

TOURISM AND MOUNTAINS

A Practical Guide to Managing the Environmental and Social Impacts of Mountain Tours

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.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

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CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

CI believes that the Earth's natural heritage must be maintained if future generations are to thrive spiritually, culturally and economically. Our mission is to conserve the Earth's living natural heritage, our global biodiversity, and to demonstrate that human societies are able to live harmoniously with nature. Founded in 1987, CI is a global nonprofit organization, working in more than 30 countries on four continents. Practical and people-centered, we draw upon a unique array of scientific, economic, awareness-building and policy tools to help inhabitants of the Earth's biologically richest ecosystems improve the quality of their lives without depleting natural resources.

Conservation International

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THE TOUR OPERATORS' INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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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This checklist has been published with the support of the French Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development.

