



A GUIDE TO RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL & RAW'S ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL POLICY

It's impossible to leave nothing but footprints. The very nature of travel means we have an impact on the cultures we visit, so we try to make it a positive one.

Small acts of generosity can lead to lasting joy, in ways that the traveller on-the-go could never observe. Similarly, the failure by travellers to show respect can have negative effects on the relationship between local cultures and transient visitors.

Your actions do make a difference, however small or insignificant they may seem.

There is a great deal more to Responsible Tourism than just being friendly of course. The biggest responsibility lies not with travellers, but with the travel operators. RAW Travel has a duty of care to our passengers and our local guides to act in ways that promote a positive impact from tourism.

Being a part of charity fundraising events is very positive in itself, but RAW Travel also tries to share the benefits of tourism. Beyond providing employment and training to our staff in Cambodia we treat them and our local suppliers with fairness and integrity. We strive hard to minimize the impacts of our operations on communities and the environment. We work with small operations in each country, supporting small locally owned businesses - and in turn we find that the 'care factor' and service is much better for our travellers. We operate a small number of departures each year, and we ensure that no provider of services for a tour is left out-of-pocket by unforeseen circumstances. Their success is our success. Their joy is your joy. So let's keep smiling.

Part 1 - Our philosophy

Small is Good

When a ship filled with 2,000 people unloads its passengers onto the docks of a small pacific island the human tide it creates alters the local community, economy and geography. Over time the effects are profound and often change the nature of the local communities so much that they no longer reflect any of the charms or values that made them popular. By contrast a single yacht mooring in a sheltered bay every couple of weeks brings joy and friendship to the community they visit, and the exchange of culture is far more genuine and rewarding for all concerned.

It's little wonder that truly adventurous travel has found much in common with Responsible Travel. The least travelled path and the most remote landscapes are a haven for the RAW Traveller; the time spent far away from anything resembling a tourist trail is the most treasured.

Sometimes it's hard to avoid essential services when travelling - a safe and comfortable bus to connect between two cities can be the difference between catching the right train and getting stuck for five days!

Local is Good

Small is good when dealing with local tour services too. Very large companies leverage their market dominance to get cheaper rates and bigger profits. This is never good for the local industry who end up earning less and less for their valued services to gain assurances of continued custom. RAW Travel has the unique ability to work with very small companies and build personal relationships with those people. So our travellers benefit from the pleasure of dedicated local operators who put quality above profit. Small also means sharing the joy. We operate a limited number of trips each year, but to a wide variety of destinations.

Respect for Culture

Responsible Travel is not just a marketing term, it's about playing a positive role in the local communities when travelling or with charitable contributions. A great deal of our travellers are already dedicated to charity, so this comes naturally. Our selected range of RAW Challenge tours bring the elements of charity and travel together in a very real sense. Respect for the local customs and beliefs also flow from this elemental mindset.

Carbon Footprints

The final issue when travelling responsibly is to be mindful of our ecological footprint. Living for two weeks in a palm-thatched hut and eating berries may be gentle on the planet, but flying half-way across the world in a jumbo-jet to get there does impact on global climate change! We do encourage our travellers to consider the benefits of offsetting their travel with Carbon Credits. All group flights that we book include carbon offsets and we are happy to quote on individual flights that include carbon offsets.

There are many considerations to responsible travel and none of us have answers to them all. But just the fact that you are thinking about them is a good start.

Our operations

Local benefits

- Wherever possible we patronize small hotels, locally owned businesses and suppliers. Profits are retained in local communities and not shipped overseas by a multi-national.
- Our RAW leaders facilitate communication of our values to travellers and local communities, educating them in sustainable tourism practices.

- We use local services and guides that mirror our values on cultural connection and environmental awareness. We foster ethnic and gender diversity in our guides.
- We eat in small local restaurants that offer an authentic taste of the region's cuisine and avoid tourist restaurants and traps.
- We donate to causes that we believe in and help support grass roots projects by including visits to them and raising awareness, fostering ongoing links between our travellers and good causes.
- Our Charity trips and fundraisers have helped raise millions of dollars for effective projects alleviating poverty and promoting education. Our Challenges have brought countless benefits to local communities from building bridges in rural Laos, to micro-finance businesses in Vietnam, orphanages in Mongolia, houses in Sri Lanka, clean water in Nepal and Vietnam through to community libraries, health and education in Indigenous Australia.

