate.

What are we building?

This toolkit helps you to create value for your local heritage, share your cultural practices, and build your village a Cultural Tourism Destination.

It supports creating shared benefits while respecting traditions and opening new opportunities for the future. Who benefits from this process?



Core Principles

Tourism should grow with the community, respecting local rhythms, values, and choices.



Community-Led



Digitized



Inclusive



Sustainable



Respects Rhythms

Different types of tourists

Just like us, visitors need a break from daily stress. They travel to different places to find peace, joy, and new experiences.



To spend a holiday



To learn new things



To visit family



To rest the mind

Curiosity About Real Life

Today, visitors want more than just photos of famous places. They are curious about how we live our everyday lives—our culture.



How we dress



What we cook



How we celebrate



How we farm

This confluence of culture with tourism is Cultural Tourism

Cultural Tourism



Culture

Living practices
& traditions



History

Places, stories
& heritage



People

Hosts & visitors
connecting



Experiences

Walks, food,
crafts & arts



Nature

Landscapes
& environment

What is Cultural Tourism and its Benefits



Economic Benefits

Generates local income through small, culture-rooted enterprises. Allows artists and hosts to earn with dignity without middlemen.



Social Benefits

Strengthens local identity, pride and brings community ownership to the forefront. Encourages intergenerational learning where youth learn skills and stories from elders.



Cultural Benefits

Supports the continuity of traditions and living heritage. Creates spaces for meaningful, respectful exchange between visitors and hosts.



Environmental Benefits

Provides incentives to conserve natural landscapes, protect resources, and maintain the village's ecological balance.

Approach: Responsible, Small-scale, and Dignified

Types of Cultural Heritage

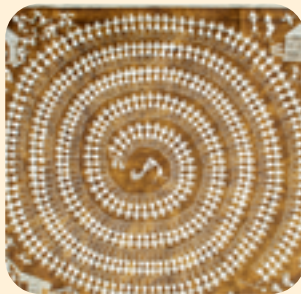
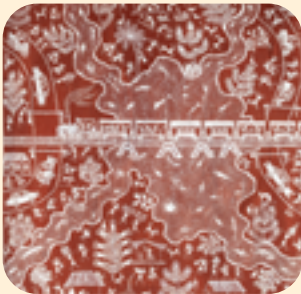
Tourism isn't just about places—it's about the living culture, history, and nature that make us who we are.

Intangible & Living Heritage

Intangible and Living heritage includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants.

- Oral traditions
- Performing arts and crafts
- Social practices, rituals & festivals
- Knowledge of nature

Ex. Warli painting, traditional dance and music, culinary practices, basketry, folklores related to places, people, and rituals





Tangible Heritage

Tangible heritage is the physical, material creations of a society that hold cultural significance and are passed down, representing a community's history, identity, and creative achievements.

- Monuments
- Buildings
- Artifacts
- Artworks

Ex. The Mahalaxmi temple, Bhim Bandh, Wadas, traditional houses, and Forts made by Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj



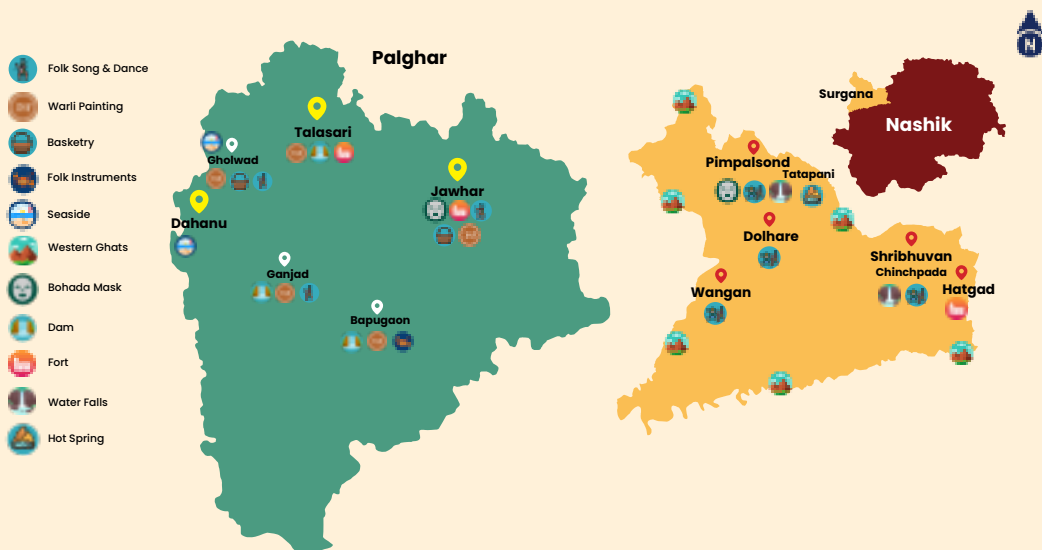
Natural Heritage

Natural Heritage is natural formations, areas, or sites of "Outstanding Universal Value" (OUV), having scientific significance, conservation importance, or biodiversity.

