

# Responsible Tourism Policy

## GreenHippo Travels 2021

GreenHippo Travels is a tour operator in Tanzania with a broad focus on responsible travel.

Our vision is to develop and promote authentic and unique travel experiences which will bring the greatest possible benefit to all participants as travelers, the population and tourist business, whilst minimizing our environmental impact and respecting the culture and people in Tanzania.

Responsible Tourism requires that hoteliers, government, local people and tourists take responsibility, take action to make tourism more sustainable.

Our believe that responsible tourism means:

- minimize negative environmental, social and cultural impacts
- generate greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the wellbeing of host communities, by improving working conditions and access to the industry
- involve local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage and to the maintenance of the world's diversity
- provide more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local, cultural and environmental issues

The aim of our Responsible Tourism Policy is:

- to educate staff, guides, crew, suppliers and clients on the importance of sensitivity to environmental, cultural and economic matters in Tanzania
- to set the example for our clients; tour guides, drivers, cooks and guides play a model role and therefore have to set the example for our clients and they also have to inform the clients
- to give practical guidance on how to achieve these objectives

**We have divided our sustainable development plan in 4 different themes:**

- 1. Carbon Management**
- 2. Destinations**
- 3. Our colleagues**
- 4. Our customers**

## **1. Carbon Management**

We are aware that wherever we go we are having an impact on the environment. We endeavor to minimize this impact and, where possible, engage in projects and activities that not only make the environment sustainable but contribute to improving it.

### **Internal operations**

We run our office in a responsible manner by using fair-trade products, reducing our energy usage, as well as recycling. We limit the amount of paper materials we produce.

### **Waste Management**

Sustainable waste management works with three objectives: reduce, reuse and recycle. We try to produce as little waste as possible, and separate glass, paper, toner/ink and batteries so it can be recycled.

### **Energy reduction**

All equipment is switched off after office hours (not on 'standby').

### **Staff mobility**

The mobility of the employees consists of the travel between home and work and for business purposes. We stimulate our employees to work from home. Others walk to our office.

### **Use of Transport**

- We prefer direct national flights to reach the destinations.
- We make sure that the vehicles we use are well maintained.
- We promote slow travel.
- We suggest hikes, walks, mountain bike tours for 1 or more days in every itinerary.
- We tell our drivers to switch off engines when vehicles are stationary.
- We don't offer activities focused on use of quad bikes, speed boats etc.

## **2. Destinations**

### **Sustainable accommodations**

We prefer small scale lodges and tented camps which work in a sustainable way. We promote sleeping Under Canvas during the safaris. We encourage the use of tented camps without a swimming pool inside the National Parks.

### **Sustainable projects we visit during our trips**

During every safari we aim to include at least one visit to a project which directly support the local economy or nature.

### **Waste management/reducing plastic water bottles.**

We reduce waste accumulation in the National Parks by following a 'whatever we bring in, we will bring out' policy.

The driver guide has a great influence on the clients to reduce the waste during the safari.

We ask our clients to bring water bottles from home. During the safari we have a refilling station in the safari vehicle.

### **Animal welfare**

- We only visit National Parks and Game Reserves where our clients can see the animals in their natural environment.
- We are sensitive to animal behavior and stress, which means staying at an appropriate distance from animals.
- We discourage touching and petting
- We discourage visiting wild animals in captivity for entertainment.
- We follow and report on the wildlife care and rescue activities in our blogs and we educate our staff and clients on the various aspects of wildlife care and rescue in Tanzania.

### **Dolphin watching**

We do not offer the activity of swimming with dolphins in the wild, because it disturbs the natural habitat of the animals.

### **Working conditions in tourism sector**

Local crew should not be given an unreasonable workload. Working hours should be reasonable and safe within local regulations and not involve dangerous practices in carrying out the job.

## Code of Conduct for Porters

We support the guidelines of the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG). Below the guidelines that we want to respect:

- **Selection of Porters:** guides from the area where the trekking takes place have priority above guides from elsewhere
- **Minimum Age:** No porters under the age of 16 will be employed. The age will be checked with the porter's identity card.
- **Wages:** All staff will receive a fair wage and payment. Tips must be distributed openly and fairly. The wage will be fair and will include porter's food. All porters will be paid for the duration of the climb.
- **Accommodation:** Accommodation is provided and climber's park fees cover this cost. No porter will have to sleep outside; they will either sleep in huts or tents.
- **Loads:** No porter should be asked to carry a load that is too heavy for their physical abilities (maximum: 20 kg on Kilimanjaro). Weight limits may need to be adjusted for altitude, trail and weather conditions.
- **Clothing:** All staff will have correct clothing that is sufficient to stand the coldness on mountains.
- **Medical Care:** All medical bills will be paid for staff taken ill during the climb. Staff will be evacuated from the mountain if they become ill and will nevertheless be paid for the whole climb.
- **Client Awareness and Behavior:** Porters and clients will be introduced by name at the start of the trek. Clients will be given advice on how much to tip and the procedure for tipping.

