Quick Tips For A Sustainable Mountain Adventure

Promoted by the United Nations, 2017 is the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

Based on the views of world-leading guides, check out our “dos and don’ts” for sustainable travel and be part of the revolution.
Protect Our Planet

1. Avoid Disposable Plastic

✗ Super convenient in the short-term. Super inconvenient in the long-term. We have produced over 8 billion tonnes of this oil-intensive material in the past 50 years. The problem with plastic is that it does not easily degrade. It breaks down into small pieces that wreak havoc on the planet’s ecosystems.

✓ Consider again and again the products you take into the mountains. Pack mindfully: take reusable bottles, bags and packaging. And always lead by example; for instance, when in town, say no to plastic straws.

2. Go Natural

✗ Slathering on the sunscreen? While it is wise to stay safe in hot weather, chemicals commonly found in synthetic body care products, including sunscreen, can be toxic for humans, animals and water sources.

✓ Key chemicals to avoid are: oxybenzone, often found in spray-on products, hydrogen peroxide, octyl salicylate and octinoxate. Fortunately, there is a considerable range of effective mineral sunscreens to choose from. Try to use biodegradable soaps and shampoos, especially in rural areas to prevent polluting water systems. Or, if you are feeling especially virtuous, try making your own: recipes are readily available on YouTube!
3. Recharge Right

X Batteries are made from extremely toxic chemicals which are hazardous to human health and the environment, especially when allowed to leach through soil and water.

✓ Use rechargeable batteries where possible and dispose of all electronics safely, preferably at a designated recycling point.

4. Minimise Waste

X Remote mountainous areas often lack a waste management system, with many communities resorting to the hazardous process of burning waste in the open, releasing harmful chemicals.

✓ Ensure you leave no waste in the mountains: keep hold of any rubbish until you find a dedicated collection point. And try to minimise your waste, recycling wherever possible.

5. Leave No Trace

X Natural ecosystems are in a delicate balance and incredibly sensitive to change.

✓ Minimise your disturbance: stick to designated trails and keep noise to a minimum. And enjoy the awe-inspiring beauty of your surroundings!
Honour Your Host

6. Respect the Local Way

X Treating the local community as a spectacle, existing for your own enjoyment is not only a barrier to an authentic travel experience, it is highly inappropriate behaviour.

✓ Respect the uniqueness of a community. No one expects you to be familiar with every cultural norm; however, you will benefit greatly from a little pre-trip research. Try and learn a handful of words in the local language and remember to pack culturally appropriate clothes.

7. Respect People’s Privacy

X The snap happy tourist may seem harmless; but capturing the perfect shot may come at a cost. Mindless photography can strip local people of their right to privacy. Moreover, mindless wandering is actually trespassing!

✓ Be sensitive to when and where you are taking photographs and always seek permission before snapping away at other people. And being on holiday is no excuse for breaking the law: always ask before entering private property.
8. Give Consciously

X It is only natural to want to give back to the community while travelling. Sadly, handing out gifts often has unintended consequences: for instance it sometimes leads to a dividing of communities and even encouraging a culture of dependency and begging.

✓ Support the community through taking your gifts to a reputable local organisation, who can guarantee their positive contribution.

9. Prioritize Health and Safety

X The whirlwind of pre-trip excitement can overshadow security considerations. Carelessness can put yourself and others at risk.

✓ Research a destination’s travel advice: those arm-aching vaccinations and comprehensive medical insurance may just save your life. It’s also a great idea to know how to contact your embassy in case of an emergency.

10. Respect Local Heritage

X Tourism to cultural heritage sites is exploding, with communities often ill-equipped to manage the sheer numbers. Tourists tempted to add an alluring artefact to their home decor are only adding to the cultural disintegration of sites.

✓ Steer clear of protected areas that are closed to tourists, and always leave cultural artefacts where they belong.
Buy Local

11. Support the local economy

✗ An increase in visitors to an area can excite big business—pretty soon you are spotting a McDonald’s on every street-corner! Not only is that red and yellow dazzlingly disorientating, it takes away vital income from local people.

 ✓ Seek out local vendors and artisans and pay a fair price for their products - excessive bargaining may appear like a fun game, but you are playing with people’s livelihoods. And from navigating the counterfeit market and sourcing a rare artisanal handicraft to sharing knowledge of that delicious family-run lunch spot, a local guide may just be the handy addition your travels require.

12. Avoid exploitative trading

✗ Mass tourism continues to sustain unsavoury practices that threaten vulnerable wildlife and heritage. The marketplace for trafficking endangered flora, fauna and cultural artefacts is growing. Demand for these vulnerable assets is outstripping our ability to offer protection.

 ✓ Do not contribute to this cycle of mistreatment. Avoid products that exploit these vulnerable assets and support organisations with strong conservation practices.
13. Choose a Responsible Travel Company

× Mass tourism prioritizes profit with little thought spared for wider environmental impacts or the well-being of local communities. We’ve all seen it, and many of us have experienced it to a certain extent. Let’s together move away from that era of travel!

✓ Do better and choose to travel with responsible operation and a different set of values. Look out for social, environmental and economic policies, the involvement of local communities and the employment of local guides.

14. Promote Responsible Travel

× By 2030, international tourist arrivals is expected to hit 1.8 billion, so it is increasingly important that we come together as a community of travellers: let’s work to preserve our planet for future generations. This starts with each individual and our responsibilities as we travel. Be mindful and don’t ignore the malpractice of others.

✓ Unity creates strength. Share your sustainable travel stories, photos and practices with your friends and family. Moreover, spread the world in person and on social media, and encourage those you know to join you in the responsible tourism revolution.
For more information contact us at
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