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ASIA ADVENTURES RESPONSIBLE TOURISM TRAVELLERS CODE of CONDUCT

Responsible Tourism is a holistic approach to tourism and to be fully effective all participants involved in the tourism experience need to believe in and uphold its principles. Amongst others this includes; tour operators, accommodation providers, guides, restaurants, transport providers, local communities, travel agents; retail outlets, **and you – the traveller!**

We always provide general advice on the countries being visited to all our guests in our pre-departure 'Travel Pack'. However, below we have listed some important pointers that will assist you in being a more 'Responsible Traveller'. The following advice, we hope, covers some of the more important issues to be aware of during your travels.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- consider what you pack in your suitcase before leaving home. Waste disposal systems in many developing countries are ill equipped to deal with the increased pressures that tourism brings, and a few simple measures can make an enormous difference to the effect you have on your destination. Where possible remove the wrapping of packaged goods before you leave, e.g. unwrap soaps and take bottles / tubes out of boxes. Please take more harmful waste, such as batteries, back home with you where they may be disposed of or recycled more responsibly;
- consider bringing a refillable water bottle with you as these can often be refilled hygienically from large water containers in hotels and certain attractions, this limits the amount of plastic bottled water you would use;
- try to reduce other plastic use, for example when shopping use your own bag to carry purchases, and refrain from having straws with your drinks;
- on our tours we have a 'zero litter' policy – 'carry in, carry out', so please do not drop litter. As well as being unsightly bottles, cans, plastic, cigarette butts, etc. can be deadly to wild animals;
- remember that in many places water is a very precious commodity and should not be wasted, use a minimum both in your accommodation and whenever possible throughout your trip, e.g. turn off the tap when brushing your teeth, take a shower rather than a bath;
- where they exist comply with local environmental initiatives, for example if your accommodation provider has a policy for reusing sheets or towels try to support this as it helps to reduce water, detergent, and energy use;
- remember to turn off lights and electrical equipment in your room if you are not using them, e.g. turn your TV fully off rather than leaving it on standby, and turn off air-conditioning units when they are not needed or when you leave the room (air-conditioning is a large energy user, so try to use it sparingly);
- never buy products that exploit wildlife or aid the destruction of species or habitats, i.e. souvenirs made from endangered species such as: ivory; animal skins; teeth; coral; shellfish; tropical hardwoods etc. Doing so will only encourage the trade, and many of the products will have been sourced illegally. In addition if you do buy these products you might find yourself with problems when you reach customs control;
- we are an accredited 'Heritage Friendly Business – Gold Status', as such we are totally against

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the trade in ancient artefacts. Archaeological theft is illegal and a problem in Cambodia. Do not purchase any ancient artefacts, such as glass and stone beads, pottery, stone tools, and metal objects. Even if you purchase reproductions ensure you obtain a certificate stating that the object is a reproduction otherwise you may face problems when you reach customs control;

- in your free time consider getting around by environmentally friendly transport such as bicycles, electric bikes; cyclos, horse drawn carts etc;
- when visiting ancient sites please respect them as they are often active religious monuments and world heritage treasures. In addition refrain from touching any carvings and bas-reliefs as this damages the stone;
- if you will be travelling to remote areas, before leaving home purchase environmentally friendly detergents and shampoos for hand / hair washing, and clothes washing, and use as little as is practical. This will help to keep valuable fresh water supplies, rivers, streams and the sea free from pollution. In addition use a bucket or similar and wash well away from the water sources to prevent your dirty water polluting someone else's drinking water;
- in addition where toilet facilities exist, however unsavoury, they should be used. Where they do not, always bury your waste and make sure it is never near (at least 30m) from a water source;
- when visiting national parks / protected areas stay on set paths in order to preserve natural habitats and leave animals undisturbed. Keeping noise to a minimum also helps, and allows you to enjoy the sights and sounds of nature and have a better chance of spotting wildlife;
- although we insist that our guides maintain suitable distances from wildlife, allowing the animal a suitable escape route, there is always a temptation to get closer. For this reason we recommend that you don't encourage your guide or driver to get closer to the animals than is acceptable and to take the most powerful lens for your camera you can get;
- do not pick wild flowers, and never feed wild animals or attempt to touch them;
- if snorkelling, diving, or observing marine mammals such as turtles and dolphins, observe environmental guidelines. Never touch or break living coral, and never touch or feed any marine animal or fish.

