

Responsible Tourism Policy



Procedures and methods in place to encourage the practice of responsible tourism within the STC



Introduction

The School Travel Consultancy (STC) has, as a founding principle, a duty to arrange school tours and expeditions that have minimal negative impact in the destinations our groups visit.

Tourism can, and should, be a force for good – creating employment, development, raising aspirations and increasing the standard of living. We aim for all our trips to have a positive effect on the communities and places our groups visit. In addition, by engaging with our partners overseas, working with them to constantly innovate and improve our trips, committing to sustainable development and training, we are creating long term mutual economic benefit.

Furthermore, by respecting the people we employ, the people we stay with along the way, our drivers, our guides, we open up our groups to experiences that can enrich and enhance the educational outcomes far beyond the more traditional type of school trip.

We have worked hard to ensure that our Responsible Tourism Policy reflects our beliefs and values in this area and considers all aspects of our business, influencing our decisions through every step of our service. One of our proudest features is the use of local leaders during all of our tours, who provide us with countless opportunities to make travel more sustainable and responsible.

Our Impact on People

We are committed to everyone involved in our work from teachers to students to the local crafts women and camp cooks, they all have the right to be treated equally and fairly. We will not discriminate on the grounds of sex, colour, religion, ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, nationality or marital status.

Staff and Suppliers

One of the STC's core principles is to use local leaders from the destination, rather than send a leader from the UK. We believe this enhances the travel experience for our clients by offering a safer and more immersive approach, whilst also benefitting the local community, providing employment and training and encouraging young people to work in the area, preventing rural to urban migration.

Both in country and in the UK, the STC supports fair pay and employment practices. This includes our third party suppliers and ad hoc people involved such as tuk tuk drivers.

As far as possible, we seek to develop long term relationships with our overseas partners and suppliers to encourage their economic growth and also allow us to invest in and provide training and development in their sector.

We will provide ongoing training with regards to the principles and practices of sustainable and responsible travel and seek to involve both our direct and indirect staff as well as influencing the practices of our suppliers.

Where possible, the STC aims to use local service providers such as hotels, activity organisers, restaurants and vehicles in order to spread the economic benefit.

Local Peoples and Communities

The STC will work to prevent the exploitation of children in tourism.

We will always respect the cultures, customs and religions of our destinations and try not to influence them unless absolutely necessary. Moreover, we will work to educate our participants and encourage them to act in a respectful manner.

When creating our itineraries or researching new destinations for our trips, we will always consider the economic, environmental and cultural issues which may arise.

The STC actively discourages participation in project work which involves working with children or orphanages. Furthermore, we seek to promote only project or volunteer work which we believe brings real and long term benefits to the local community and has minimal negative impact on the local people and environment.

We will provide support to organisations and local communities visited by our groups, especially where project work is concerned to ensure the longevity of the outcome.

While designing our tours, we seek to balance the needs of larger groups to ensure that our type and scale of tourism is appropriate to local conditions and infrastructure.

Clients

Prior to any trip overseas, we will host an information evening for our participants to give them an insight into and understanding of the people and destination which they will be visiting so that they may gain as much as possible from their visit and act in a respectful and responsible way. We will also provide a Responsible Travel information guide.

Our local leaders will act to assist our clients in acting responsibly while away and encourage them to do so.

We also understand that any overseas visit can be overwhelming for some of our clients and we work hard to ensure that they feel safe and comfortable while travelling with us.

Our Impact on the Environment

The STC aims to achieve a zero litter policy everywhere we go and to provide support and training for our local teams to facilitate this.

Through our local leaders, we seek to encourage our clients to consider the environmental impact of their actions whilst they are abroad in order to help protect the natural environment.

We actively discourage the participation of activities which exploit wild or domestic animals or activities which may harm the natural habitats of wild animals.

We encourage our clients to support our carbon offsetting scheme.

Clients are given information regarding and encouraged to use environmentally friendly articles including clothing, containers and biodegradable washing products.

Our local leaders are knowledgeable in the intricate issues surrounding their local environments and as such will provide instruction and advice for our clients as to the best way to look after it.

Initiatives and Schemes

Within the STC, we run various initiatives and are part of several schemes which help us to act more responsibly within the industry and demonstrate our commitment to this cause.

Carbon Offsetting

Carbon emissions produced by flights have a huge impact on the environment. In order to minimise this, we include the cost of carbon offsetting all international flights within our quotes with the proceeds going to Friends of Conservation. We also pay to carbon offset all international staff flights.

Zero Litter Policy

In many of the destinations our groups travel to litter is an overwhelming problem. Throughout our tours we have a zero tolerance approach to litter and seek to minimise the amount we produce. This is done through the work of our in-country leaders whilst we support them in effectively disposing of any waste which is produced. With our in-country operators, we actively encourage groups to participate in activities such as litter clean-up projects.

Industry Wide Groups and Accreditation

To prove our commitment to responsible travel we are part of several organisations which promote responsibility and sustainability in tourism. These are:

Travelife (www.travelife.org), a certification system dedicated to making travel more responsible and sustainable with whom we are working to develop our business in this area.

Tourism Concern (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) aiming to ensure that travel is ethical, fair and a positive experience for both travellers and the people and places they visit.

Choosing Volunteer Work and Projects

We appreciate that volunteer projects can enhance a journey abroad and believe that they have the potential to be worthwhile and life-enhancing for both the participants and the local community they choose to work

with. When our suppliers propose volunteering opportunities we investigate the real worth of the project and will only approve it if we believe it will be beneficial and worthwhile to the community involved.

We aim to work at the grass roots level in conjunction with the community, NGOs and conservation organisations to achieve this.

The STC does not support any volunteering activity involving the care of children or exploitation of animals and we only encourage participation in activities which our clients are qualified to do.

When consorting with our suppliers we focus on the following points to assess a project:

- Does the project add value to the community or impose on the community? If it adds value, then how?
- What sort of local consultation went into developing the project?
- Is there a local organisation involved in the day-to-day management of it?
- What is/are the timeframes of the project (there should be both short and long term goals)?
- What local employment is being created as part of the project?
- How is the money paid being spent?
- Is the project provider a responsible travel organisation?

Questions

For more information regarding our responsible travel policy and practices please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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