Digital Backpack: Sustainable Experiences

ecomadic sustainability commitment

ecomadic is a curated marketplace for local & sustainable travel. As a sustainable travel brand, we are on the mission to empower travelers to make responsible decisions that positively impact destinations and keep tourism dollars within local communities.

Through our travel platform, we seek to redefine travel as a sustainable practice that supports the social, economic, and environmental health of destinations – and the world at large – for years to come.

Sustainable Experiences

Sustainable experiences include guided excursions, which highlight food, culture, nature, adventure, education, cruising, and more. No matter what category an experience may fall under, every business featured on ecomadic should strive towards sustainable and transparent growth.

Every business faces challenges and failures - and many successes - on its unique journey towards greater sustainability. However, we expect each business featured on our platform to continually strive towards greater sustainability and increase overall social, economic, and environmental benefits for local communities.

ecomadic's sustainability guidelines provide the baseline criteria of the practices your eatery should be striving for. In meeting these criteria, you help support our quest to support local communities, preserve cultural heritage, minimize environmental footprint, and encourage positive visitor experiences through travel.

Environmental: Assure your presence is being used to benefit the surrounding natural environment.

Minimize In-House Environmental Impact

Operating as a tour provider, your business should be most conscientious about its effect on the natural environment. Specifically administering techniques to:

Save Water

- Consider where your water supply is being sourced from and keep in mind the surrounding community's access.
- Implement staff policies to practice water conservation.
- Enforce a Resource Consumption Audit to constantly measure and monitor water consumption; through reports, your company can address and correct any water situations.

Conserve Energy

- Encourage green energy practices.
- Implement energy efficient policies.
- Offset the amount of carbon produced on-tour with reputable projects.
- Enforce a Resource Consumption Audit to constantly measure and monitor energy consumption; through reports, your company can address and correct any energy situations.

Manage & Reduce Waste

- Eradicate food waste (i.e. smart food purchasing).
- 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle'
- Avoid excess packaging (i.e. purchase bulk, limit single-use items).
- Dispose of all excess waste with regulated companies who follow proper legal protocol and divert from landfill when possible.
- Manage solid and toxic waste responsibly by properly treating before releasing and/or re-using.
- Enforce a Resource Consumption Audit to constantly measure and monitor waste management; through reports, your company can address and correct any waste situations.

Note: *An Environmental Management System should be in place to constantly monitor, report, and correct operations regarding Water, Energy, and Waste.*

Minimal Transport
- Make efforts to cut-back on transport time.
- Opt for eco-friendly transportation options when possible (i.e. walking, biking).

Purchase Responsibly
- Support other producers, suppliers, and/or distributors with circular supply chains that implement environmental conservation policies.
- Reduce international imports for minimal mileage.

Mitigate Pollution
- Take into account all types of pollution and work towards reducing:
  - Air pollution
  - Light pollution
  - Land pollution (i.e. littering, plastic, soil contamination)
  - Noise pollution
  - Visual pollution
  - Water & Thermal pollution

Note: *Do not use chemical-based products (i.e. cleaning solutions) in order to avoid toxic runoff into the water systems which ultimately affects the surrounding communities, climate, and oceans.*

Limit Unnecessary Land Use
- Abide by strict zoning and compliance laws.
- Source construction products and materials from trusted, local contractors to ensure that sustainable practices are in place when building amongst the natural habitat.
- Do not severely alter the natural habitat and be mindful of the ecosystems within.

Offer Plant-Based Options on Excursions
- Serving plant-based and vegan options on tour allows for customers to opt for more environmentally-friendly dishes; as limiting meat and dairy lessens CO_2 emissions, saves water, combats deforestation, and protects our oceans.

Environmental (con't): Assure your presence is being used to benefit the surrounding natural environment.

Conserve the Surrounding Natural Environment and Protect Native Biodiversity
- Allowing the natural plant and animal life to flourish by allocating the appropriate amount of conservation practices; this could include: planting Indigenous flora-en-fauna, eliminating invasive species, contributing to local conservation funds.

Respect Natural Sites
- Keeping the natural region intact, pristine, and attractive by abiding by local regulations and educating guests on the best practices to preserve the area; such as, encouraging a 'Leave No Trace' motto and ensuring that individuals do not contribute to the illegal buying or taking of natural items.

Safe Wildlife Interactions
- All interactions with wildlife must be strictly regulated and safe. If touring involves wildlife, be sure to support sanctuaries that encourage free roaming and natural habitat re-creation, and do not contribute to the exploitation of animals for profitable gain.
- Signs of animal exploitation can include: feeding, captivity, unsafe distances, touching/holding, abnormal behavior (i.e. fear, discomfort, injury). Furthermore, make certain that individuals do not contribute to the illegal buying of items related to the wildlife trade.

