Using This Self-Assessment Checklist

This checklist has been developed to help mountain-based tour operators assess the level of good practices currently demonstrated by their businesses.

The checklist follows a similar structure as the Guide, with each set of questions corresponding to the good practices suggested under a key action area discussed in the Guide.

Each question can be answered with a simple yes or no. In most cases, examples of the kinds of good practices that would constitute a “yes” answer are also provided. More examples can be found by referring back to the corresponding sections of the Guide.

This checklist can be used as a tool for discussing and analyzing a tour operator’s conduct as well as that of its providers and suppliers. Visitors may also use the checklist to evaluate and choose tour operators and other tourism-related service providers that demonstrate good practices. The tool can be used to measure year-by-year progress on changes introduced to protect the environment and cultural heritage, foster local development or safeguard natural mountain settings. The checklist can also provide the basis for a code of conduct or service agreements with suppliers, or might serve as a yardstick for choosing new partners who share these priorities.

Good Business Practices

Visitor Education and Interpretation

1. Have you undertaken any actions to improve your knowledge regarding the environmental characteristics of the areas in which you conduct your tours?

☐ yes ☐ no

2. Do you have an environmental education or interpretive component in your tour? If yes:

Does your program identify local cultural, historical and environmental values, assets and sites of interest in your region?

☐ yes ☐ no

Does your program identify the main behaviors you want visitors to adopt to protect the local environment, culture and way of life?

☐ yes ☐ no
Is your program presented by trained guides?

☐ yes    ☐ no

Is your program adaptable to different visitor groups (e.g. children, speakers of other languages)?

☐ yes    ☐ no

3. Do you provide your customers with information about the mountain ecosystems and biodiversity conservation? For example, do you:

Identify environmental values and attractions?

☐ yes    ☐ no

Identify threatened species, habitats and environmental issues?

☐ yes    ☐ no

Identify visitor impacts and how to avoid them?

☐ yes    ☐ no

Provide information on participating in local conservation projects?

☐ yes    ☐ no

Indicate how to use local natural resources sparingly?

☐ yes    ☐ no

4. Do you provide your customers with relevant information about local laws, customs and appropriate behavior? For example, do you:

Identify inappropriate behavior, language, physical contact?

☐ yes    ☐ no

Discuss protocols for photography?

☐ yes    ☐ no
Encourage visitors to avoid sensitive or private local sites?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Encourage visitors to be considerate when using shared infrastructure and services?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Explain any relevant customs laws and souvenir restrictions?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Communicate fishing and hunting restrictions?

☐ yes  ☐ no

5. Do you recommend locally owned businesses that demonstrate good environmental and social practices?

☐ yes  ☐ no

6. Do you have any processes in place for obtaining feedback from visitors on their level of satisfaction with the various aspects of your tour?

☐ yes  ☐ no
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

7. Do you work in collaboration with protected area managers, research bodies, conservation groups or other tour operators? For example:

To develop and maintain tour infrastructure?

☐ yes  ☐ no

To develop ways of sharing tour and transport infrastructure so as to avoid congestion and not concentrate impacts in particular areas?

☐ yes  ☐ no

HEALTH AND SAFETY

8. Are you aware of the range of health and safety issues that may be relevant to visitors on your tours and in destinations that you operate in? For example:

Environmental and social conditions, events and danger areas?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Flora and fauna risks?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Minimum health and fitness requirements associated with each tour activity?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Equipment and vehicle standards required for safe operation?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Skill levels required for each activity and for safe equipment and vehicle operation?

☐ yes  ☐ no

9. Do you do anything else to help provide a healthy and safe environment for visitors while on tour? For example:

Do you carry adequate first aid supplies?

☐ yes  ☐ no
Are guides trained in first aid procedures?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Do you ensure vehicles and equipment are:

Good quality, following preferably international standards for safety?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Maintained in good condition?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Fitted with appropriate safety equipment?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Operated safely and at reasonable speeds?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Not used in overly congested conditions?