- Physical formations
- Biological formations
- Geological/Physiographical areas
- Ecosystems (Forest, Wetlands)
- Landforms

Ex. The Western Ghats, The Mangroves of Palghar, Chikoo or cagards etc.

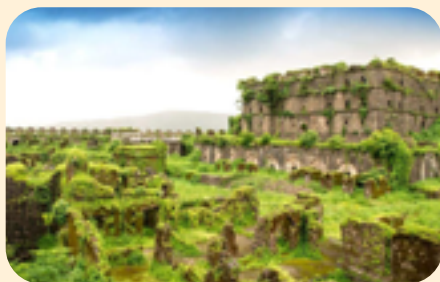




Our state holds the highest number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India, reflecting a legacy of intellect, creativity, and resilience.

12 Maratha Forts

Built by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, these forts (like Raigad, Shivneri) showcase extraordinary military strategy, planning, and resilience.



Ajanta & Ellora

Ancient rock-cut caves featuring masterpieces of Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain art, representing religious harmony and artistic brilliance.

Elephanta Caves

Located on an island near Mumbai, these rock-cut caves contain magnificent sculptures dedicated to Lord Shiva, dating back to the 5th century.



CSMT & Art Deco

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus and the Victorian Gothic & Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai highlight colonial and modern architectural fusion.

Western Ghats

A biodiversity hotspot older than the Himalayas, home to unique flora and fauna, crucial for the ecological balance of the region.



Why it Matters

Not only do we, but tourists value these too; if you have such a place in your region, it can increase footfall. These are not just relics of the past; these are a testament of our knowledge, creativity, courage and connection to history and nature

Identifying Tourism Aspects in Your Village

Mapping our village assets: Natural, Cultural, Tangible, and Stories

Community Activity

Goal: Recognize our strengths before creating experiences.

Draw a map of your village and mark all tourism assets. Look for hidden gems that visitors might value.

MAP LEGEND & CATEGORIES

- Natural Heritage - Forests, rivers, hills, groves
- Cultural Practices - Festivals, crafts, music, food
- Heritage Places - Temples, old homes, meeting spots
- Stories & Oral History- Myths, historical events, memories

Be sure to include: Stories related to your rituals, tradition, migration, locality, farming, songs, and traditional folklore

Cultural Tourism

Entrepreneurs in Your Village

Tourism can support small, local enterprises that are rooted in culture, skills, and everyday life. These enterprises can help individuals and groups earn with dignity while strengthening the community as a whole.



Local Guides & Storytellers

Community members who share local history, rituals, landscapes, and everyday life with visitors.



Craft Artists

Makers who demonstrate traditional skills (such as Warli art or basketry) and sell products directly, without middlemen.



Local Eateries

Households or individuals who prepare and serve local recipes and seasonal produce, offering authentic food experiences.



Youth Cultural Ambassadors

Young community members who document stories, support village walks, assist visitors, and connect elders' knowledge with tourism



Village Facility Providers

Community members managing rest areas, drinking water points, toilets, and information corners for visitors.



Cultural Performers

Artists who present songs, dances, rituals, or demonstrations linked to festivals, farming cycles, and traditions.



Homestay and Transport Providers

Community members offering local stays and transport, ensuring income remains within the village.

Activity: Map Our Services

Identify existing assets and future opportunities within the village.

Mark These

- Homestays
- Transport
- Crafts
- Food
- Guides
- Art/Music

Discuss

- Which activities are ready to host visitors today?
- Who in the community has skills but needs a platform?

Sustainable Tourism-Based Enterprises

Small activities run by community members that uses local knowledge, skills, and resources. They respect culture and nature, require low investment, and can continue even with limited visitors.

Pricing Your Services

Tourism should benefit the community fairly. Pricing helps ensure that everyone involved is respected and compensated for their effort, time, and knowledge.

