



# The School Travel Consultancy



A guide to planning exceptional  
educational adventures & school expeditions  
**Parts 6 & 7**





## Section 6: Responsible Tourism

## Introduction:

The issue of responsible tourism is a serious one. Tourism is an industry which, if managed inappropriately, can lead to the degradation of habitats, local resources and communities as a whole.

Here at the STC, it is our firm belief that tourism can and should be both sustainable and beneficial to all concerned.

We believe we have a duty to arrange holidays, tours and expeditions that have minimal impact on a destination. The tour operators we work with have a big part to play in this, and many are recognised as leaders in the field of Responsible Tourism. But it is also *your* responsibility, and there are many things which you, as a traveller, can do to minimise your negative impact on a destination and maximize the positive.

The following pages give a few basic tips and suggestions on how to ensure you and your group travel in a more responsible fashion.



# Environmental Considerations

The environmental impact of travel, especially travel in a large group, can be considerable, both to the environment in general and on a more specific local level. Any area that is visited has its own environmental issues that are often unique to that area. A good understanding of these issues is therefore essential in helping a group minimise its impact on the area being visited. This is where the use of experienced local agents with local knowledge is so important - they understand the pressures that tourism can bring and how those pressures can best be minimised.

## *Top tips on environmentally friendly travel:*

- Use biodegradable soap and shampoo especially if travelling to places where water treatment facilities are limited. Remember streams or rivers may be someone's drinking water further downstream.
- Conserve local resources in your accommodation by turning heating/air conditioning down/off, switching lights off when leaving a room, re-using towels and bed linen and using water sparingly.
- Keep to tracks and trails even if difficult, muddy or slippery as walking or riding on the side of paths can widen the track adding to erosion and the destruction of habitats.
- Do not pick plants or flowers - remember some flora can take hundreds of years to grow and a moment to kill!
- Don't touch coral reefs and use biodegradable sun lotion if swimming in the sea.
- If trekking keep the number of your movements to a minimum, moving quietly and with care and attention to your surroundings.
- Do not feed wildlife. Keep your distance and use a zoom lens to get close up shots.
- Make sure all rubbish is disposed of properly, carrying it out of remote areas. Use alternatives to plastic. Litter, such as cigarette butts, can take many years to biodegrade with serious ecological consequences.
- Consider what you really need to take with you. Get rid of any packaging and waste that you can before you leave home.
- Be fire aware: Timber can be scarce and is a valuable ecological resource – even fallen dead wood is important. Comply with local rules relating to fires, do not throw rubbish on a cooking fire and do not leave rings of stones.





# Ethical Awareness

Ethical awareness when travelling encompasses many aspects. In essence, it is about making sure that the local people we all rely on whilst travelling for the provision of food, accommodation, transport, souvenirs and leisure activities, get a fair deal for the services they provide. There are a number of ways in which this can be done.

Typically these steps include using locally run hotels rather than big international chains (enabling a larger proportion of the money to enter the local economy), using local transport and guides where possible, and fair working conditions for porters where they are used.

## *Top tips on how to travel ethically:*

- Keep jewellery and other personal effects to an absolute minimum as it can appear to be flaunting affluence.
- Giving gifts and money to individuals and children you have just met can have upsetting consequences – creating dependence, expectation, loss of self respect. Instead, consider donating to a local project or cause for the good of the whole community. If you want to take presents, consider taking postcards of your home region or national parks, or photos of you and your family.
- Try and purchase souvenirs from local artisans, bargain if it is expected, but remember how important even a small amount of money can be to the seller. Offer a fair price.
- Never buy goods made from animal products, coral reefs or endangered plants and avoid souvenirs that could have come from archaeological sites.
- If possible stay and eat in locally run hotels, bars and restaurants - the money will go to the local community rather than a big corporation or international chain.
- Try the local food and specialities. By eating locally produced goods you will help the local farmers as well as the local economy.
- Consider hiring a local guide to take you beyond the tourist route. You will be providing employment and getting an insight into the country, environment and customs.
- Use local transport where possible.
- Ensure your tour company is treating local staff (e.g. porters, drivers, guides and cooks) with respect. Do they have fair pay, reasonable loads, proper equipment, medical cover, reasonable hours of work and proper food? If you feel employees are not being treated fairly then do not be afraid to raise your concerns.
- See [www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk) for more information.



