



FINAL ASEAN HOMESTAY STANDARD

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1 Foreword

The objective of this standard is to develop a comprehensive homestay standard that can be adapted by ASEAN Member States as recommended in the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP): 2011 – 2015 to create quality visitor experience by showcasing their rural resources in a presentable, safe, and attractive manner. The establishment of the standard shall increase the quality of services, facilities and human capital in ASEAN homestay programmes by providing a more organised path to a professional level of management, taking into consideration the needs, capability and cultural diversity of all ASEAN member states.

In developing the standard, existing homestay standards and guidelines used by all ASEAN member states were analysed, where common grounds and gaps were identified. The resulting standard will focus on nine criteria, namely host, accommodation, activities, management, location, hygiene & cleanliness, safety & security, marketing and sustainability principles.

2 Introduction

All over the ASEAN region, the homestay programme is a form of alternative tourism in which tourists are given the opportunity to experience the way of life in a typical village with local community. The experiential nature of this form of tourism is becoming increasingly popular with foreign tourists. In contrast to mass tourism, the homestay programme should preferably be low scale, low density, flexible and spontaneous. More importantly it should be owned and operated by the local communities so that the economic benefits go directly to them.

As a form of Community Based Tourism, the homestay concept is currently well accepted as a rural development tool in many ASEAN countries. The homestay programme can enhance local quality of life through generation of income, support local culture, arts and crafts business, encourages restoration of local and historic sites, and foster nature conservation efforts through community education.

With many of the world's international tourists looking to ASEAN countries for rural tourism, a more systematic development of homestay will be crucial in creating a 'new brand' of tourist experience, showcasing the rural way of life, offering an affordable form of holiday that contains a high degree of cultural and educational elements. The selling point of the homestay programme is not the physical entity of the village but more towards the total village experience, where the community and communal activities are strong influential factors.

The success of the homestay programme in the ASEAN region is highly dependent on a strong understanding of the basic requirements of a quality visitor experience from a homestay perspective. Therefore the establishment of ASEAN Homestay standard is necessary, providing an opportunity to standardize a base level understanding of what a homestay is and to establish a minimum standard across all ASEAN member states. The standard also facilitates a coordinated approach, encouraging partnership with the relevant stakeholders, creating a positive environment while revitalizing the rural economy as well as poverty reduction.

3 Scope

The standard focuses on the homestay, where guests will stay with the host's family and experience the everyday way of life of the family and community in both a direct and indirect manner. The standard also focuses on the following essential criteria such as host, accommodation, activities, authenticity, management, location, safety and security, marketing and sustainability principles.

4 Terms and Definitions

The terms and definitions applied in the ASEAN Homestay Standards are as follows:

4.1 Attraction

A place of interest and pleasure where guests visit, typically for its inherent or exhibited values especially of cultural and historical significance such as historic sites, performing arts institutions, handicraft centres, local industries and natural areas.

4.2 Authenticity

Genuine, original, unadulterated or the real thing in order to give real experience to the guests especially related to local culture and nature.

4.3 Basic First Aid

The basic of emergency care and treatment of an injured or ill guest before professional medical care is available.

4.4 Biodiversity

The existence of a wide variety of plant and animal species in their natural environment.

4.5 Booking

Making a reservation for homestay services via the appropriate communication medium, such as the internet, fax, phone etc.

4.6 Code of Conduct

A set of rules outlining the responsibilities or proper practices for guests and homestay provider/host. Also known as the dos and don'ts, to instil the appropriate behaviour of guests suitable for the particular environment.

4.7 Communal Activity

Activity emphasizing social cohesion, where villagers get together and conduct activities such as cleaning the village and preparation before an event.

4.8 Community Centre/Area

A place where locals and guests meet with each other. It can be in the form of gathering, a place for cultural performance or a venue to conduct activities.

4.9 Communication Equipment

Tool or equipment used for disseminating information between sender and receiver such as mobile telephones, *hand held radio*, GPS etc.

4.10 Community to Community Training

Training programme conducted mainly through visiting successful homestay, learning through case studies and best practise. Also able to cultivate mentor-mentee relationship between established homestays and new entrants.

4.11 Culture

Habits, traditions, local practise and beliefs of a society.

4.12 Database

Systematic collection, organization and classification of information.

4.13 Emergency Rescue

A situation or occurrence that happens unexpectedly and demands immediate action for the victim to be evacuated/removed from the area.

4.14 Environmentally Friendly

Also related to eco-friendly, nature friendly, and green, refer to goods and services, laws, guidelines and policies claimed to inflict minimal or no harm to the environment and local community.