What to Consider While Pricing

Time & Effort

How much time does the activity take? (1 hour, half-day, full day)

Community Members Involved

How many community members are contributing? (guide, cook, artist, host)

Materials & Resources

Raw materials used (food ingredients, craft supplies, fuel, transport)

Skill & Knowledge

Specialized skills (storytelling, art, performance, traditional knowledge)

Visiting Group Size

Smaller groups may cost more per person; larger groups can reduce per-person cost

Types of Pricing Models

Per Person Cost

Example: ₹500 per visitor for a 2-hour village walk + storytelling

Package Cost

Example: ₹3000 for a half-day experience (up to 5 visitors)

Activity-Based Pricing

Separate cost for each activity:

- Craft workshop: ₹300
- Meal: ₹250
- Guided walk: ₹400

Sample Experience Pricing

Half-Day Village Experience (4–5 hours)

Includes:

- Welcome drink
- Guided village walk
- Craft demonstration
- Local meal

Suggested Range: ₹800 – ₹1500 per person (based on location and services)

Activity: On a chart paper, list out the possible services and discuss price range.



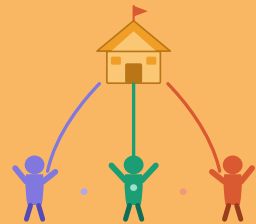
Remember: Low pricing may attract more visitors, but fair pricing ensures dignity and sustainability. Do not undervalue your culture and effort.

Building Awareness Within the Community

Tourism works best when everyone understands its purpose. Awareness builds shared responsibility, avoids misunderstandings, and strengthens collective ownership.

Engage communities to for collective action to build village cultural tourism

- Panchayat meetings & small gatherings
- Storytelling sessions with children
- Community museum or info corner
- Cultural programs & demonstrations



Key Focus Areas

Respect for Culture

Ensuring traditions are shared with dignity and not just as a show.

Visitor Interaction

Welcome visitors warmly with courtesy, while clearly maintaining public and private space boundaries.

Collective Decision-Making

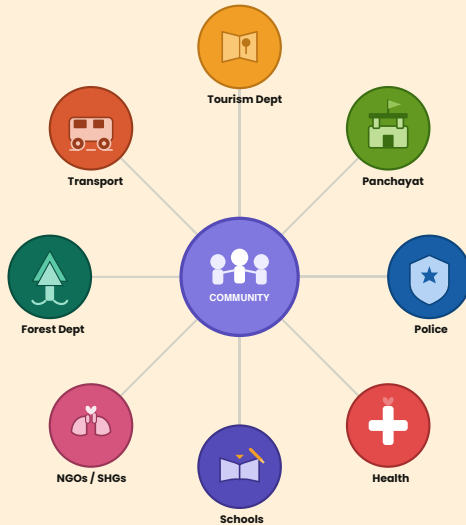
Talk together on how to retain the value of your traditions, places, and stories through aligned understanding and shared responsibilities

Discussion Activity

Can you share some stories that talk about your roots and the history of some heritage places? Sharing these stories is the first step in building your tourism narrative.

Convergence with Local Stakeholders

Tourism grows through collaboration. Connecting the community with local bodies ensures transparency, shared goals, and long-term sustainability.



Decentralise and Collaborate:

- Collaborate with the Panchayat for festivals, melas, cleanliness drives, and permissions from other departments
- Ask for help from the Police for safety, crowd control, and information sharing
- Collaborate with Schools/Colleges for volunteers and local guides
- Collaborate with SHGs and Artisans for food, crafts, and services
- Collaborate with NGOs for training and community inclusion
- Connect with Tourism Department for promotion and official support

Activity: Stakeholder Map

On a chart paper, list departments and people who are essential to support your initiative. Each community member is a stakeholder!

Curating Experiences & Trails

Identifying Tourists: Who Are We Hosting?

Different visitors have different expectations. Understanding who visits helps us plan suitable, memorable experiences for everyone.

Students & Researchers

Eager to learn deep details about history, architecture, and social structures.

- HISTORY
- LEARNING
- FACTS



Families

Look for relaxation, safety, and engaging activities for children and elders.

- LEISURE
- SAFETY
- FUN



Culture Enthusiasts

Want to experience authentic rituals, art, food, and connect with locals.

- RITUALS
- ART
- FOOD



Eco-Tourists

Love nature trails, bird watching, and sustainable practices that protect the land.

- NATURE
- TREKKING
- FLORA



Photographers

Seek beautiful landscapes, unique portraits, and the "golden hour" for visual stories.

- VISUALS
- LANDSCAPES
- STORIES



Experiences should be based on real community life and designed to fit local rhythms. Use this example to design meaningful visitor trails.

The Coastal Heritage & Orchard Trail:

Beaches, Bamboo Craft, and the Famous Chikoo Belt

Ideal for: Culture lovers, slow travellers, food enthusiasts, and weekend explorers.