Environmental awareness

- Minimizing the environmental impact from the way we travel, the places we visit and the cultures we experience, is an absolute priority in everything we do. It's that simple.
- Transport is efficient/sustainable: we use non-motorized transportation as the primary mode of travel. In SE Asia we have eliminated use of large support vehicles that follow cycling groups. Wherever needed we use smaller, less polluting vehicles and keep the impact of support vehicles to a minimum.
- We refuse to use wasteful polystyrene lunch boxes, cups etc and giving out multiple plastic bottles. Our Trekkers and Cyclists are encouraged to avoid buying plastic bottles and we give out water from large dispensing bottles, which are refilled.
- We were one of the first to start using compulsory carbon offsets on our group flights
- As Kermit the frog said "it's not easy being green!", so we appreciate your ideas and feedback on how we can improve our operations further.

Building bridges

- As tour operators we believe we have a responsibility to ensure that our operations, literature and promotions convey respect and dignity to all the people we visit and is non-voyeuristic. We emphasize the positive aspects of the cultures that we visit and look beyond stereotypes.
- We aim to educate people about the realities of life in the countries they visit and reduce barriers between local people and visitors.

WHAT PART CAN YOU PLAY IN BEING A GOOD TRAVELLER?

Respect for our differences

- be aware of the standard of dress for locals and the acceptable definition of 'modest'
- take special care at religious sites; shoes, shoulder and hats all vary with the temple
- never take someone's photo without asking permission first; sign language can do wonders
- try to learn about their ways of doing things to avoid frustration or misunderstandings
- a little effort to study your guide book on the culture of a country can improve your appreciation of the people and your enjoyment of their customs

Giving Something Back

- take a photo and get their address so you can send it back to them
- select a charity that works in the region and donate to them
- be generous in your humanity; share your kindness and your smile
- share your spending money around instead of buying up big in one place

Try and avoid giving handouts on the street

- this can encourage begging instead of developing sustainable skills
- particularly a problem with children who quickly learn to ask tourists for pens, candy or cash
- giving out sweets to Children who can't afford or access dentistry can cause problems
- be aware of parents who use their children to approach travellers and ask for money
- never pay for photographs unless they are employed to dress in cultural attire and pose for you

Shopping and bargaining

- in Asia expect to bargain for almost anything that isn't listed with a price tag
- the only rule of bargaining is that once your offer has been accepted you cannot withdraw it
- avoid being too generous when shopping; access to easy tourist dollars can put the price of some goods out of reach for local people
- but also avoid being over zealous in your bargaining, the last fifty cents won't make a difference to you but may be somebody's profit margin and meal for the day
- make sure your haggling is good natured, a smile and a bit of fun goes a long way

Transport for Travellers

- use public transport as much as possible; it reduces carbon emissions and you're getting up-close and personal with the locals
- exercise your patience when dealing with timetables and delays to transport; you are never the only person inconvenienced
- don't expect a bus or taxi driver to speak english; anyone who can speak another language is usually able to find a better job than driving a vehicle all day

Care for the environment

- consider donating to a carbon credit scheme to offset your carbon-dioxide emissions resulting from airplane travel, buses and boats.
- never leave behind rubbish or waste; even when the local community are poorly educated on how to care for their environment there is no excuse for you to behave the same way
- avoid the use of disposable plastic bags

Thank you for caring and being a responsible traveller!

PART 2 - Our actions

RAW Travel's Environmental and Social Impact Policy

Our Aims

RAW Travel recognises the environmental and social responsibilities that come with being a tour operator in developing countries and national parks. We will continually strive to reduce any negative environmental and cultural impacts of our trips on the regions we visit. Furthermore we will strive to bring positive benefits to communities and ensure that benefits of tourism are more equitably distributed amongst those who need them most.

We hope to improve our environmental performance through a series of achievable targets and aim to make our trips environmentally and socially positive in their impacts wherever possible. We believe in pro-poor tourism and strive to ensure that the suppliers we deal with are treated equitably and paid a fair price for their services.

Assessment

We aim to record our progress in the following key areas:

1. Overseas trips - local cultures and economies
2. Overseas trips - local environment
3. Office administration
4. Australian trips - local environment & community
5. Flights and travel

Each year we will review the progress made, and note any changes to our future objectives.

Achievements

In the past 2 years we have helped facilitate the following projects:

- Construction of houses in Phnom Penh Cambodia through Habitat for Humanity
- Construction of a community hall in Phyang, Ladakh
- Ongoing assistance with the renovation classrooms in the Helambu district of Nepal

A. By 2010 we aim to include either a project based visit or donation on all of our overseas trips. The aim with the visits will be to raise awareness of local issues amongst our passengers and give them the opportunity to contribute to solutions.