4.15 Familiarisation Trip

Organize trips for travel agents, tour operators, tour wholesalers, media or other members of the travel trade for the purpose of educating and “familiarizing” them with tourism destinations. By seeing the destinations themselves, the travel trade is better prepared to answer customer questions and promote travel to the location. Also known “FAM Trip”.

4.16 Guest

A person staying in a homestay, usually participating in community and village based activities.

4.17 Hands on Approach Training

Learning which emphasized the practical aspect, looking at the real situation on the ground rather than theory or class room approach.

4.18 Homestay

An alternative tourism where tourists will stay with the host’s family in the same house and will experience the everyday way of life of the family and the local community.

4.19 Homestay Provider

Local family that offer their house as a homestay.

4.20 Host

A person/community that represents the homestay and provide services/hospitality to homestay guests.

4.21 Interpretation Skill

A complex task that combine several abilities beyond language competency in order to deliver an effective presentation in a given setting.

4.22 Management

The process of managing that involves the people in charge of running a committee or an organization such as planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling to achieve the organization objectives.

4.23 Manual

Comprehensive and step-by-step guide to a particular topic, that also serves as a reference book. It details out what is required, explains how to put the presented information into practice, and instructs how to solve problems as they occur.

4.24 Micro Enterprise

Locally owned enterprises producing goods and services utilizing village based resources.

4.25 Nature

Natural resources such as forests, rivers, caves, mountains, etc.

4.26 Package

A fixed price product that makes it easy for guest to buy and enjoy the activities of the homestay. The packages usually offer a mixture of components like transportation, accommodation, meals, activities and sightseeing.

4.27 Reservation System

System that allows access to booking reservations for homestay packages and services such as online booking or through phone.

4.28 Social Media Network

Social networking websites that allow registered users i.e. homestay providers/homestay management to create profiles, upload photos and video of their homestay, send message and keep in touch with guests, colleagues and business associates.

4.29 Target Market

A specific group of visitors in which marketing communications are directed to.

4.30 Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

The main attraction or uniqueness of the homestay, a main pull factor in attracting guests.

4.31 Village

A rural area where the people live as a community, unique with its own cultural and natural resources.

ASEAN Homestay Standard - Criteria

1 Host

1.1 The Village and Community

- 1.1.1 There shall be a minimum number of 5 registered homestay providers within the village to reflect community involvement and cohesion.
- 1.1.2 The homestay shall be located close to nature-based and cultural tourism attractions in the surrounding areas.
- 1.1.3 Priority shall be given to villages with a proven track record in organisation and beautification such as past winners of best village and best landscaping competitions.
- 1.1.4 There shall be a community centre/area to be used as a base for the homestay operation and activities such as for welcoming ceremony, cultural performance, etc.

1.2 Homestay Provider

- 1.2.1 The homestay provider shall be free of criminal record.
- 1.2.2 The homestay provider shall be in good general health and not inflicted with communicable diseases.
- 1.2.3 A basic homestay course shall be formulated, attended and completed by each and every registered homestay provider.

2 Accommodation

2.1 The House

- 2.1.1 The structure of the house shall be in good, stable and safe condition such as roof, walls, doors, floor, etc.
- 2.1.2 The design and building materials shall reflect the vernacular architecture and local identity.
- 2.1.3 The homestay provider shall provide a guest bedroom(s) that is separated from the other bedrooms in the house.
- 2.1.4 There shall be a minimum of one (1) bathroom/toilet for the guest either inside the guest room or inside the house.
- 2.1.5 It is recommended that the house shall have electricity supply.
- 2.1.6 The house shall have adequate and clean water supply made available at all times inside the house.

2.2 The Bedroom

- 2.2.1 Provide basic amenities and furnishing in the guest bedroom(s) such as fan, desk, mini cupboard, mirror, electric socket, mosquito net or coil etc.
- 2.2.2 A maximum of four of the total number of bedrooms in the house, which are not being used by any member of the homestay provider/host shall be allocated to homestay guests
- 2.2.3 Provide standard and appropriate type of beds such as single beds and double beds with comfortable mattresses and pillows.
- 2.2.4 If necessary, windows should be fitted with a mesh frame to keep out mosquitoes and other insects.
- 2.2.5 Bed linen shall be changed as needed; and following the departure of each guest, a fresh set of clean bed linen shall be provided to the next guest.