Arrival: Begin your journey by arriving at Dahanu Road or Gholwad railway station, and travel to Gholwad village (around 10km)

Community Heritage Experience: Step into the Gholwad Community Museum, a vibrant space that preserves local memories, traditions, and stories of the region's diverse communities.

Meet the Artists: Visit local bamboo craft makers and witness traditional craftsmanship passed down through generations. Under their guidance, try your hand at weaving your own bamboo creation and discover the beauty of sustainable craft traditions.

Walk Through the Chikoo Orchards: Gholwad is known across India for its chikoo orchards. Take a leisurely orchard walk, learn about the cultivation of this beloved Geographical Indication certified fruit, and enjoy tasting freshly harvested chikoo straight from the farms.

Coastal Escape: Continue to the scenic beaches of Dahanu, Bordi, and Chinchani, where the Arabian Sea meets quiet stretches of sand. As you stroll through these serene seaside landscapes, encounter the region's distinctive Parsi cultural presence, reflected in charming heritage bungalows, quiet lanes, and elements of colonial-era architecture that lend the coastline a unique historical character.

Historic & Spiritual Stops:

- Explore the historic Tarapur Fort (approximately 30 km from Gholwad), overlooking the Arabian Sea.
- Visit the revered Mahalaxmi Temple (approximately 40 km from Gholwad), a sacred site nestled amidst natural beauty.

Departure / Stay: Return to Mumbai by late evening train from Dahanu Road or Gholwad, or extend your experience with a peaceful overnight stay in Dahanu–Bordi coastal belt

Activity: Design an Experience

Now, discuss and make such trails for your village/locality, make sure to use this framework. Design a half-day or one-day visitor experience plan, including logistics, timeline, and offerings.

1. Who is it for?

- Identify your visitor type
- Students, families, or explorers?
- Check Worksheet 5

2. What to do?

- Village walks
- Craft & farming demos
- Food & storytelling

3. Where & When?

- Specific locations
- Best season & time
- Respect daily rhythms
- Define private and public space

4. How? (Logistics)

- Safety & group size
- Assign hosts & guides
- Booking process



Telling Your Stories

Storytelling is not about selling a place—it is about sharing real stories in a respectful way. Clear communication sets the foundation for a good experience.

Purpose

- Attract visitors who value culture, heritage, and community life.
- Set clear and honest expectations before arrival.
- Build trust between visitors and community members.
- Ensure visitors arrive informed, prepared, and respectful.
- Strengthen community confidence in sharing their stories.



Digital Communication

Engaging online using platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube. Share photos, short videos, and stories to reach a wider audience.



In-Person Communication

Direct conversations with visitors, collaborators, and stakeholders. Personal interaction builds the deepest connections.



Inward Communication

Sharing values, rules, and stories while visitors are at your place. Guiding behavior and deepening understanding on-site.



Outward Communication

Sharing stories and promoting your region to potential visitors outside the community to attract interest.

Remember: Communication helps visitors understand local life and set expectations even before they arrive.

Digital Communication Strategies

Use digital spaces to share stories, attract the right visitors, and engage with the world while maintaining local control.

What to Share

Everyday Village Life

Photos with captions explaining traditions, seasons, and daily rhythms.

Process Videos

Short clips showing how crafts are made, farming is done, or food is cooked.

Trail Maps & Places

Simple digital maps highlighting walking trails or important heritage sites.

Visitor Stories

Short feedback, photos, or video bites from visitors enjoying their stay.

Audio Stories

Voice notes or recordings about local history, myths, or festival songs.

Upcoming Events

Dates for festivals, workshops, or special seasonal experiences.

How to Manage

Encourage Youth

Encourage young people to learn new tools and regularly create and update photos, short videos, and stories about the region.

Create a Content Plan

Decide what to post and when. For example: “Monday - History”, “Wednesday - Craft”, “Friday - Food”.

Community Contribution

Encourage different members (elders, artists) to contribute stories, with shared guidelines on what is appropriate.

Responsiveness

Assign a team member to respond to comments and messages promptly with accurate information.

In-Person Communication Tips

When you communicate with visitors, your attitude, body language, and storytelling create the connection. Be the confident host your village needs.



How to Present Yourself

Confident & Firm

Believe in your knowledge. Speak with assurance about your region.

Well Articulated

Speak clearly. Use simple words to explain local concepts.

Eye Contact

Look at your guests. It shows honesty and builds trust.

Body Language

Stand tall. Use open gestures. Smile to show welcome.

Highlight Emotions, Pride & Warmth

Share how you feel about your festivals, your land, and your ancestors. Emotion is contagious.