☐ yes  ☐ no
INTERACTION WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES

10. Do you consult with local communities regarding tour activities? For example:

   *Do the routes and sites chosen avoid sensitive or private community areas and activities?*
   
   □ yes   □ no

   *Do tour activities interfere with the daily lifestyle of local communities?*
   
   □ yes   □ no

   *Do tour activities create competition for shared natural resources, community services or infrastructure?*
   
   □ yes   □ no

   *Is the cultural and historical information conveyed accurate and appropriate?*
   
   □ yes   □ no

11. Do you use and support local suppliers and workers? For example:

   *What proportion of your employees are long-term residents of the region?*
   
   □ yes   □ no

   *Do you try to buy and supply locally produced food, beverage and souvenirs wherever possible?*
   
   □ yes   □ no

   *Do you include stops with local businesses, accommodation or markets in your tour?*
   
   □ yes   □ no

   *Do you pay fair wages to employees and encourage other businesses to do the same?*
   
   □ yes   □ no

12. Do you purchase equipment, goods and services from responsible suppliers? For example:

   *Who support local communities?*
   
   □ yes   □ no
Who demonstrate good environmental, social and business practices?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Who pay their employees fair wages and provide reasonable working conditions?

☐ yes  ☐ no

13. Do you assist the skills development and further education of your staff?

☐ yes  ☐ no

14. Do you provide good working conditions for employees? For example:

   Do you support your guides financially or otherwise to take language or guiding courses?

☐ yes  ☐ no

   Are your staff are paid fairly?

☐ yes  ☐ no

   Do your staff have reasonable work hours and breaks?

☐ yes  ☐ no

15. Do you contribute to community development? For example:

   Are you involved in any projects that improve the living conditions of local communities, such as health care, sanitation and access to food supplies and clean water?

☐ yes  ☐ no

   Are you involved in any projects that support education or training?

☐ yes  ☐ no
GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

WILDLIFE INTERACTION
16. Do you avoid wildlife feeding and handling?

☐ yes    ☐ no

17. Do you minimize noise and disturbances to local wildlife? For example:

   Do you use low wattage and diffuse lighting in natural areas?

☐ yes    ☐ no

   Do you slow down or avoid areas where wildlife is common when in vehicles or vessels?

☐ yes    ☐ no

   Do you discourage flash photography?

☐ yes    ☐ no

   Do you advise visitors to avoid bright-colored clothing, loud noises and sudden movements around wildlife?

☐ yes    ☐ no

RESOURCE CONSUMPTION, ENERGY USE AND TRANSPORT
18. Do you use wood and water supplies sparingly?

☐ yes    ☐ no

19. Do you encourage sustainable fishing and hunting practices? For example:

   Do you follow laws relating to maximum fish catch and minimum size limits?

☐ yes    ☐ no

   Do you use appropriate tackle, barbless hooks and native or artificial bait?

☐ yes    ☐ no

   Do you restrict catch sizes to immediate need?

☐ yes    ☐ no
Do you use catch and release methods when not fishing for food?

☐ yes  ☐ no

20. Do you undertake any actions to minimize energy consumption? For example:

Do you use batteries for lighting and equipment where possible?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Do you use fuel stoves for cooking and heating?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Are your vehicles:
   a. fuel efficient and regularly serviced?

☐ yes  ☐ no

   b. fitted to minimize engine and exhaust noise?

☐ yes  ☐ no

21. Do you practice good driving techniques and minimize the use of motor vehicles?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Do you plan tour routes to minimize distance traveled and to avoid congestion?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Do you share transport vehicles with other tour operators or accommodation providers where possible?

☐ yes  ☐ no
WASTE GENERATION AND DISPOSAL

22. Do you collect and remove all waste where possible?

☐ yes  ☐ no

23. Do you try to minimize the amount of waste generated by your activities? For example:

Do you avoid over-packaged goods?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Do you purchase in bulk?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Do you use recyclable containers?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Do you avoid purchasing disposable items?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Do you use refillable containers?

☐ yes  ☐ no

24. Do you participate in any recycling schemes?

☐ yes  ☐ no

25. Do you bury human waste (where removal is impractical) to a depth of at least 15cm (6 inches) and at a distance from water bodies of at least 100m (328 feet)?

☐ yes  ☐ no

26. Do you try to protect waterways from pollution by chemicals, rubbish and other waste products? For example:

Do you avoid the use of cleaning products, soaps, detergents and toothpaste in or near freshwater?

☐ yes  ☐ no
Do you avoid the use of toxic chemicals and use biodegradable chemicals where possible?

☐ yes  ☐ no

Do you clean, service and refuel vehicles and equipment away from freshwater?