2.3 The Toilet/Bathroom

- 2.3.1 Provide either sitting or squatting type of toilet inside or outside close to the house.
- 2.3.2 Provide basic toilet and bathroom facilities including doors with locks in all toilets and bathrooms
- 2.3.3 Adequate and clean water shall be provided at all times

3 Activities

3.1 Village and Community Based Activities

3.1.1 The village and community based activities shall optimise and showcase the local resources such as the following:

3.1.1.1 Local culture and heritage

3.1.1.2 Local enterprises (Micro enterprises, farms, local industries, handicrafts).

3.1.1.3 Natural resources (forests, rivers, caves, lakes, etc.)

3.1.2 The design and implementation of the activities shall encourage the interactive participation between local community and guests.

3.2 Surrounding Activities

3.2.1 Visits to popular tourist attractions in the surrounding areas shall be integrated into the homestay package/itinerary with the homestay functioning as a base.

3.2.2 Collaborate with other villages in the adjacent/surrounding areas to add variation to the activities as well as create multiplier effects.

3.3 Authenticity

3.3.1 The homestay community shall retain its identity, values, and culture, to portray a distinct and authentic experience.

3.3.2 Preserve and involve guests in communal activities to showcase the community spirit and social cohesion.

3.3.3 Preserve local handicrafts and showcase local performing arts by establishing cultural groups and associations.

4 Management

4.1 Leadership

4.1.1 The homestay organisation shall be led by a local champion with strong leadership qualities and respected by the local community e.g. head of village.

4.2 Organisation

4.2.1 The homestay organisation shall have a systematic structure with clear roles, responsibilities and line of communication.

4.2.2 The organisation shall facilitate the empowerment of the local women and youths.

4.2.3 The village management shall give the blessing for the setting up of a homestay organisation that is operated in a commercial manner but answerable to the former.

4.3 Database

4.3.1 Homestay Operator Database

4.3.1.1 Establish a database of the homestay operators containing information such as home address, number of family members and any special talent, knowledge or skills.

4.3.2 Guest Database

4.3.2.1 Create a reservation and registration system to keep record of guest arrivals, country of origin and length of stay, etc.

4.3.2.2 The guest database shall also record comments, complaints, and suggestions from guests.

4.3.3 Product Database

4.3.3.1 Carry out and update an inventory of existing tourism resources within the village and in the adjacent/surrounding areas.

4.4 Capacity Building and Training

4.4.1 The homestay organisation shall produce simple manuals and guidelines covering the following aspects:

4.4.1.1 Welcoming and guest handling

4.4.1.2 Registration, billing and payment

- 4.4.1.3 Hygiene and cleanliness
- 4.4.1.4 Communication skills
- 4.4.1.5 Planning, organising and handling of activities
- 4.4.1.6 Marketing and promotion
- 4.4.1.7 Storytelling and interpretation skills

4.4.2 The training programmes and modules shall emphasise 'hands on approach' and 'community to community training'.

4.5 Collaboration

4.5.1 The homestay organisation shall establish smart partnerships with:

- 4.5.1.1 Other homestays and private agencies especially tour operators and hoteliers to develop packages and enhance promotional activities.
- 4.5.1.2 Public agencies such as international, national and state tourism organisations to seek assistance in terms of training, funding, marketing and promotion and other technical advice.
- 4.5.1.3 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to develop joint programmes in environmental conservation and cultural preservation.
- 4.5.1.4 Universities and institutions of higher learning to seek assistance in training and technical advice.

5 Location

5.1 Accessibility

- 5.1.1 The location of the homestay is accessible to any mode of transportation.
- 5.1.2 Clear signage shall be provided to guide guests to the homestay.

6 Hygiene and Cleanliness

6.1 House (Kitchen, Bedroom and Toilet)

- 6.1.1 All rooms, kitchen and toilets shall be kept clean and free of malodour, dirt, dust, cobwebs etc.
- 6.1.2 The kitchen floor shall be regularly mopped and kept free from stains and spills.
- 6.1.3 Toilet(s), shower tray(s), bath tub (s), well and sinks shall be regularly cleaned and kept free from dirt, stains and malodour.
- 6.1.4 Disinfectants shall be used to keep toilets clean and free from germs.
- 6.1.5 Soap, shampoo, toilet tissue and clean towel shall be provided by the homestay provider.

6.2 Surrounding Compound

- 6.2.1 The surrounding compound shall be litter free.
- 6.2.2 Eradicate breeding ground for mosquitoes (especially Aedes mosquitoes) such as clogged drains, discarded tins, etc.
- 6.2.3 It is recommended that the homestay provider and other residents to carry out village beautification and landscaping using local plants that are maintained on a regular basis.