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- we hope that those who choose to travel with Asia Adventures do so with a genuine desire to enhance their holiday by learning more about the people of the host community;
- before you travel try to learn about the local culture and traditions of the places you will be visiting. A little time spent researching the unique customs of the region can avoid embarrassment and offence. In addition arriving with some understanding about the background of the country you are visiting will help reduce 'culture shock' and you will get more out of your travels and your interactions with local people;
- it is quite easy in a small, simple community to appear an arrogant rich foreigner, so be aware of the feelings of other people, and avoid extravagant displays of wealth such as ostentatious jewellery and technological gadgetry, not only can this accentuate the gap between rich and poor but in rare cases it can be an incitement to robbery;
- being able to speak a few phrases in the local language is always appreciated, and locals are very supportive of your efforts - plus the experience can greatly enhance your visit. In your pre-departure 'Travel Pack' you will find various simple phrases which we have found useful;
- dress appropriately, especially in places of worship or cultural significance. Asians generally dress conservatively, women tend not to wear revealing tops nor skirts or pants that show their knees and even men will usually prefer long pants to shorts (smart knee-length shorts are fine). 'Follow suit' and dress with a sense of decorum. As well as showing respect to local dress norms you may also find that you are afforded better all round reception from local people - first impressions count for a lot in Asia;
- in many regions of the world it is considered offensive to take someone's photograph without obtaining their permission beforehand. Please try not to be offended should they decline, even if you do not understand why. If people seem reluctant or look away then please do not take a picture;

- be particularly aware that being drunk, swearing or public displays of affection are viewed as inappropriate and offensive by many Asian people;
- we encourage you not to give to beggars. It may take a hard heart not to give but remember that if a beggar earns more than someone who works for a living it may encourage the practice and cause problems for the local economy. In addition giving money to children often dissuades their parents from sending them to school. There are numerous NGOs (non government organisations) that work with street children and other socially disadvantaged groups to help them escape the cycle of poverty. If you would like to make a donation to the country you have visited please contact Asia Adventures, as via our partnerships with these NGOs we will be able to recommend a charity or project that will welcome your donation;
- if you wish to make an appropriate gift to a local community it may be better to give school materials or local food treats to the school head or village chief. Handing out sweets can encourage children beg and may ruin their teeth in a place where there is no dental service;
- different cultures have different attitudes to tipping and bartering so ask your guide for advice so as not to offend. Keep a light heart and a big smile when bargaining, and try to remember that small amounts can mean a lot more to the seller than to you;
- whilst travelling, at times, different cultures and traditions can be confusing, however please remember that it is these cultural differences that make your trip special.

ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

- in the country where you are travelling local standards of living are usually very different to your own, as such you need to realise that your economic 'power' is often great and this should not be abused. Rather it should be used to positively assist the local communities being visited;
- it is estimated that as much as 90% of money spent by visitors can leave the host region / country. In order to ensure that as much of your money as possible stays in the local area support locally owned business, e.g. eat in locally owned restaurants and order local drinks and produce rather than requesting international brands. You can encourage local community initiatives such as handmade crafts by buying locally produced souvenirs;
- when buying locally made products and supporting local skills, try not to simply buy on price but on value to you. Bargaining for a lower price for both souvenirs and services, is often the accepted and expected custom, but don't drive a hard bargain just for the sake of it;
- try the local food and specialities. Many rural areas around the world are under threat from a reduction in their agricultural base and by eating locally produced goods you will help the local farmers as well as the local economy;
- spend socially - wherever possible shop in outlets that support community groups and which uphold the values of 'Fair Trade' (i.e. employing socially & economically disadvantaged individuals, paying a fair wage, providing safe and healthy working conditions, produce products in a way that minimises environmental degradation etc). Asia Adventures can advise you as to which outlets have a commitment to 'Fair Trade'.

Ultimately, we strive to ensure that a visit from Asia Adventures' guests leaves a destination better rather than worse off, and we value your co-operation in helping us to attain this goal whilst also enjoying your trip to the utmost...

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information concerning how best to be a 'Responsible Traveller'.

