



GOOD TRAVELS ADVISOR



Tips for Being a Responsible Traveler

It is exciting and fun to go on a trip and explore a new destination! And even before you think about how you can help others, the simple power of your presence has tremendous effect on local communities. You can have a better holiday, create deeper and authentic connections with people and places, and have some great stories to tell, just by being aware of how you spend your travel dollars and interact with the local community.

Here are some tips to help you become a responsible traveler:

Tip #1: Be sensitive to local children, especially street children

Children frequent tourist sites and sell trinkets, offer their service as guides or to carry traveler's belongings. Your initial reaction may be to

support them but as a general rule, it is best not to buy goods or services from children.

Giving money or small gifts to children encourages them to continue begging and perpetuates a cycle of poverty. It can also prevent them from going to school. In some countries, organized begging, the most visible form of human trafficking, is an issue. And while it may be difficult to not give them sweets and candy to enjoy, you may inadvertently be creating dental problems and unfortunately, not all communities have access to proper dental care.

Check with your tour guide about the local context and see if there are better options instead. You can support a local nonprofit organization or visit social business that support street children and their families.

Tip #2: Be sensitive when taking pictures of people and situations

Interact and ask before taking pictures of individuals or identifiable groups. When taking pictures of children, ask the adult with them for permission first. Be sensitive to your surrounding and context. If a person asks for money and you really want the picture, consider the fair price you are willing to pay.

Some religious and cultural sites do not allow photographs so be sure to ask your tour operator or look for posted signs.

Tip #3: Be responsible when interacting with local wildlife

Adventurous tourists and animal lovers may want to get close to exotic animals such as riding an elephant or visiting and taking photos of tigers in captivity. But by doing so, you can inadvertently encourage practices that cause abuse and suffering to the animals. Choose an operator or experience that has a protective animal tourism policy and carefully evaluate the options they offer. You can start by visiting TourismConcern's Ethical Travel Guide listing for groups to work with. In addition, many destinations have responsible animal sanctuaries that can be a better option than a wildlife tour.

Souvenirs made from animals, such as fur, ivory, rhino horn and turtle shell products may be exotic and unique but many countries prohibit the purchase and transfer of animal products. To avoid confiscation, fines and possibly imprisonment by government authorities, it is best to avoid purchasing animal souvenirs when traveling.

Tip #4: Be conscious how you spend when you travel

Choosing well when making purchases in a destination can have a big impact on a community, as well as create a more authentic experience for you.

Travelers can shop at local markets, choose a hotel owned by a local group and use local tour guides. This lets you interact with locals as well as infuse money into the local economy. Make sure to spread your shopping out and buy from several vendors instead of one.

Try to look at the bigger picture when bargaining with local vendors. In some cultures, bargaining is expected. But try to find a balance between a good price and one that is fair, or even generous, to the vendor.

Tip #5: Reduce your footprint

At home, many of us have a routine for reducing our environmental impact; we use energy saving bulbs and water efficient faucets, compost, buy local organic foods and walk or bike instead of driving when we can. But traveling disrupts your routine and it may be difficult to figure out how to reduce your impact.

The biggest part of your carbon footprint from traveling is probably your flight. You can offset the flight by purchasing carbon offset with your carrier or ask your travel advisor to direct you to their trusted source. When you are at your destination, consider taking public transportation. Renting a bike or walking is also a great way to enjoy the sites.

Many destinations now offer eco-friendly lodging and if you are staying at a luxury hotel, check their corporate social responsibility (CSR) program. Do they minimize their impact on the environment and have a connection with the community they are in?

There are many other simple ways to reduce your impact, including: packing light and using baggies that you can re-use again; bring your own water treatment instead of buying bottle water; support local organic restaurants and shops.



Want a Win-Win Way of Buying?

Support a local social enterprise

Social enterprises are revenue-generating businesses that combine a social goal with selling goods or services. Social enterprises may be run by a nonprofit or a for-profit business; it may redirect surpluses for social goals, such as using its profits to build schools; and they often train and employ people who are typically excluded from the mainstream economy, such as disabled people or marginalized women.

Social enterprises are becoming popular and can be found in many tourist destinations. You can ask your tour guide or friends and family, or visit websites like [Grassroots Volunteering's](#) small business section, or [Tourism Concern's](#) ethical travel guide database.

Visit These Social Enterprises on Your Next Destination

[Friends the Restaurant, Phnom Penh, Cambodia](#)

Friends the Restaurant is run by Mith Samlanh, which has worked to build the future of former street children and marginalized young people in Phnom Penh since 1994. This vibrant and colorful training restaurant has become a must-visit play on any trip to the Cambodian capital as it is highly rated on TripAdvisor and have some of the tastiest, and most inspiring, experiences around.

[Seeing Hands Nepal, Kathmandu and Pokhara, Nepal](#)

Seeing Hands is a social enterprise providing training and employment opportunities in massage therapy for visually impaired people. They operate three massage clinics across Nepal, each employing teams of professionally-trained blind therapists who provide massages to visiting guests. Part of the fees the enterprise earns are used to fund the training and employment of more blind masseurs. This social business has earned excellent ratings on TripAdvisor. Visit their clinics in Thamel, Patan or Pokhara; you can help others even as you get pampered after a trek!

Your travel agent is a certified Good Travels Advisor, part of an industry training and learning community focused on maximizing travel giving and volunteering so you can make the greatest impact possible – and have the greatest experience possible!

Sources: [ChildSafe Movement](#), [Travelers' Philanthropy: Dos and Don'ts of Travel Giving](#), [Travelers' Philanthropy Handbook](#), [Ethical Concern: Ethical Travel Guide](#), [Center for Social Enterprise](#).



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