## Child protection

During our safaris we don't use children in any way for our activities.

## Code of conduct against child sex tourism

We recognize that the sexual exploitation of children is a world-wide problem. In all our activities and operations we actively disagree with all kinds of sexual exploitation of children.

## 3. Our local partners

GreenHippo Travels respects elementary human rights such as non-discrimination, freedom of assembly, no forced labor and no child labor.

## **Communication**

We actively communicate with our office staff and local partners on environmental and social issues through meetings.

## **Payment**

We expect from our suppliers to pay their workers a fair salary, that is at least the minimum wage, preferably more than this. None of the employees from our suppliers should depend completely on the tips from the tourists.

## **4. Our Customers**

We are proactive in raising awareness of sustainability issues with our customers. We aim to raise awareness, influence choice, change behavior, and develop and promote new products to encourage responsible safari choices.

### **Communicating sustainability during a holiday**

Our guides play an important role in informing our customers on responsible travel. At the start of a trip all our customers receive a leaflet with responsible travel tips.

### **Use of water**

Water should always be used sparingly. We have a water refilling station with clean drinking water in all our safari vehicles.

### **Use of energy**

- We advise clients to turn off air-conditioning, lights, TVs and fans when not in their rooms and consider not using air-conditioning, or only when it is extremely warm.
- We look out for any hotels that use more sustainable resources - e.g. hotels with solar panels.
- We check regularly if hotels recycle any goods and encourage others to adopt the system if it works.
- We do not encourage our drivers to let the cars run the engine for more than three minutes before setting off.

### **Use of firewood/Campfires**

- Charcoal is not an environmentally friendly fuel source as you cannot be sure that the wood it is made from is from a sustainable source. Therefore we prefer to minimize the use of charcoal.
- Wood collected should be dead wood off the ground only.
- Keep the fire small

- Use a pre-existing fire ring where possible or the site of a previous fire
- Only paper goods should be burned on the campfire. Even light plastics generate toxic fumes.
- Be aware of fire hazards and local fire regulations
- On leaving camp, the campfire should be 'dug in' so that you can be sure it is out and it is not an unsightly mess.

### **Litter and waste disposal and reduction of waste**

The following policy should be adhered to when disposing of rubbish from camps at nature areas:

- Items that should be burned: paper & card\*
- Items that should be buried: vegetable & food waste\*
- Items that should be carried out: plastics, glass & cans. Rubbish should always be disposed of where it is sure to be collected\*

\*NB in national parks we will have to follow the guidelines of the national parks.

Litter is a huge problem in many countries, in Tanzania as well, where there is limited or no infrastructure for waste disposal, let alone recycling facilities. The first step is to ensure that waste is disposed of in the most effective way possible.

- Litter should always be disposed of responsibly. It is absolutely forbidden to throw trash out of the window when we are travelling. Therefore every vehicle has a rubbish bin.
- Cigarette butts should not be dropped on streets / behind bushes / overboard boats etc. but put in a rubbish bin or in pocket until a rubbish bin is available.
- Campsites should be checked for all litter before departing, including bottle tops and cigarette ends. Crew should help in this respect.
- Check if any recycling facility exists locally and use it where possible.

### **Sanitation and toilets**

- It is NOT allowed to leave any toilet paper behind anywhere.

### **Respecting animal welfare**

Never feed animals. It can make them ill or makes them dependent, so they cannot survive on their own in the wild.

- Do not pursue animals, this is distressing them, for the sake of a photo / better look. Do not try to touch animals; apart from being dangerous, it can distress them.
- When snorkeling or diving, do not stand on coral - or even touch it.

- Where animals are used for transport on tours, we try to ensure that animals are well cared for and have no signs of mistreatment or malnourishment.
- We don't offer tours with dolphins involved.

