



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM POLICY

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1. ON TOUR

Wild Earth Adventures are committed to operating in a responsible way and this has always been the guiding principle. On tour we aim, through working with suppliers, tour leaders, local guides and customers to:

- ensure local staff are treated well and fairly and paid a fair wage
- encourage positive relations with local people and be an economic benefit to them
- minimise our impact on the environment

The aim of Wild Earth Adventures Responsible Tourism Policy is to:

- educate our Tour Leaders, local guides and suppliers and clients on the importance of sensitivity to environmental, cultural and economic matters in the area where we operate
- give practical guidance on how to achieve our objectives and
- set goals to work towards together.

We endeavour to drive up standards and performance in all areas.

The In-House Responsible Tourism Policy provides a policy and guidelines as to how to perform duties and operate in a more responsible way.

Wild Earth Adventures welcome feedback from all sources which may enable us to perform better in this field.

HOW WE WORK WITH LOCAL SUPPLIERS

Where possible and practical, Wild Earth Adventures seeks to use locally owned and operated suppliers and employ local people as leaders and staff to operate our tours.

We believe and try to ensure that our suppliers and local staff are:

- treated as equals socially
- given practical support by our tour leaders
- not given an unreasonable workload

Local suppliers are audited to identify responsible tourism issues on the services they operate and we work with them to find solutions. Tour leaders are our eyes on the ground to identify issues and discuss good and bad practice with local staff and suppliers.

INTERACTION WITH LOCAL PEOPLE

On our tours we try to;

- Plan tours in a way which maximises the opportunity to meet local people and learn about the local culture
- Provide employment for local people by using local guides and locally owned and operated services
- Present talks and discussions on all aspects of the history and culture to present a balanced view of the country
- Be an economic benefit to the communities visited by using a variety of local restaurants, shopping in local markets and buying locally produced goods.

IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Small groups may 'leave fewer footprints' but they still leave footprints! We are aware that wherever we go we are having an impact on the environment. We endeavour to minimise this impact and, where possible, engage in projects and activities that not only make the environment sustainable but contribute to improving it.

We consider our impact on the environment is in many parts of what we do.

GENERAL

Trip planning

- Group sizes are determined by what is appropriate to the area we are travelling to. Tours involving wildlife visits and walking are often smaller in order to minimise disruption to wildlife and the natural habitat.

Hotels

On tours where hotels are used, we endeavour to;

- Advise clients to turn a/c, lights, TVs and fans off when not in room and consider not using a/c if possible. TVs should be switched off, not left on stand-by as this uses electricity
- Look out for any hotels that use more sustainable resources - eg hotels with solar panels
- Ask our agents and tour leaders to talk to hoteliers about towel washing options and encourage them to introduce a system where clients fold towels for reuse rather than wash every day
- Encourage recycling by clients at hotels, lodges and hostels

Use of vehicles

- Wild Earth Adventures tries to ensure that vehicles used on tour should not cause more than average pollution
- If measures exist to reduce the existing level of pollution (eg by using alternative means of transport or public transport), we will always consider this option
- We use a/c only when necessary on vehicles as this uses extra fuel

Use of water

Water should ALWAYS be used sparingly. Even in countries with seemingly ample water supply, energy is used in sewage and clean water processing; overuse could be depleting the water table and causing further pollution. ALL should follow the following policy;

- Consider taking a shower rather than a bath
- Consider whether you really need two showers a day or if one would suffice
- Do not leave water to run - use a plug as you generally use less water
- Don't leave the tap running when brushing teeth.

TREKKING/CANOEING

Respecting animal life

Our interactions with animals can be through wildlife viewing and through the use of animals for transport.

Wildlife

- Never feed animals / fish. Giving them food other than or additional to what they usually eat is likely to make them ill
- Do not pursue animals, thus distressing them, for the sake of a photo / better look
- Do not try to touch animals; apart from being dangerous, it can distress them
- Never pick flowers / leaves. Tour Leaders and local guides should provide a reference book where possible so clients can identify plants in situ.
- Do not collect fossils, shells or stones
- Do not encourage stray animals to follow you by feeding them. Best policy is to ignore them and get away.

