

# THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILD FRIENDLY TOURISM CONGRESS

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## ***Children are our future-***

We want to protect children's rights in the tourism and travel sector, prevent violence against children, provide scientific contribution to child friendly tourism issues and draw attention to the work done in this area. For this purpose, we are pleased to organize the 1st International Children Friendly Tourism Congress, which will take place with the participation of sector representatives and academicians, as the Tourism Faculty of Cumhuriyet University on 25-28 April 2018 at our university.

## **What is Child Friendly Tourism?**

Child Friendly Tourism is the mentality that every kind of holiday and vacation act organised considering children health, safety, security and improvement. In other words applying affirmative action in favor of children in trip, accommodation, tour and vacation.

The main theme of the International Child Friendly Tourism convention, which will be organized this year, is the strengthening of a child-friendly, safe tourism concept in tourism and the development of children's rights consciousness. A population of about 26 million children in Turkey (including more than one million Syrian refugee children), constitute 35% of the total population. The studies of Global Ethical Code of Conduct for Tourism and the World Tourism Child Protection Network prepared by The United Nations World Tourism Organization's Ethics and Social Responsibility Department with the support of Turkey is not well known in Turkey and said that child protection is not sufficiently achieved in practice. Tourism investors, government officials, tourism sector officials, international organizations, media organizations come together to organize meetings at UNWTO conferences to protect children and young people in the tourism sector and to prevent child labor.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989 and put into force on 2 September 1990. The implementation of this convention is considered an important step in the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) initiative to create child-friendly cities. This initiative aims to encourage cities to live up to the rights of children in their everyday lives and to become a decisive

element in their development and city images, taking into account the needs and wishes of children. It is also a fact that this consciousness will first affect cities, countries and the world. We can list the main social responsibilities of developing child-friendly tourism in the following way:

### **1. Why Child Friendly Tourism is needed?**

In tours and vacations adults can protect themselves, at any minor incidents they can maintain their vacation. When it comes to children, both children and their accompanying parents faces the risk of interrupt their vacation or going home unhappy. If the business takes precautions to minimize these possible setbacks, everyone will return home happy.

### **2. Becoming a Child Friendly Tourism Company is a Social Responsibility**

Children having a happy holiday will have a positive impact on mental health and learning. Happy children will be reconciled with their surroundings. Tourism businesses contribute to the happiness of the society with the positive environment they make for children.

### **3. Child Friendly Tourism is the Fundamentals of World Peace**

Particularly in holiday villages and leisure resorts, permanent friendships and associations between young people and children of all ages take place in everyone's memories. The friendships bonded in countries like Turkey with a wide range of nations spending their holidays at, especially if directed consciously, carries the potential if becoming long term friendships and contributing to the world peace.

### **4. Contributing to the Development of Child-Friendly Tourism is a Leadership Responsibility.**

Today, many businesses declare themselves as "Child Friendly Tourism Enterprises" according to an indefinite set of criteria. The concept of child friendly is one that requires high responsibility at the same time as being a slogan that has a good ring to it. In this subject that is starting to be discussed in the world, It is very important to determine the criteria as soon as possible and to decide which businesses can be child friendly in order to prevent unfair competition in the sector. This will also contribute to the protection of consumer rights. Holding companies incorporating tourism sector, business groups, chain hotels, tour operators and professional organizations have a big responsibility in this field. Both scientific studies and public awareness-raising activities should be supported. The people and institutions that will take the initiative in this regard will have sectoral priorities and will attain high recognition and decency rates as well as great contributions to the Peace of the Country and the World.

The transformation of facilities in the tourism sector into more comfortable, private and service friendly facilities for families, taking more specific health and safety precautions, ar-

rangement of educational activities for children, more facilities for children in urban areas and hiking trails will lead to more preference by the families as it will increase the chance of having more time with the family. Being a Child Friendly Tourism Company will provide many commercial benefits as well as many social responsibilities. If we could put them into headings:

### **A. Child Friendly Tourism begins to be a new Segment**

The number of businesses describing themselves as child friendly, in the 2018 catalogs and sales sites have increased almost %300 compared to previous year. This is an indication that you need new placements to stand out or to survive in the shrinking market conditions of the real sector. It is clear that among new placements the most tangible one is the Child Friendly Business.

### **B. Why Businesses Should Be Child Friendly**

First of all, a child having an accident and interrupting the vacation plan is an extraordinary situation and businesses should return the fee for the remainder of the vacation at the very least. If the accident happens due to the negligence of the business, they can also be condemned to pay compensation in serious amounts. Small amounts that businesses will spend to become child-friendly will save themselves from large repayments. It is possible to look at this as self insurance.

In recent years, a growing trend has been observed in the number of people who goes to vacation together with their children. Especially in package tour sales, the percentage of families with children reached almost 35%. It is also a known secret that family members who are influential in the selection of places in the vacation plans of the families are children. If businesses are taking measures to protect children and their rights and health, that will be the reason for preference before others.

### **C. Becoming a Child Friendly Business Minimize The Cost Of Acquiring New Guests**

Today's children are tomorrow's parents. Children that are having a vacation in a tourism business for the first time by the choice of their parents, due to their happiness they wish to revisit the same establishment. Those are the same children who will decide to take their children to a vacation first time. They will take their new generation kids to these same establishments. Guest that getting to know the establishment and revisiting second/ third generations can extend the chain forever. It is a known fact that cost of reaching a revisiting guest is between one seventh to one fifteenth that of reaching a complete new one.

### **D. Being Child Friendly is a Brand Placement**

Children are the future of their families as well as the future of the world. Families will prefer those establishments who are tied to the child friendly businesses in their non-vacation expenses.

Increasing the application areas of these recently used themes in tourism such as Baby, Child and Youth Friendly Facility, Child Friendly Travel will enable the families with children to be able to vacation more safely and peacefully. Research shows that children and young people under the age of 18 are an important determinant in the purchase or preference decisions of families, despite the absence of purchasing power. Children's security, health, healthy / organic nutrition, recreation and even educational activities need to be acknowledged and conditions improved in the tourism sector.

At the beginning of the mission of the scientists is to prevent the exploitation of consumers by evacuating the principles and slogans. Being aware of our responsibility to protect children's rights in the sector; The conditions of being child-friendly should be determined by scientific researches, criteria should be determined and criteria should be applied by the related public institutions, non-governmental organizations and the World Tourism Organization.