# Cultural Awareness

Experiencing the culture of a country is one of the joys of travelling and an integral part of any educational trip abroad. It should always be remembered, however, that as tourists we are guests in someone else's country and as such we should respect the wishes of the local people and their culture. This applies to everything from dressing appropriately, to the taking of photographs and general conduct. A little effort in this respect does not normally go unnoticed. The more effort you put in to learning about the culture of a country, the more you will get out, even if it is just learning a few words of the local language.

## *Top Tips to be culturally aware:*

- Learn as much as you can about your destination before leaving home – customs, religion, values, rules, culture. Ask your tour operator, look on the internet, ask your local guide/agent in country.
- Learn enough of the language to exchange simple pleasantries. Hello, goodbye, please and thank you should be a minimum.
- Be aware of dress codes. If unsure, always dress conservatively. Check what is considered appropriate swimwear. Remember different areas of a country (e.g. city/beach/rural) may have different dress codes.
- It is often customary to remove shoes in people's homes and religious buildings.
- Be aware of codes of behaviour such as body language and public displays of affection. There are many ways to inadvertently give an inappropriate or offensive signal, likewise you may misinterpret local visual language. See [www.culturecrossing.net](http://www.culturecrossing.net) for an excellent guide to avoiding common faux pas and giving offence.
- Ask before taking photographs. Respect people's right to decline having themselves, their children, their animals and their property photographed. You may have to be satisfied with taking away only the memory.
- Ask permission to enter the territory of indigenous people.

## Porter Protection

Porter Protection has had much press lately and rightly so. Campaigns by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG) and Tourism Concern have highlighted appalling abuse of porters by some tour companies and individuals.

The IPPG's aim is for every porter to have:

- Access to adequate clothing, boots, shelter and food (appropriate to the altitude and weather)
- Medical care when ill or injured
- Insurance

The essential message is: do not stop trekking or using porters, as they very much need the work. Instead, make sure that you or the tour operator you use looks after their porters and treats them with respect and dignity.

The STC has made a commitment to only use trekking companies that have demonstrated a clear policy to Tourism Concern on the rights of porters and their working conditions.





## Section 7: Sources of information

# Useful links:

## Passport & Visa resources:

### Identity and Passport Services:

Passport services for British and Irish nationals resident in the UK.

[www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/ips/](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/ips/)

### Visa Central:

Specialists in obtaining work and travel related visas. Our web-portal on the Visa Central site gives up to the minute information on visa requirements and application procedures.

[www.visacentral.co.uk/stcvisas](http://www.visacentral.co.uk/stcvisas)

### Travelling within the EU – non EU passport holders

The British council 'list of travellers' – means non-EU citizens can usually travel as part of a school group without the need for a visa. More information here:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/home-information-centre-list-of-travellers-scheme.htm>

## Expedition Advice and Resources:

### The Royal Geographical Society:

Registered charity and world leading learned society and professional body advancing geographical science throughout the world.

<http://www.rgs.org/>

### Geography Outdoors:

Fieldwork and expedition advice from the Royal Geographical Society.

[www.rgs.org/OurWork/Fieldwork+and+Expeditions/Fieldwork+Expeditions.htm](http://www.rgs.org/OurWork/Fieldwork+and+Expeditions/Fieldwork+Expeditions.htm)

### The Young Explorers' Trust:

Registered charity promoting safe and responsible expeditions for young people.

[www.theyet.org/](http://www.theyet.org/)

### Outdoor Educational Advisors Panel:

Clear guidance for the Management of Outdoor Learning, Off-site visits and Learning Outside the Classroom.