Where animals are used for transport on tours we try to ensure that animals are well cared for and have no signs of mistreatment, illness or malnourishment

Litter and reduction of waste

Litter is a huge problem in many countries where there is limited or no infrastructure for waste disposal, let alone recycling facilities. The first step is to ensure that we minimise our use of resources in the first place -in order to generate less waste. Then we try to ensure that waste is disposed of in the most effective way possible.

Limiting generation of waste

- We encourage customers to avoid accepting plastic bags for everything in shops and to reuse the ones they have (for litter collection etc).
- Where possible, water is provided for clients to fill their own water bottles, selling cheap refills from a large container or purified water to reduce plastic bottle waste.

- Customers are encouraged to reduce the amount of packaging taken on tour as it is usually more effectively disposed of at home than on tour
- On camping tours, where possible we use reusable food containers rather than foil or plastic bags. We avoid using disposable plates, cups and cutlery.

Litter

- Litter should always be disposed of responsibly. If it is not clear that rubbish bins are emptied regularly, rubbish should be carried out to where it will be disposed of.
- Cigarette ends should not be dropped on streets / behind bushes / overboard boats etc. but put in a rubbish bin or in pocket until a rubbish bin is available. We recommend smokers carry a receptacle to collect their butts. Plastic film cases are excellent for this and reduce the smell!
- Food waste - including apple cores etc - should not be dropped behind bushes, overboard boats etc. but carried until they can be put in a rubbish bin. NB: orange peel takes 6 months to decompose in temperate climates and is therefore unsightly for a long time. It can also poison wildlife which may eat it and attract aggressive wild animals to areas used by humans.
- On walks, at sites or other areas where appropriate, we suggest a voluntary system where customers take a plastic bag and collect a few pieces of litter from the trail and dispose of it at the end of the walk, leaving the environment cleaner than when we found it!

We try to ensure we and our Leaders are aware of local guidelines and regulations regarding walking. To avoid erosion, the following general guidelines always apply:

In popular areas

- Concentrate use on existing trails
- Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy

In pristine areas

- Disperse use to prevent the creation of trails
- Avoid places where impact is just beginning to show

Only walk on planted ground if there is no other choice. Where a walk crosses a field or planted area, we recommend our groups go carefully at the edge, in single file and ask permission from the owner first if possible.

CAMPING

Camping can have a very visible impact on the environment. In addition to the above policy, we issue our leaders and local guides with the following guidelines to operate the trip and share with clients and thus ensure our impact is minimised.

Selecting camp area

In popular areas:

- Concentrate use on existing campsites
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.
- Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent

In pristine areas or wild bush camps, consider moving pitches or camp to avoid creating a camp or trails. The essence is to leave no trace.

Bush toilets

If no fixed toilets exist at camps, a hole should be dug and a toilet tent should be provided where possible. This provides privacy, is more hygienic and better for the environment. The following is our guideline for the construction and use of the toilet tent;

- hole should be dug at least 30m (100ft) from any water source. The hole should be as deep as you can dig it. Pouring water on soft ground, eg sand, before digging will make the ground more solid and prevent the hole caving in
- a trowel should be provided for customers to lightly cover waste with the diggings
- a rubbish bin should be provided for toilet paper and burn and bury ashes. Ensure bin is emptied regularly
- The hole should be filled in before it overfills and a new hole dug if necessary

If there is no toilet tent facility, the following policy should be followed:

- trowel/s should be provided for customers to bury waste
- customers should be instructed to 'go' at least 30m (100ft) from any water source and dig the hole at least 12 inches deep to bury waste. NB: microbes are most active at this level and decomposition will be quicker.
- provide matches for clients to burn and bury paper where appropriate or suggest clients bring paper back to a central bin to be burned or disposed of. Tour Leaders and local crew should assess the fire risk and brief clients accordingly.

