

## **Sustainable Excursion Policy**

The objective of this policy is to organize tours with minimal impact on the environment, preserving the authenticity of communities and their natural surroundings. Hence, wherever feasible, all employees including directors, management and employees responsible should adhere to following policy.

### **Sustainable Excursion Principles**

Our sustainable approach to sensitive places and cultures is primarily based on following principles:

- **Positive excursions:** Our Company will ensure excursions take place in the most positive way possible and to the best benefit of local people and cultural and natural heritage. We will avoid excursions that harm humans, animals, plants, natural resources (e.g. water/energy), or which are socially/culturally unacceptable.
- **Fair excursions:** The excursion activities of our company are in compliance with legally based spatial planning, protected area and heritage regulations and destination management strategies of local, regional and national authorities. The excursions also fully respect human rights and child protection.
- **Human-biodiversity connects:** In applying a sustainable development perspective we should recognize the close links and interdependence of biological diversity and local cultures within the socio-ecological systems of many protected and culturally important places. This means any activity aiming to achieve sustainable development will necessarily have to take into consideration the interrelationship of biological diversity with the local cultural context.

### **General Sustainability Considerations**

Aarya Village Travel considers the following important general elements of sustainability in excursions:

- Where available, preference is given to excursions that are operated on the basis of acknowledged and controlled sustainability standards.
- We encourage our staff to take an active interest in sustainable tourism and we do guide them accordingly so they can put it in practice.

#### **Sensitivity to cultural heritage**

- In sensitive cultural sites (e.g. indigenous villages), heritage sites or ecologically sensitive destinations, skilled and certified guides will guide our guests.
- The company intends to include into packages and promote to clients excursions and activities that directly involve and support local communities. For example by purchasing services or goods, traditional crafts and local (food) production methods, and visiting social projects.
- Our company supports initiatives that improve the relationships between accommodations and local producers, among which the production and distribution of local food products and souvenirs etc. (e.g. initiatives to improve quality level, logistics, transport)

#### **Sensitivity to natural heritage**

- The company intends to include into packages or promote to clients, excursions and activities that support local environment and biodiversity (e.g. visiting protected areas, environmental protection projects).
- Our company will ensure operation of excursions within national and local sustainability standards. All the national parks and conservation areas in Nepal are managed with a controlled sustainability

standard by the respective regional forest authorities and wildlife wardens. We ensure that our clients are aware of and comply with relevant rules and regulations.

- Any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimized, rehabilitated, and there is a compensatory contribution to conservation management.
- Our company supports environmental and biodiversity protection by paying the permit / entrance fee to national parks and conservation areas. Where possible, we will provide other means of support.

### **Sensitivity to animals**

- Our company does not offer excursions and attractions in which captive wildlife is held, except for properly regulated activities in compliance with local, national and international law. In case of living specimens of protected and wildlife species these are only kept by those authorized and suitably equipped to house and care for them humanely.
- Excursions that include interactions with wildlife comply with relevant (e.g. Travelife) codes of conduct. Taking into account cumulative impacts, they do not lead to any adverse effects on the viability and behavior of populations in the wild.
- Wildlife species are not harvested, consumed, displayed, sold, or traded, except as part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilization is sustainable and in compliance with local, national and international law.

### **Preference for local tour leaders**

- Key tour leaders, local representatives and guides, contracted by the company, are appropriately qualified and are trained regularly.
- Tour leaders, local representatives and guides are informed on the relevant aspects of the companies' sustainability policy and are expected to comply with it.
- We acknowledge local tour leaders for their destination knowledge and we encourage them to enhance this by offering them guidance and training on sustainability and the destination.
- Tour leaders, local representatives and guides 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. sexual exploitation).

### **Sustainable Trekking/Hiking Excursions**

One of the key excursion types in Nepal, trekking takes place in our vulnerable mountain ecosystem and it is our duty to help conserve this. Hence, for trekking excursions, our company has put in place some specific sustainability practices. As much as possible, we follow the "Leave No Trace" principles:

1. Plan ahead and prepare.
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
3. Dispose of waste properly.
4. Leave what you find.
5. Minimize campfire impacts (be careful with fire).
6. Respect wildlife.
7. Be considerate of other visitors.

Beyond these, we follow these practices to ensure our clients have a safe and sustainable trekking experience:

1. Trained guides who can help our clients follow these sustainability practices.
2. We ensure a proper waste management on our trek/hike

3. Where possible, we encourage our clients to use local toilets.
4. Max load of porters is in accordance with national regulations (15 kg for female porters, 20 kg for male porters)
5. Trekking staff is provided with appropriate clothing and other necessary equipment (e.g. proper walking boots, sunglasses, gloves, hats, etc.)
6. Trekking staff is provided with appropriate lodging and food. Access to tents where necessary.

