



Recommendations for Responsible Gibbon Watching

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Jessica Williams¹, Fan Peng-Fei², Susan M. Cheyne³, Dilip Chetry⁴, Alison Behie¹

¹ *The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia*

² *Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou, China*

³ *IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group Section on Small Apes, UK*

⁴ *Primate Research and Conservation Division, Aaranyak, Guwahati, Assam, India.*

Introduction

Gibbon-focused tourism has the potential to be used as an effective conservation tool, helping to protect natural habitats and increase community interest in, and awareness of, wildlife. Gibbon tourism has an important role to play in the sustainable use of forest habitats which are currently under direct threat from illegal logging, agricultural expansion, and human population growth. The health and wellbeing of the guides, tourists and animals must be prioritised at all times, and it is our hope that these recommendations will support this. Ensuring the continued survival of the small apes in the wild should always remain the primary goal of such endeavours. Gibbon tourism can be sustainable and make a positive contribution to conservation efforts and the welfare of local communities.

It is our intention that these recommendations will help to improve conservation policy for this diverse and threatened group of primates, as well as for other primates in the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot, through ensuring the careful design and management of existing and future tourism programmes.

Recommendations

Before Your Visit

- When choosing a tour operator/tour guide, enquire if they are aware of and follow the recommendations listed in this document to reduce negative effects on gibbon behaviour and health.
- Choose a tourism site that promotes conservation and supports local human communities through employment and revenue sharing.
- Where possible contact the provider directly and ask for information regarding their commitment to conservation efforts, the involvement of local communities and how to minimise your impact as a tourist while viewing gibbons (e.g., clothing and behaviour).

- In the days prior to visiting gibbons, be particularly conscious of personal hygiene (e.g., washing hands regularly, social distancing, wearing a mask in crowded places).
- Do not visit gibbon tourism sites during disease outbreaks such as the COVID-19 pandemic (consider supporting the sites remotely during these periods).
- Only participate in tours which can provide information about the potential of disease transmission and how they minimise this risk for you and the gibbons.
- If you feel ill in any way do not visit the gibbons (if possible, reschedule your trip).

During Your Visit

- If asked to complete a health questionnaire, answer all questions honestly.
- Consent to having your temperature checked if asked by guides on arrival.
- Listen and pay attention to the instructions from guides.
- Limit the disturbance of gibbons by:
 - Wearing neutral (e.g., beige, natural greens, brown, grey, black) coloured clothing.
 - Remaining calm and talking quietly.
 - Switching phones to silent.
 - Limiting the use of flash photography.
 - Ideally, restrict numbers in your group. There may be exceptions to this. Ensure exceptions are based on scientific evidence, or at least monitored by experienced guides.
- Visit gibbons while they are naturally most active (generally early morning) and limit observation to a maximum of 1-hour/day.
- Wear protective certified masks while in the presence of gibbons and remember to disinfect and wash thoroughly before and after (while you are not allowed to touch gibbons or any wildlife, but you may accidentally touch trees and other plants).
- Stay at least 7 metres (23 feet) away from gibbons (this may require you to move away from the gibbons if they approach you).
- Do not leave any litter or body waste in the forest.
- Avoid eating near gibbons and keep everything in closed containers when in the forest.