Campfires

If these are a luxury (i.e. for camp 'ambience') try to have only an occasional fire as a treat, as it depletes natural resources / causes smoke pollution. It is not really a valid argument to say that it is essential for heat / light as we can likely provide these by alternative means.

- If an open fire is used for cooking please advise and see if an alternative is available - eg a locally purchased gas stove?
- Wood collected should be dead wood off the ground only. Do not strip branches from trees as what looks dead to you may be just dry or dormant
- Keep the fire small
- Use a pre-existing fire ring where possible or the site of a previous fire
- Only paper goods should be burned on the campfire. Even light plastics generate toxic fumes.
- Be aware of fire hazards and local fire regulations
- On leaving camp, the campfire should be 'dug in' so that (i) you can be sure it is out and (ii) it is not an unsightly mess.

Waste disposal

The following policy should be adhered to when disposing of rubbish from camps:

- **Items that should be burned:** paper & card
- **Items that should be carried out:** vegetable & food waste*, plastics glass & cans. Rubbish should always be disposed of where it is sure to be collected

* Please note that in many parks and where the local laws or guidelines stipulate, ALL waste must be carried out including vegetable matter. As the food waste is not indigenous, it can potentially make animals sick. Furthermore, it can attract animals to camp (bears etc).

- Campsites should be checked for all litter before departing, including bottle tops and cigarette ends. Clients and staff should help in this respect.
- Check if any recycling facility exists locally and use it where possible.

Use of water

- Does the provision of hot water for personal washing mean burning more fuel or is it solar generated? Restrict use if so
- If using 'bucket' showers or similar, turn off water supply whilst soaping up
- Dirty water, eg from washing dishes, should be disposed of by scattering over ground at least 30m (100ft) away from water source / river if a drain is not available
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.
- Do not use non-biodegradable soap in lakes or streams. Locate sources selling bio-degradable products where possible and use these products
- Do not pour oily water into streams

2. IN-HOUSE

It is not only what we do on tour that counts. In the office we have to ensure that we too act to minimise our impact on the environment. We do this because

- It's everybody's moral obligation to do so and we will always lead by example
- It saves us money
- It's good to feel we are doing something positive and working for a company that genuinely cares

REDUCING WASTE

Recycling is good, but not generating the waste in the first place is even better! Doing so also saves us money, and this is ultimately in everyone's interest.

- **Not producing a brochure** – by relying on the website as the main marketing tool, this reduces the use of resources to produce a glossy brochure
- **Re-use paper** - rather than ordering a new notepad, please keep used paper for general jottings.
- **Stationery** - Ensure you check the back of your drawer before ordering stationery. Give any excess stuff to the person responsible for ordering stationery in your department who will put it back into circulation.
- **Stop printing!** Think: do you really need to? Try to avoid printing every document you and try filing electronically on the system – it is often easier to locate files and it keeps your desk clear!
- **Print double sided** where you can – reducing the font size or margins can save pages too
- **Use the larger printers:** they are more energy efficient

RECYCLING

Here's the list of what we recycle in the office:

- Paper, including newspapers, magazines, envelopes
- Any cardboard, including food packaging
- Glass jars / bottles
- Food & drinks cans
- Plastic bottles, including tops
- Plastic food (& other) packaging
- Carrier bags
- Plastic magazine / brochure sleeves

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- **Lighting:** Please consider whether you need the light on or not. We've tried to reduce the number of strips in the fixtures to use less electricity
- **Heating:** Heating is turned on once we feel the temperature warrants it. It can be regulated by individual thermostats on radiators – please turn off heaters rather than open windows if it is too hot.
- **PCs:** switch your monitor off at night as this saves electricity and reduces the fire risk

OTHER STUFF

We use fair trade tea and coffee in the office, as this supports vulnerable farmers rather than adding to the profits of global enterprises.