

The Environment:

- Take care of the environment. Any area visited has its own environmental issues and so a good understanding of these issues is essential in helping to minimise the impact of tourism. Experienced local agents and guides will be able to guide you on the necessary local knowledge.
- Use biodegradable soap and shampoo especially if travelling to places where water treatment facilities are limited. Remember streams or rivers may be someone's drinking water further downstream.
- Conserve local resources in your accommodation by turning heating/air conditioning down/off, switching lights off when leaving a room, re-using towels and bed linen and using water sparingly.
- Keep to tracks and trails even if difficult, muddy or slippery as walking or riding on the side of paths can widen the track adding to erosion and the destruction of habitats.
- Do not pick plants or flowers - remember some flora can take hundreds of years to grow and a moment to kill!
- Don't touch coral reefs and use biodegradable sun lotion if swimming in the sea.
- If trekking keep the number of your movements to a minimum, moving quietly and with care and attention to your surroundings
- Do not feed wildlife. Keep your distance and use a zoom lens to get close up shots
- Make sure all rubbish is disposed of properly, carrying it out of remote areas. Use alternatives to plastic. Litter, such as cigarette butts, can take many years to biodegrade with serious ecological consequences
- Consider what you really need to take with you. Get rid of any packaging and waste that you can before you leave home.
- Be fire aware: Timber can be scarce and is a valuable ecological resource – even fallen dead wood is important. Comply with local rules relating to fires, do not throw rubbish on a cooking fire and don't leave rings of stones.

Volunteer Projects:

Volunteering in Community Projects should be a worthwhile and life-enhancing experience for both you and the community you work with. Some questions to consider and ask your provider that will help ensure the best quality and value include:

- 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)?
- Be sure you are not taking the place of local staff.
- How is the money you have paid being spent?
- Is the project provider a responsible travel organisation?

For more information see: www.ethicalvolunteering.org



Contact us... and give your travel direction

Visit: 11-15 Dix's Field, Exeter, EX1 1QA

T: 01392 660056

E: info@thestc.co.uk

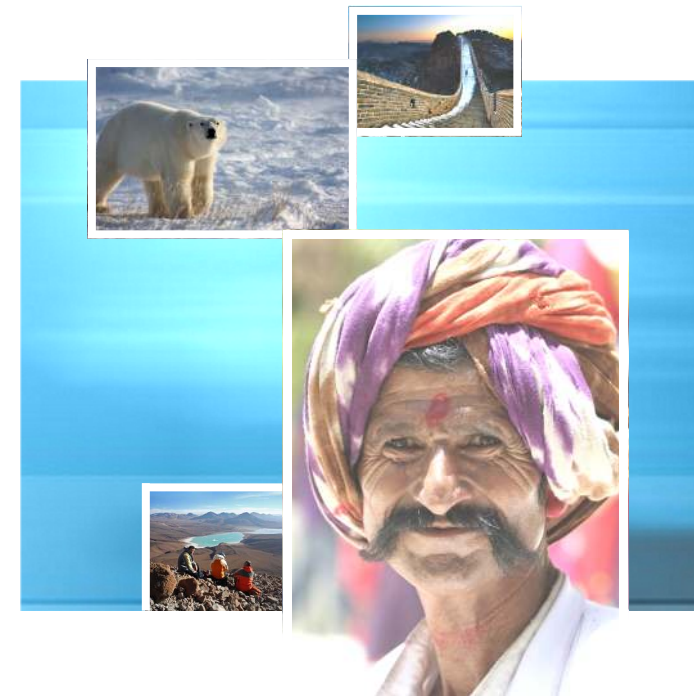
W: www.thestc.co.uk



The School Travel Consultancy is a trading name of The Specialist Travel Consultancy Ltd.
Registered in England No. 5700491. VAT Registration No. 878 9824 39

A guide to

Responsible Travel



With understanding
comes responsibility...

This guide offers simple steps we can all take to reduce our environmental and cultural impact whilst travelling abroad.

Introduction:

The issue of responsible tourism is a serious one. Tourism is an industry that, if managed inappropriately, can lead to the degradation of habitats, local resources and communities as a whole.

Here at the STC, it is our firm belief that tourism can and should be both sustainable and beneficial to all concerned.

We believe we have a duty to arrange holidays, tours and expeditions that have minimal impact on a destination. The tour operators we work with have a big part to play in this, and many are recognised as leaders in the field of Responsible Tourism. But it is also *your* responsibility, and there are many things which you, as a traveller, can do to minimise your negative impact on a destination and maximize the positive.

This guide gives a few basic tips and suggestions on how to ensure you travel in a more responsible fashion.

Should you have any questions then please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Happy travels!

Questions you should ask before you go:

- Does your operator invest in your destination by hiring, training and developing local leaders?
- If trekking, does the operator adhere to the guidelines of the International Porter Protection Group?
- Does your operator use locally run and owned accommodation so that as much money as possible can go back into the local economy?
- Do they adhere to good environmental practices?
- Have your volunteering projects, if applicable, been designed and developed in conjunction with the local community?

Cultural Awareness:

- Learn as much as you can before leaving home – customs, religion, values, rules, culture. Ask your tour operator, look on the internet, ask your local guide/agent in country.
- Learn enough of the language to exchange simple pleasantries. Hello, goodbye, please and thank you should be a minimum.
- Be aware of dress codes. If unsure always dress conservatively. Check what is considered appropriate swimwear. Remember different areas of a country (e.g. city/beach/rural) may have different dress codes.
- It is often customary to remove shoes in people's homes and religious buildings.
- Be aware of codes of behaviour such as body language and public displays of affection. There are many ways to inadvertently give an inappropriate or offensive signal, likewise you may misinterpret local visual language. See www.culturecrossing.net for an excellent guide to avoiding common faux pas and giving offence.
- Ask before taking photographs. Respect people's right to decline having themselves, their children, their animals and their property photographed. You may have to be satisfied with taking away only the memory.
- Ask permission to enter the territory of indigenous people.



Ethical Travel:

- Keep jewellery and other personal effects to an absolute minimum as it can appear to be flaunting affluence.
- Giving gifts and money to individuals and children you have just met can have upsetting consequences – creating dependence, expectation, loss of self respect. Instead, consider donating to a local project or cause for the good of the whole community. If you want to take presents, consider taking postcards of your home region or national parks, or photos of you and your family.
- Try and purchase souvenirs from local artisans, bargain if it is expected, but remember how important even a small amount of money can be to the seller. Offer a fair price.
- Never buy goods made from animal products, coral reefs or endangered plants and avoid souvenirs that could have come from archaeological sites.
- If possible stay and eat in locally run hotels, bars and restaurants - the money will go to the local community rather than a big corporation or international chain.
- Try the local food and specialities. By eating locally produced goods you will help the local farmers as well as the local economy.
- Consider hiring a local guide to take you beyond the tourist route. You will be providing employment and getting an insight into the country, environment and customs.
- Use local transport where possible.
- Ensure your tour company are treating local staff (e.g. porters, drivers, guides and cooks) with respect. Do they have fair pay, reasonable loads, proper equipment, medical cover, reasonable hours of work and proper food? If you feel employees aren't being treated fairly then don't be afraid to raise your concerns.
- See www.tourismconcern.org.uk for more information.

