

Swiss Family Treks & Expedition and Swiss Himalayan Family Treks & Expedition Pvt. Ltd

Sustainable Excursion Policy

Date of approval: 11th June 2017

Our company is committed to ensuring excursions are organized sustainably.

One of the most visible aspects of our company's sustainability to our clients can be found in the arrangement of excursions. Hence, our company takes care of developing and executing excursions in a fully sustainable manner. We will give strong preference to destinations that follow sustainable practices throughout all aspects of their tourism offer and see it as our role to guide destinations towards this.

Wherever possible, all staff will pursue the following goals and adhere to the specified principles when involved in organizing excursions.

Scope

This policy will be part of the Sustainability Policy. The policy is applicable to the excursion activities conducted by our company and all employees will follow these guidelines disclosed in this document.

This policy is effective immediately after approval by Managing Director and circulation to staff. The policy will be formally reviewed every 2 years to ensure its relevancy. The Managing Director or an officer delegated with such authority must approve any deviations to this policy.

Sustainable Excursion Principles

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

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. Human-biodiversity connect

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

Our company 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. 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 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:

- Trained guides who can help our clients follow these sustainability practices.
- We ensure a proper waste management on our trek
- Where possible, we encourage our clients to use local toilets. When there is no local toilet available,
- Risk insurance for all trekking staff
- Max load of porters is in accordance with national regulations (15 kg for female porters, 20 kg for male porters)
- Trekking staff is provided with appropriate clothing and other necessary equipment (e.g. proper walking boots, sunglasses, gloves, hats, etc.)
- 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 gives preference to destinations, which clearly pursue sustainability elements. In Nepal some of the mass tourism destinations are becoming better at

this (e.g. Annapurna has installed drinking water stations to minimize plastic bottles).

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 Excursions Checklist

Our company has made an inventory of environmentally or culturally sensitive excursions, which are offered across Nepal. The below table indicates which sensitive excursion types we offer, and if their organization involves third party.

In our execution of these excursions we are well aware of our behavior and aim to do so as sustainably as possible and with utmost care for the site.

	Organized directly by our company	Organized by our company, equipment provided by third party	Fully outsourced to third party
Culture-based activities			
• Tangible cultural heritage (buildings, statutes, etc.)			
• Intangible cultural heritage (dance, food, ceremonies, etc.)			
• City tour			
Nature-based activities			
• Hiking			
• Mountain biking			
• Trail running			
• Mountain climbing			
• Jeep safari			
• Motor biking			
• Mountain flight			
Fresh water-based activities (rivers, lakes)			
• Rafting			
• Canoeing			
• Row boating			
• Motorized boating			
• Fishing			
• Swimming			

Community-based activities

- Visiting traditional communities
- Visiting indigenous people
- Slum tours
- Visiting schools
- Visiting orphanages

Animal activities

- Horse riding
- Elephant riding / washing
- Mule transportation
- Captive animals (e.g. zoos)
- Wild animals in natural habitat (e.g. safaris)

Do's and Don't for Tourists

We encourage all tourists to respect Nepalese culture and nature and we recommend the following practices:

- Show gratitude and respect: use both of your hands rather than one when giving or receiving something, even money.
- Remember not to point with a single finger but use a flat extended hand especially 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 "Namaste" greeting is preferable.
- It is better not to touch offerings or persons when they are on way to shrines, especially if you are non-Hindu.
- Avoid touching women and holy men.
- Don't eat with your left hand. The left hand is for...where the sun never shines.
- 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)
- Note that some of the temples may be prohibited for non-Hindus.
- Dress appropriately and respectfully at all times, and especially when visiting a temple or monastery.
- Do not take photographs of locals, holy shrines & temples unless local people have clearly given their consent.
- Avoid smoking 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 clockwise, so that the outer walls are always on your right. If you encounter a stone wall covered with Tibetan inscriptions, do the same: Walk past with the wall on your right (and don't take any of the stones).
- Raising your voice or shouting is seen as extremely bad manners in Nepal. It can only make a problem worse.

- Do not give anything to children or elderly, as this will only stimulate begging behavior. If you want to help, give your donation to a trustworthy charity or a school. Your tour company can advise you on this.
- 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.