What to Share

Remember: Not everything is for everyone.

- ✓ True & Accurate: Share facts and real history, not made-up stories.
- ✓ Identity & Pride: Focus on stories that highlight who you are.
- ✗ No Exaggeration: Keep it simple and authentic.
- ✗ Respect Privacy: Don't share personal details of neighbors without consent.
- ✗ Respect Beliefs: Be careful with myths or rituals that are sacred or sensitive.

Pro Tip: If you don't know the answer to a visitor's question, it is okay to say "I don't know" or "I will find out". Honesty is better than guessing.

Cultural Boundaries & Visitor Behaviour

Tourism brings people together, but clear boundaries ensure it remains respectful. Both hosts and guests have a role to play in creating a safe environment.

Community Responsibilities

ROLE OF THE HOST

✓ Maintain Cleanliness

Keep shared spaces and hygiene facilities clean for everyone's health and comfort.

✓ Welcome Diversity

Welcome people regardless of their gender, clothing choices, or personal opinions.

✓ Respect Personal Boundaries

Give visitors space. Respect women and gender-diverse guests.

✗ Avoid Staring or Teasing

Do not make visitors feel uncomfortable by staring or making jokes.

Visitor Responsibilities

RULES FOR GUESTS

✓ Respect Dress Code

Dress modestly and appropriately according to village customs.

✓ Seek Consent

Always ask before taking photos or videos of people or private homes.

✓ Keep it Clean

Do not litter. Carry your waste back with you or use dustbins.

✗ Restricted Areas

Do not enter sacred, private, or restricted spaces without permission.

✗ No Alcohol/Substances

Respect local rules regarding alcohol use and noise levels.

Safety & Risk Awareness

Tourism brings people together, but clear boundaries ensure it remains respectful. Both hosts and guests have a role to play in creating a safe environment.

Safety Assessment Checklist

Terrain & Weather Risks

Identify slippery paths, steep cliffs, or areas prone to flooding during rains. Check weather before trails.

Vulnerable Groups

Ensure safety measures for children, elders, and women. Are paths walkable? Are rest stops available?

Health & First Aid

Keep a basic first-aid kit ready at the community center or homestay. Know where the nearest doctor is.

Clear Signage

Place visible signs marking dangerous areas (e.g., deep water, loose rocks) and safe drinking water points.



Emergency Contacts

- Hospital: 102 / Local
- Police: 100 / Local
- Panchayat: Sarpanch No.

Display these at village entry points.

Activity: Mark safe/unsafe areas on your village map. Make signs for danger zones and put up emergency numbers today.

Clear Signage

Place visible signs marking dangerous areas (e.g., deep water, loose rocks) and safe drinking water points.

Waste Management, Recycling & Upcycling

Waste management handles waste safely, recycling reuses materials, and upcycling turns waste into useful or creative products while protecting nature and culture.

Waste Management

- Reduce the use of plastic in homes, markets, festivals, and tourist areas
- Practice waste separation (wet and dry) at homes, public spaces, and tourist areas
- Use dustbins in markets, pathways, homestays, and visitor points
- Maintain clean, functional toilets with regular water supply and cleaning
- Ensure clear signage and respectful use of public and community toilets
- Manage waste carefully during festivals, melas, and public events

Upcycling and Recycling



- Avoid single-use plastic; promote reusable and eco-friendly alternatives
- Use locally made bamboo baskets for waste collection, segregation, and storage
- Promote recycling of paper, glass, metal, and plastic where possible
- Encourage upcycling of plastic and other waste into useful or decorative items

Why it matters: Cleanliness and hygiene are essential for community health and visitor experience. These reflect cultural pride and strengthen the region as a responsible Cultural Tourism Hub

Monitoring & Community Evaluation

Tourism needs regular review. Check readiness before you start, and reflect on progress after every visit.

Phase 1: Readiness Check

Hold a short meeting after visits to discuss:

- Are roles and rules clear? [YES/NO]
- Are limits and safety considered? [YES/NO]
- Is the community in agreement? [YES/NO]
- Is hygiene management in place? [YES/NO]
- Are boundaries respected? [YES/NO]

If most answers are YES, the community is ready.

Phase 2: Post-Visit Reflection

Before opening your doors, ask these questions:

What Worked Well

Identify the highlights. Did guests enjoy the food? Was the guide confident?

What Did Not Work?

Be honest about failures. Was there too much noise? Did we run out of water?

What Needs Change?

Decide on actions. "Next time, we will limit the group size to 10."



Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation

COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM PALGHAR & NASHIK DISTRICTS



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