☐ yes  ☐ no

**CONTRIBUTION TO BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE CONSERVATION**

27. Do you directly support any local conservation, rehabilitation or research and monitoring activities? For example:

*Do you participate in any environmental monitoring programs?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

*Do you provide physical or financial support for rehabilitation activities?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

*Do you assist local authorities or protected area managers in providing site hardening infrastructure in heavily used and/or sensitive areas?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

28. Do you incorporate any conservation, rehabilitation or research and monitoring activities into your tour activities? For example:

*Re-vegetation of tour trails or camping sites?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

*Weed removal?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

*Monitoring of wildlife sightings or water quality?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

*Trash collection and removal?*

☐ yes  ☐ no
MOUNTAINS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

29. Do you participate in and promote carbon offset schemes and explain to visitors about the effects of climate change and how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

☐ yes  ☐ no

30. Do you take practical steps to reduce the carbon emissions from your tour activities?

☐ yes  ☐ no
GOOD PRACTICES FOR SPECIFIC TOUR ACTIVITIES

NATURE WALKS, HIKING AND CAMPING

31. Do you do anything to help minimize erosion of landscapes and the removal of vegetation?

*Do you rotate between different established routes and sites to give areas time to recover from use?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

*Do you discourage the removal of plants, fruit, seeds, rocks or shells?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

*Do you avoid using/camping near sensitive sites and routes?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

LAND- AND SNOW-BASED ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

32. Are your tour group sizes appropriate for the carrying capacity of the area? Have you consulted with professionals to establish this?

☐ yes  ☐ no

33. Do you clean animals, equipment, vehicles, watercraft, clothing and footwear where relevant to avoid introducing exotic flora and fauna into local ecosystems?

☐ yes  ☐ no

34. Do you use established tracks, roads and sites and avoid clearing new areas?

☐ yes  ☐ no

35. Do you remove any artificial structures after use?

☐ yes  ☐ no
36. If your tour includes ice or rock climbing:

*Do you rotate areas used to minimize damage to vegetation and rock and ice formations?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

*Do you use equipment efficiently and appropriately? For example, minimizing the use of chalk, bolts and fixed equipment?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

37. If your tour includes cave environments:

*Have you undertaken any actions to prevent physical contact and damage to sensitive rock formations, animals and plants?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

*Do you use low and diffuse battery powered lighting?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

*Do you discourage the consumption of food and the disposal of trash or chemicals?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

*Do you use equipment efficiently and appropriately? For example, minimizing the use of marking materials, cushioning ropes and avoiding excessive use of fixed equipment?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

38. If you use horses or other animals:

*Do you undertake actions to prevent them grazing in sensitive areas, polluting water bodies and eroding areas with soft ground?*

☐ yes  ☐ no

*Do you deliver feed via a nose bag and undertake actions to prevent the introduction of exotic seeds into the local ecosystem?*

☐ yes  ☐ no
FRESHWATER-BASED RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

39. Do you undertake any actions to protect freshwater vegetation and habitats from damage? For example:

Do you try to anchor in muddy environments?
☐ yes ☐ no

Do you try to avoid shallow areas where paddles can damage river bed structures and vegetation?
☐ yes ☐ no

40. Do you undertake any actions to protect wetland areas from erosion and vegetation clearing? For example:

Do you use mooring buoys where available?
☐ yes ☐ no

Do you use soft ties when using trees as natural anchors?
☐ yes ☐ no

Do you avoid damage to bank vegetation when porting and launching craft?
☐ yes ☐ no

41. Do you undertake any actions to protect freshwater wildlife? For example:

Do you avoid breeding or nesting grounds when porting, launching, anchoring or mooring watercraft and when choosing sites to come ashore?
☐ yes ☐ no

Do you maintain slow vehicle speeds in areas where freshwater-going animals are common?
☐ yes ☐ no
This Assessment Check-List is A Joint Initiative of:

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
The Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) at UNEP encourages decision makers in government, local authorities and industry (including the tourism industry) to develop and implement policies, strategies and practices that are cleaner and safer, make efficient use of natural resources, ensure environmentally sound management of chemicals, reduce pollution and risks for humans and the environment, enable implementation of conventions and international agreements, and incorporate environmental costs.

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The Tour Operators’ Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development (TOI) is a network of more than 20 tour operators that have committed themselves to integrating sustainability principles into their business and to collaborating with a view to promoting and spreading practices compatible with sustainable development. The TOI has been developed with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

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