

Explore Himalaya Travel & Adventure Sustainable Excursion Policy

Explore Himalaya Travel and Adventure is committed to organizing excursions in a very sustainable manner. We choose the places that follow sustainable practices in every aspect. We also promote the destinations that are adventurous and educational and can set example in overall tourism of Nepal. All our staffs adhere to the sustainable values while organizing excursions.

Scope

This policy will be a part of the Sustainability Policy. The policy is applicable to all the excursion programs organized by our company. This policy comes under effect after the approval by Managing Director and circulation to all staff. The policy will be thoroughly reviewed every 2 years to ensure its relevancy and consistency. In case of any inconsistency, the Managing Director or any authorized officer shall initiate the corrective measures.

1. Sustainable Excursion Principles

1.1 Positive excursions

All the excursions we operate make positive impacts in all possible ways. The excursions are beneficial to local people, respectful to heritages and caring to environment. We follow socially/culturally acceptable code of conduct and request our clients to do so.

1.2 Fair excursions

The excursion activities of our company are in agreement with government guidelines including protected area and heritage regulations and destination management strategies. The excursions also provide fair working environment with respect to human rights and child protection policy of government.

1.3 "Leave No Trace"

As most of the excursions like trekking takes place in protected mountain ecosystem, we stick to "Leave no Trace" policy that includes following sustainability practices.

- > Plan ahead and prepare.
- > Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
- > Dispose waste properly.
- > Leave what you find.
- > Minimize campfire impacts (be careful with fire).
- > No disturbance to wildlife.
- > Be considerate to other visitors.

1.4 Human-biodiversity connectivity

One of the foremost concerns of our excursions is to create zero or least impact on biodiversity. While doing so, we also acknowledge the indispensable connectivity of human beings and natural surroundings. All our activities are run considering the socio-ecological interrelationship.

2. General Sustainability Considerations

We give preferences to excursions that are operated on the basis of sustainability standards set by local and national governments. We guide our staff to bring their knowledge on sustainable tourism into practice. Our company makes following considerations while operating excursions:

2.1 Sensitivity to local economy and cultural heritages

- In sensitive cultural sites like indigenous villages, heritage sites and trails, we provide preferably local or especially trained guide to our clients.
- We promote community based village tourism and home stay, and promote activities that support local communities like purchasing services or goods, traditional crafts and local souvenir visiting community based project sites etc.
- Our company helps the local accommodation providers and local producers to improve the quality of their products and services in sustainable way.

2.2 Sensitivity to natural heritage

- We promote excursions that care local environment, fragile terrain and biodiversity. We also include activities like visiting protected areas and environmental conservation projects to make our clients aware about the importance of sustainability.
- We operate the excursions in natural heritage sites within local and national sustainability standards and ensure our clients follow the designated rules and regulations.
- We are highly aware to minimize disturbance to ecosystem, in case of unintentional misconduct; there is a compensatory contribution to conservation management.
- We support environmental and biodiversity protection by paying applicable permit/entrance fee to national parks and conservation areas.
- We also care support the cause in any way possible.

2.3 Sensitivity to animals

- We do not include excursions that hold wildlife in captivity, except in cases that are regulated in compliance with local, national, and international law. In case of living specimens of protected species, we make sure that they are kept by authorized people in suitably equipped environments with proper care.
- In excursions that include interactions with wildlife, we make sure that the practice complies with codes of conduct set by local, national and international law. We also consider that human actions don't have any cumulative impacts that lead to any adverse effects on the behavior and populations of the species in the wild.
- Under no circumstances are wildlife species harvested, consumed, displayed, sold, or traded, except as part of a regulated activity that strictly comply with local, national and international law.

2.4 Training and preference to local tour leaders

- In every possible situation, we choose local tour leaders and representatives.
- All our key tour leaders, local representatives and guides are appropriately qualified and well informed on companies' sustainability policy.
- Our local tour leaders and guides are trained on sustainability and destination on a regular basis so that they can inform clients on relevant sustainability matters in the destination (e.g. protection of flora, fauna, and cultural heritage, resource use), social norms and values (e.g. tips, dressing code and photography) and human rights (e.g. abuse, sexual exploitation).

2.5 Sustainable trekking excursions

As most of the excursions include trekking, we specially focus on the following practices in our trekking operations.

- We use trained guides who can aware our clients to follow sustainability practices,
- We ensure the proper disposal of waste on our trek.
- We encourage our clients to use local toilets. In case of emergency or where there is no toilet nearby, we instruct our clients to dig a hole and cover it properly after use.
- All our trekking staffs are insured.
- We adhere to maximum load limit of porters fixed by national regulations (15 kg for female porters, 20 kg for male porters)
- We ensure proper working condition to our trekking staffs like providing appropriate lodging, food, clothing and other necessary equipment (e.g. proper walking boots, sunglasses, gloves, hats, etc.)

2.6 Selection of sustainable destinations

Our company follows these practices when selecting new destinations:

- We consider the accessibility through more sustainable means of transport while selecting destinations.
- We prefer places with traffic-free areas, sustainable city planning, proper waste management infrastructure and community participation. We also choose alternative non-mainstream destinations where tourist traffic is not very high.
- We avoid places in which tourism leads to negative impacts on local population, culture and environment unless the company's contribution results in counter balancing effects. In such cases, we pressurize the government for proper initiatives.

3. Do's and Don'ts for Tourists

We recommend the following practices to our clients to make their travel experience comfortable and memorable:

- Use both of your hands rather than one when giving or receiving something, even money. Using of one hand only is considered rude.
- Do not point with a single finger but use a flat extended hand specially to indicate a sacred object or place.
- In Nepal, people (especially women) do not normally shake hands when they greet one another, but instead press palms together in a prayer-like gesture known as "Namaste". This way of greeting is used extensively in all parts of Nepal.
- It is better not to touch offerings or persons when they are on their way to shrines, especially if you are non-Hindu. • Avoid touching women and holy men.
- Cows are sacred in Nepal. Hence, it is respectful not to eat beef in front of local people.
- Try not to step over or point your feet at another person, a sacred place or a hearth.
- Remove your shoes when entering a home, temple or monastery (and do not bring leather items to Hindu temples)
- Non-Hindus are not allowed in some temples. Make sure about it before you enter.
- Dress appropriately and respectfully at all times, and especially when you visit religious places.
- Take permission before taking photographs of locals, holy shrines and temples.
- Avoid smoking and drinking in religious settings.
- Don't offer food to a Nepalese after tasting it, nor eat from a common pot, and avoid touching your lips to a shared drinking vessel.
- Acts of affection and handholding between women and men is not appreciated.
- Walk around stupas and sacred stone inscriptions clockwise, and don't take any of the stones.
- Raising your voice or shouting is seen as extremely bad manners in Nepal. It can only worsen a matter.
- Do not give anything to children or elderly, as this will only encourage begging behavior. If you want to help, donate to a trustworthy charity or a school. Your tour company can advise you on this.
- Make sure that any antique that you buy is legal. Do get a receipt of authenticity when purchasing an antique replica. This may be checked when you want to take it out of the country.