### **Souvenirs: antique, coral, shells, ivory, butterflies etc.**

Be aware of goods that may be manufactured through child labor and local laws regarding purchase and export of antiquities. Do not buy items derived from endangered / fragile species (flora and fauna). Be aware which goods are made from forbidden animals or plants. It is forbidden to take such souvenirs to Europe, and clients risk a big fine. Here is a list of examples of products/materials that are forbidden:

- any type of coral and products made of corals
- all big shells
- ivory and products made of ivory
- any products made of the skins of tortoises, crocodiles, snakes, big cats, butterflies and parrots

### **Food and meals**

Do not eat food from endangered / fragile species. As with objects, be aware which goods are from sustainable sources. In Tanzania bush meat is forbidden to eat.

### **Cultural differences**

- Crew should be treated as equals socially. Respect for social and cultural diversity is important.
- When visiting local people, we will always behave according to norms and values in the particular community. Sensitivity to the host culture is important. For example: we ask permission from the village chief to visit the families.

### **Gifts and presents**

- It is not advisable to give any money, sweets, gifts, medicines or presents to children, neither to adults.
- We discourage giving to beggars that are begging to tourists only/ in particular. Whilst in many countries some people depend on begging for their livelihood, we regard giving money as a short-term solution to a more fundamental problem.
- If people want to assist children, we advise to give some requirements to non-governmental organizations which are focusing on special target groups, such as children, orphans, handicapped persons etc.

- Where possible, we will inform our clients about a development project or organization within this destination. It is preferable that this organization is supported by a foundation and has a website, so clients will have the possibility to give follow-up by contacting this foundation.

### **Visiting schools, hospitals or development projects**

- The tour guide should always ask permission to visit a school, hospital or development project. If they allow the group to visit the spot, we will ask whether somebody from the school, hospital or project can give us a brief explanation while guiding us around.
- After the guidance and explanation it is respectful to hand over a gift for the school, hospital or project. Distinction can be made between a small gift for the person who has been guiding and a present/money for the project itself.
- We do not encourage to give 'second hand' medicines to hospital with description in languages that the people in hospital do not understand.

### **Photographing**

We inform our clients about photographing. The following general advises is given and besides this, each specific destination might have some specified instructions:

- Always ask permission in advance when making photographs of a person or his property (for example, his house or his cattle).
- Never make photographs secretly; if people do not want to be photographed we have to respect it.
- We do not encourage to pay for photographing people, except when this is the social norm for tourists like for instance the Masaai or Hadzabe tribe in Tanzania. In these cases it is advisable to discuss the price in advance. In some cases the prices are quite fixed and the tour leader will inform you about this.
- When visiting certain small villages, schools or compounds the guide will ask permission to make photographs and not until permission is given, clients are allowed to make photographs. It is respectful to meet, listen and talk first, before taking out the cameras of the bags.
- Do not make promises to send the photographs if you are not sure to keep your promises.

### **Dress code**

- We inform our clients about the dress code in each particular village. In the first briefing the tour guide will mention the general dress code and on particular events or visits the tour guide will advise clients how to dress.





- Encourage clients to dress appropriately to the local norm, even if other visitors do not.
- In Islamic areas (Stone Town - Zanzibar) tourists must dress according to what the local people expect from them. It is respectful to dress properly.

### **Foods and Crafts**

We promote local sourcing of food and other local products. We encourage our clients to visit local bars and restaurants and experience local products and cuisine. Our tour guides educate our customers about local food and crafts and encourage their appreciation, this can help to make a real difference to the preservation of local skills and jobs.

### **Visiting tribal groups**

- All advises concerning photographing, begging, dressing etc. should be taken into account very strictly.
- All tourists should realize that they are 'guests' in the communities that are visited.
- We have to inform ourselves about the cultural issues, such as the way of greeting, payments, bringing presents, asking questions etc. The guide will inform clients about how to show respect to the community.
- We will always try to find a local guide within the tribal group who can explain about the culture in English.
- Tourists and crew should not take the freedom to walk around on a private compound without asking permission. Realize that this is private property and some areas might be holy and are not allowed to walk.
- Tourists should not give money to individuals. If they want to donate something, it is good to donate to a community project (in some cultures you need to contact the chief).

### **Tipping**

Clients are advised to give a fair, reasonable tip to the local guides, cleaners, cook, drivers etc. Tipping is very important but we can never force clients to tip, as it is voluntary. We will brief our clients that what tipping means to us (our culture) is much different from what it means for the crew (their culture), so they are aware that tipping is very important.

***For questions and remarks related to our sustainability / CSR Policies, please contact [office@greenhippotravels.com](mailto:office@greenhippotravels.com). We will make sure we respond to you in 24 hours.***