6.3 Food Preparation

- 6.3.1 Kitchen shall be in good, clean condition and well ventilated
- 6.3.2 Kitchen utensils shall be in good condition, clean, and kept in a dry place.
- 6.3.3 Chipped plates, glasses and mugs, etc. shall not be used to serve meals for guests.
- 6.3.4 Family members involved in food preparation shall have good personal hygiene and be properly attired.
- 6.3.5 Meat, chicken, fish and other ingredients used in food preparation shall be fresh and preferably sourced from the local market/suppliers.
- 6.3.6 Served food shall be properly covered.
- 6.3.7 Guests shall only be served safe drinking water.

7 Safety and Security

7.1 Safety Training

7.1.1 Safety personnel shall undergo basic training in first aid and emergency rescue.

7.2 Safety Features for Facilities Activities

7.2.1 At least 2 safety personnel shall accompany guests and ensure safety and security during homestay activities.

7.2.2 Any water-based activity (such as river cruise, white water rafting etc.) shall provide guests with appropriate and sufficient safety attire/equipment recognised by the relevant authorities.

7.2.3 Any physical facility such as jetties shall have safety features such as railings, slip proof flooring, etc.

7.2.4 Trails and trekking routes shall be well marked and signposted.

7.3 Briefing on Safety Aspects

7.3.1 Guests shall be briefed on safety aspects prior to taking part in any homestay activity.

7.3.2 Provide leaflets on safety guidelines and tips for guests.

7.3.3 Guests participating in eco-adventure activities shall be required to register their name and contact number for record/monitoring purposes.

7.3.4 Formulate a manual for safety procedures and guidelines to be used as a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

7.4 Emergency Rescue and Evacuation

7.4.1 Personnel in charge of safety shall be equipped with emergency/first aid kit during activities.

7.4.2 Safety personnel shall also be equipped with communication equipment to alert authorities of any impending danger or if a guest is sick or injured.

7.4.3 It is recommended for guests to have insurance coverage as part of the package.

7.4.4 Adhere to safety requirements of respective country.

8 Marketing and Promotion

8.1 Promotion Activities

- 8.1.1 Identify and approach target markets and design itineraries/packages to suit their needs and expectations.
- 8.1.2 Identify the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) of the village to differentiate it from other homestays.
- 8.1.3 Create promotional materials e.g. brochure, interpretative boards, panels to relay information about the homestay programme and community.
- 8.1.4 Cooperation with local government and tour operators for marketing.

8.2 Partnership with Tour Operators

- 8.2.1 It is recommended to organize familiarisation trips and invite tour operators and tourism companies to sample the homestay experience.
- 8.2.2 It is recommended to work closely with prominent tour operators, possibility of them becoming advisors for the homestay organisation.

8.3 Web Marketing

- 8.3.1 It is recommended to develop website and utilise social media network to promote the homestay and handle online booking.
- 8.3.2 It is recommended to engage the village youth to maintain and update the online promotional mediums.

9 Sustainability Principles

9.1 Economic Sustainability

9.1.1 Employment

9.1.1.1 The homestay organisation shall recruit and employ staff from the local community.

9.1.1.2 It is recommended to allocate the provision of incentives and bonuses linked to good performance and/or service levels to motivate staff.

9.1.1.3 It is recommended to provide micro finance to deserving locals for them to participate in business activities related to the homestay programme.

9.1.2 Purchasing

9.1.2.1 It is recommended that the homestay organisation buy materials and products from the local micro enterprises.

9.1.2.2 It is recommended to request guests to buy locally made goods and set up craft sales area within the homestay centre/common areas to showcase the local products.

9.1.3 Local Product/Attraction

9.1.3.1 Promote local festivals and visits to nearby markets.

9.1.3.2 Offer guests traditional handicraft, food and organise cultural events and performances.

9.2 Environmental Sustainability

9.2.1 Limit and mitigate the physical impact of tourists particularly on sensitive natural and cultural environments.

9.2.2 Discourage the participation of guests in activities, which could exploit local flora and fauna.

9.2.3 Adopt nearby beach, forest or river and organise litter clean ups with guests.

9.2.4 Develop a code of conduct (or dos and don'ts) for interaction with wildlife and disseminate it to guests.

9.2.5 Ensure the local community is educated about the importance of conserving biodiversity.

9.2.6 Ensure that the design and construction of tourism facilities and services are environmentally friendly.

9.3 Sociocultural Sustainability

9.3.1 Set up information corners and cultural displays at the homestay centre and common areas.

9.3.2 Inform guests about the need to respect local customs and the appropriate behaviour.

9.3.3 Ensure the local community is educated about the importance of preserving their culture.

9.3.4 Actively ban the participation or endorsement of commercial sexual activities or illegal drug use.