### **Sustainability through a long-term perspective**

We aim to achieve sustainability across all excursions and destinations in Nepal through a long-term perspective. In our effort:

- We communicate our sustainability objectives and requirements to our excursion providers, equipment providers and destination representatives.
- Where contracts with suppliers are in place, basic sustainability clause(s) are included (e.g. child labor, anti-corruption and bribery, waste management and protection of biodiversity).
- Providers for sensitive excursions or activities, which are integrated into packages or offered through local partners, receive and implement documented guidelines and/or codes of conduct in order to minimize negative visitor impact and maximize enjoyment. The guidelines are developed with the collaboration and consent of relevant NGO's and the affected community.

### **Sustainable Destinations**

Our company follows these practices when selecting new destinations:

- In selecting new destinations the accessibility through more sustainable means of transport is considered.
- Sustainability aspects in destinations are considered in the selection process of new destinations (e.g. traffic-free areas, sustainable city planning, proper waste management infrastructure and community participation). Possibly alternative non-mainstream destinations are offered.
- Destinations in which tourism leads to structural negative local effects in terms of biodiversity, waste; sanitation; human rights and healthcare, water, energy and food availability are not selected (unless the company's involvement results in clear counter balancing effects).

### **Sensitive areas guidelines**

<b>Heritage sites</b>	<b>Protected areas</b>	<b>Conservation area</b>
Kathmandu Durbar Square	Chitwan National Park	Annapurna Conservation Area
Patan Durbar Square	Sagarmatha National Park	Kanchenjunga Conservation Area
Bhaktapur Durbar Square	Langtang National Park	Manaslu Conservation Area
Swayambhunath Stupa	Bardia National Park	Gaurishankar Conservation Area
Boudhanath Stupa	Rara National Park	Api Nampa Conservation Area
Pashupatinath Temple	Shey Phoksundo National Park	Blackbuck Conservation Area
Changu Narayan Temple	Khaptad National Park	Ghandruk Conservation Area
Lumbini	Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park	Lamjung Conservation Area

	Makalu Barun National Park  Banke National Park  Shuklaphanta National Park	Mardi Himnal Conservation Area  Panchase Conservation Area
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**Popular Indigenous village in tourism industry**

Tharu Village (Chitwan): Sauraha

Gurung Village (Annapurna Region): Ghandruk, Ghale Gaun

Tamang Village (Langtang Region): Gatlang, Briddim

Sherpa Village (Khumbu Region): Namche Bazaar, Khumjung, Thame

Chepang Village (Chitwan and Makwanpur): Hugdi, Shaktikhor

**Prioritize off the beaten paths while consulting with the clients**

**Upper Dolpo:** Located in the far-western region, Upper Dolpo offers stunning landscapes, remote villages, and an opportunity to explore the Shey Phoksundo National Park and the beautiful Phoksundo Lake.

**Rolwaling Valley:** Tucked away between the Langtang and Everest regions, Rolwaling Valley is known for its challenging trekking routes, pristine landscapes, and views of majestic peaks like Gauri Shankar.

**Tsum Valley:** Nestled in the northern Gorkha district, Tsum Valley is a hidden gem known for its sacred monasteries, Tibetan Buddhist culture, and picturesque landscapes.

**Kanchenjunga Region:** The eastern region of Nepal offers the opportunity to explore the less-visited Kanchenjunga Conservation Area, home to the third-highest peak in the world. The region offers stunning mountain vistas, remote villages, and rich biodiversity.

**Nar Phu Valley:** Situated in the Annapurna region, the Nar Phu Valley is a secluded region that requires a special permit to visit. It offers a unique cultural experience with Tibetan-influenced villages, ancient monasteries, and rugged landscapes.

**Rara Lake:** Located in the remote Mugu district of western Nepal, Rara Lake is the largest lake in Nepal. The area boasts untouched natural beauty, serene surroundings, and opportunities for hiking and birdwatching.

**Lower Mustang:** While Mustang is becoming more popular, the lower region of Mustang is still relatively off the beaten path. It offers a mix of Tibetan culture, ancient cave dwellings, and beautiful landscapes.

**Makalu Base Camp:** Located in the eastern region near the border with Tibet, Makalu Base Camp trek takes you through pristine forests, rugged terrains, and offers close-up views of Mount Makalu, the fifth highest peak in the world.

**Khaptad National Park:** Situated in the far-western region, Khaptad National Park is a serene and less-visited area known for its peaceful atmosphere, diverse flora and fauna, and religious significance.

**Far-Western Hill Stations:** The far-western region of Nepal is home to hill stations like Dadeldhura, Dipayal, and Darchula, which provide opportunities for nature walks, panoramic views, and a glimpse into the rural life of Nepal.

**Special note:** Sales and Operations departments should pay close attention to sustainability issues before, during, and after the tours on these sensitive destinations. It is imperative for the departments to refer to our "Sustainable Consultation Policy for Clients" and provide clients with the "Responsible Traveler Code of Conduct."

Aarya Village Travel will review this policy from time to time as appropriate, and in any event, once every year.