B. By 2010 we aim to include an environmental & cultural impact assessment in all new trip planning in Asia.

C. By 2010 we aim for all local staff on overseas trips to derive a fair income from working on our trips by introducing a minimum tip system to support those given by passengers. I.e. RAW Travel will donate money where the group tip falls below an agreed level. This will be administered by our staff working on the events.

d. RAW Travel will aim to donate to one project each year in each of its key destinations of Aus-

tralia, Cambodia, Vietnam and Nepal that contributes effectively to social welfare or environmental conservation.

RAW Travel ensures that a fair wage is paid to porters in Nepal, Bhutan and Ladakh, and that tips are divided fairly between local staff, in keeping with the IMEC's Porter Protection policy. We intend to ask all overseas partners for a statement committing to providing a fair wage for local staff.

By mid-2010 we aim for all of our overseas participants to be aware of our carbon offset facility and encourage them to purchase carbon credits. All of our group trips involving flights will include a carbon offset as part of the purchase price.

All purchased paper to be recycled paper and to purchase recycled office products where the choice exists. Envelopes, notepads and toner cartridges for the printer are recycled and printing is kept to a minimum. All trip documentation is supplied electronically.

All recyclable materials (paper, cardboard, glass, plastics, ink cartridges) are recycled.

From 2006 we aimed to work from premises which utilise green power.

By 2010 we aim for all staff to be fully aware of our environmental and social policy targets.

RAW Travel endeavours to recycle all paper, cardboard and glass from AUSTRALIAN trips.

By 2010 we intend to produce trip planning manuals which include environmental impact notes as standard.

1. Overseas trips - local cultures and economies

There are many ways in which our activities can have a negative effect on the areas in which we travel; however there are also many opportunities for us to have a positive impact as well, through careful consideration of how we spend our money and contributing back to local economies and .

We currently minimise negative cultural and economic impact in the following ways:

- At the briefing (usually the first night of the event) we inform participants of any local environmental or cultural issues of which they should be aware.
- We use local equipment, services and vehicles wherever possible.
- We purchase food from locally-sourced suppliers
- Where possible we use locally-owned and run accommodation.
- In conjunction with the local staff, we discourage the giving of short term cash gifts, preferring to supply much-needed items such as stationery for local schools.
- Wherever possible we try to employ accommodation and services which are small, locally owned businesses to ensure that there is a benefit to the local economy.
- We encourage communication between local people and our travellers to aid mutual understanding and respect between cultures
- RAW Travel has applied to join the IMEC Partnership for Responsible Travel, which "recognizes tour operators committed to promoting proper porter treatment and cultural and environmental

sensitivity amongst their clients”.

- We ensure that any tips are divided fairly amongst local staff.

2. Overseas trips - local environment

We also aim to have a positive effect on the environment in which we travel:

- In the planning stages of establishing a new challenge we take into consideration any environmental, cultural, economic and political issues before committing ourselves to operating in an area.
- We aim to achieve zero litter, and whenever possible or appropriate remove local litter.
- We keep impact to local flora and fauna to an absolute minimum.
- We promote an understanding of and insights into the local environment.
- We encourage the eating of local foods therefore reducing importation of expensive foods.
- We work in conjunction with the local guides to ensure against the pollution of water courses during the event.
- We ask participants to avoid the purchase of souvenirs which have a negative impact on wildlife and on the environment.
- We ensure that waste is minimized and recycled whenever possible.
- We avoid bottled water wherever possible to reduce pollution from discarded plastic bottles.

3. Office administration

We aim for an environmentally-friendly office in the following ways:

- We purchase recycled office products whenever possible, especially paper.
- We try to be as paper-free as possible (for example, using email whenever appropriate; downloadable Tripnotes).
- We recycle all paper, plastics, cardboard, glass, ink cartridges;
- We minimise the energy used in the office by using green power and not leaving equipment on stand-by, switching off all computers each night.
- We have a paper recycling bin in the office so it's easy for office staff to recycle.

4. Australian trips

Although our activities in the Australia are similar to those overseas, there are a number of ways we can control our environmental impact to a greater extent:

- We try to keep non-recycled waste to a minimum.
- We encourage participants to use our group transportation to join trips and cut down on private vehicles being used to arrive at the trip start.
- Our departure points are located near to public transport, encouraging people to use these facilities
- We use local suppliers wherever possible.
- We contribute to environmental & conservation projects on the Great Ocean Walk and have been pivotal in organizing fundraising trips for Indigenous projects in outback Australia
- We inform our travellers about ways to minimise their environmental and social impact.
- We stick to the protocols of our advanced eco-certification award