<http://oeapng.info/>

## Travel Safety advice, medical resources & training:

### Foreign and Commonwealth Office 'Know before you go' and Country Advice

Visit the 'Know Before You Go' Campaign website for useful information, advice and tips on planning your journey abroad. Visit the FCO Country advice pages for up to date travel safety advice.

[www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo](http://www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo) & [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

### Fit For Travel:

Provides free information about travel health, travel vaccines and specific information appropriate to your destination.

[www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/)



**Travel Health Consultancy:**

Advisers to the STC, schools and travellers on travel health, risk assessment, wilderness first aid courses and vaccination requirements. Also offer a mobile travel vaccination clinic for private groups and pre-travel risk screening and crisis management assistance.

[www.travelhealthconsultancy.co.uk/](http://www.travelhealthconsultancy.co.uk/)

**Malaria Hotspots:**

Information on malaria including games and quizzes for children.

[www.malariahotspots.co.uk/](http://www.malariahotspots.co.uk/)

**Blood Care Foundation:**

Membership organisation which ensures the supply of safe blood to their members throughout the world.

[www.bloodcare.org.uk/](http://www.bloodcare.org.uk/)

**Medic Alert:**

Bracelets and necklets detailing personal health conditions.

[www.medicalert.org/home/Homegradient.aspx](http://www.medicalert.org/home/Homegradient.aspx)

**The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA)**

Useful guidance on group safety at water margins.

<http://www.rosipa.com/leisuresafety/Info/WaterSafety/groupsafety-watermargins.pdf>

**Electricity, Climate, Currency, Time and Female travellers****Global Electricity Guide:**

Really useful site giving details of electricity supply and plug formations for every country in the world.

<http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm>

**World Climate**

Provides statistics for weather for tens of thousands of worldwide destinations.

<http://www.worldclimate.com/>

**Worldwide Currency Conversion**

Helpful for converting any currency into another at prevailing exchange rates.

<http://www.oanda.com/converter/travel>

**World Time**

Gives you the precise time anywhere in the world.

<http://www.worldtimeserver.com/>

**Journey Woman**

Online travel magazine for female travellers, with tips and advice on clothing, kit and staying healthy and safe.

<http://www.journeywoman.com/>

**Lonely Planet's Thorntree**

An on-line forum for travellers with up-to-date advice and latest news from your destination.

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/index.jspa>

### **Kit, Maps and Travel Guides:**

#### **Cotswold Outdoor:**

Outdoor, expedition and travel gear. STC Clients get 15% off here (see your trip confirmation documents for details)

[www.cotswoldoutdoor.com/](http://www.cotswoldoutdoor.com/)

#### **Nomad Travel Stores:**

On-line pharmacy and travel gear.

[www.nomadtravel.co.uk](http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk)

#### **Stanfords:**

Worldwide map specialists.

[www.stanfords.co.uk/](http://www.stanfords.co.uk/)

#### **Bradt Travel Guides:**

Authoritative and highly regarded travel guides that often contain more in-depth background country information than the likes of Rough Guide and Lonely Planet. Bradt also have a wide variety of specialist guides to wildlife and trekking in certain regions.

[www.bradtguides.com/](http://www.bradtguides.com/)

### **Responsible Tourism:**

#### **Culture Crossing:**

An excellent country by country community-built guide to aid cross-cultural etiquette and understanding.

[www.culturecrossing.net/](http://www.culturecrossing.net/)

#### **Tourism Concern:**

Independent UK charity fighting exploitation in the global tourism industry.

[www.tourismconcern.org.uk/](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk/)

#### **International Porter Protection Group:**

Website of the international charity fighting for Porters' rights and well-being.

<http://ippg.net/>

#### **Friends of Conservation:**

The charity we support through our 50:50 CO<sub>2</sub> offset programme.

<http://www.foc-uk.com/>

#### **Learning Service:**

Tips and suggestions on how to 're-think volunteer travel' to ensure it's responsible.

<http://learningservice.info/>

# If you've got this far, then congratulations!

Do let us know your thoughts, and if we can help you plan your next adventure, then we'd be delighted to offer our expertise.

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