

Responsible Guest Guide

Simple actions you can take to support the people and places you visit

We all travel for different reasons and many of us would agree that one of the best things about travel is having new and unique experiences. Because people, culture, history, wildlife and scenery play such important roles in our travel experiences, protecting and supporting these things should be at the heart of every tourism and travel organisation, and every traveller.

Travelife certification helps accommodation providers put sustainability at the heart of their business. Travelife Certified properties must achieve 100% compliance with one of the toughest accommodation sustainability standards in the world, something we verify by conducting a full site audit of each property every 2 years.

We have conducted thousands of these audits all over the world and have found that the greatest impact comes when many individuals take simple actions, and that no matter how hard an accommodation provider works to improve, they are only successful if their guests are also willing to take some simple actions too. We invite you to keep reading to find out how you can help to improve the impact of your travel.

Researching your trip

Booking travel: If you have a choice, always opt for the company that is taking action to improve their environmental and social impacts. The best ones will publish annual sustainability reports and be independently certified by a reputable sustainability label like Travelife.

Culture: Travel is more enjoyable when you have some knowledge of how to respect local customs and culture. Even simple things like how to tip, dress or say thank you are useful to know before you arrive.

Ground transport: You can help ease congestion, pollution and emissions by opting for taxi and transfer companies with low-emission fleets, using public transport and exploring the destination on foot or by bike when it is safe and practical to do so.

Caring for others: Spend some time learning how to identify the signs that someone is being trafficked, abused or exploited, then find out how to report it if you ever see it. You should be able to find reputable information and training resources online, often provided by the police or an NGO, otherwise ask for advice from a relevant local charity or check with your travel agent.

Packing

Pack light: Whether you are travelling by plane, train, ship or car, a lighter load means that less fuel is required to complete the journey, leading to lower emissions.

Pack to bring it back: Unwanted items you leave behind add to pollution in destinations that lack good waste and recycling solutions, and in all destinations they add stress to local waste management systems.

Personal care products: Washing or swimming when using shampoos, lotions and gels that contain 'microbeads' can cause serious long-term harm to biodiversity. Many countries have already banned them so please do not travel with these items.

Sunscreens: Certain ingredients found in some sun protection products are very damaging to marine life and reefs, even in tiny amounts and even from showering them off in your hotel room. Look for a marine-safe alternative if a sunscreen contains any of these ingredients: Oxybenzone, Benzophenone-1, Benzophenone-8, OD-PABA, 4-Methylbenzylidene Camphor, 3-Benzylidene Camphor, nano-Titanium Dioxide, nano-Zinc Oxide, Octinoxate, Octocrylene.

Single-use plastics: If you bring them with you then they will have to be disposed of and many destinations lack the facilities to do this safely. See if you can travel with reusable alternatives or ones made from recycled paper products instead of plastic.

At your accommodation

Temperature: Keeping your room at a comfortable temperature is important yet this is one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in accommodation. You can help by not adjusting the thermostat more than necessary and by ensuring that heating/cooling units are turned off whenever doors or windows are open.

Water: There are always greenhouse gas emissions created from sourcing and disposing of water, and in some destinations water is an extremely precious resource. You can help by taking shorter showers, turning off the tap whilst brushing your teeth and making use of any low-flush option on toilets.

Eating & drinking: Around a third of all food produced is never eaten, yet food production accounts for a third of all greenhouse gas emissions. You can help by only ordering what you will eat, choosing local items over imported ones and opting for more meat-free meals during your stay.

Find out about recycling: Every location has different recycling rules that can be confusing when you travel, so ask hotel staff about what you can recycle and how.

Supporting the local community

Support local businesses: Try to dine and shop at locally owned and operated businesses in the area. If you are buying gifts or mementos, see if you can find something that is handcrafted by a local artist or produced by a small business.

Explore the culture and area: Even if you are on a lazy beach holiday or a short business trip, you are likely to get more out of your visit if you find time to take in some of the local sites, culture and activities.

Respecting people: Make sure you know about, and observe, any local laws, customs or traditions. Do not take photos or videos of people without their permission, especially if you intend to post these online. Remember that only parents or legal guardians can give permission for children.

Safeguard children: Avoid activities that could harm children such as orphanage and school visits that can disrupt education or lead to exploitation. The best way to support children is to donate to a reputable charity. If you suspect that any child is being exploited or abused, immediately report the issue to law enforcement. You can speak with accommodation staff or your travel agent if you are not sure how to do that safely.

Protect biodiversity: Be sure to properly dispose of your waste and follow any guidance about how to protect sensitive areas such as sand dunes, reefs or forests. Do not take anything away from these areas such as shells or stones and likewise, do not leave anything behind.

Support local improvement initiatives: If you have had a great time at your destination and would like to give something back to the people who live there, then we suggest looking for a local improvement initiative or charity to support. You could ask staff at your accommodation for ideas as they may already have something in place. For example, raising funds to build a new medical centre, to improve a local park or to protect an important natural area.

Safeguarding animals

Stray or abused animals: If you are concerned about stray or abused animals, ask staff at your accommodation about the best course of action. They may already be working with a local animal welfare organisation or have some advice for you. If not, you can ask your travel agent. International organisations like [World Animal Protection](#) and [Born Free](#) often have online advice about what to do if you see abuse or neglect of captive wild animals (e.g. snakes, tigers, bears, elephants).

Animal activities & attractions: We suggest that you avoid any activities that could possibly be harmful to the mental or physical wellbeing of animals. This could include activities involving feeding or touching wild animals and any attractions where animals are forced to behave in a way that would not be normal for them in the wild.