Socio-Cultural: Showcase clear efforts to engage the local community in a beneficial way for all parties.

Support Local Staff

- Bringing in local staff, particularly in developing destinations, can bring an abundance of new opportunities for your business; such as: gaining local knowledge and expertise, local collaborations (i.e. governments, grassroots organizations), and greater ability to retain talent.
- It is especially important that staff receive an adequate amount of training, guidance, and support to ensure that team members are able to optimize their skills and be fully capable to handle their roles and responsibilities.

Treat Employees Fairly

- It is recommended that staff feel respected and that their health, well being, and quality of life is a priority. By showing staff a superior level of care, employers are more likely to build stronger relationships.
- Legally, it is important to follow strict sustainability governance to ensure that your business is complying with all relevant laws in order to protect your business and employees from any issues that may arise; such as: equal opportunity, health & safety, labour, and risk management. These systematic standards should be displayed, reviewed, monitored, and evaluated periodically.

Encourage Education and Participation on Sustainability Initiatives

- Giving employees the chance to participate in the in-house sustainability initiatives will show staff that you, as an employer, trust and recognize that they play a key role in the functionality of the overall business.
- Businesses that showcase they really care about their impact and staff are likely to see a higher employee retention rate. Furthermore, staff will feel more fulfilled and self-empowered over their ability to be a part of a successful program. Through furthering education, employees are more inclined to pass the knowledge down to their team members, other departments of staff, as well as guests.

Eliminate Exploitation

- Enforce strict policies against exploitation and inappropriate behaviors, focusing particularly on situations involving the harassment of animals, children, women, and desperate individuals.

Socio-Cultural (con't): Showcase clear efforts to engage the local community in a beneficial way for all parties.

Recognize Guest Needs for Customer Satisfaction
- It is important to take into consideration guest needs when making business decisions to promote a positive and meaningful experience.
- This includes accurately advertising your tour, including sustainability standards, so visitors will have a preconceived idea of their experience during tour operations. In addition, clearly state the level accessibility that is provided by your business and its services.

Engage Visitors to Protect Cultural Norms
- Implementing guest policies that educate visitors on the "do's" and "don'ts" of appropriate interaction with the local culture will facilitate cross-cultural exchanges, provide the chance for guests to learn more about the area, and safeguard a country's unique character.
- Educating your travelers and providing easy access to social resources allows for guests to make a good impression on the local community and in the destination. Specifically aim to provide guidance on:
  - Appropriate dress code
  - Respectful photography
  - Local religion norms
  - Local business practices (i.e. haggling, tipping)
  - Local social standards (i.e. gestures, eye contact, meal time customs, public displays of affection)
  - Attitudes towards alcohol and drug usage
  - Positive impact (i.e. waste management, energy/water use, ethical souvenirs)

Respect Local Culture
- Due to the fact that culture is unique to every destination, promoting a country's heritage can help strengthen a country's identity. Business actions should constantly be striving to honor local traditions, customs, beliefs, and conduct requests in order to protect native authenticity.

Respect All Cultural Sites — including Natural, Cultural, Archaeological, and Sacred
- When interacting with cultural sites, businesses and their visitors should strictly follow conduct requests so the rights, identity, history, and future of the surrounding place remain undisturbed. This includes ensuring that individuals do not contribute to the illegal buying or taking of relics.

Economic: Make certain there are viable long-term economic benefits for all relevant stakeholders.

Local Sourcing & Purchasing
- Keeping business and currency within the local economy allows for economic prosperity, stronger and stabler community relations, diversification, and increased effectiveness.
- Therefore, it is best to create fair partnerships between all stakeholders included in tour actions; including interactions between: local businesses (i.e. socially responsible eateries, eco-accommodations, social enterprise shops), local individuals (i.e. artisans, entrepreneurs, entertainers), Indigenous communities, and animals.

Support Circular Supply Chains
- Acquiring only from producers, suppliers, and/or distributors who abide by the similar socio-economic standards; such as: fair-trade practices, treating their stakeholders fairly, and being mindful of local livelihoods.

Employ Locals
- Making certain that all staff members are being paid fair and decent salaries, as well as creating new job offerings that are accessible to the surrounding community.

Provide a Better Local Livelihood through Community Development Projects
- Particularly in developing regions, community development projects can be a way to make an invaluable contribution with a long-term, socio-economic impact. Some benefits include: reducing poverty and suffering, creating employment and economic opportunities, using a holistic approach to achieve local sustainable goals, and instilling confidence and responsibility within the community.
- Examples of ways your company can make a difference: starting a give-back program, partnering with NGOs, educational training (i.e. English language), introducing ecotourism practices.

Are you an experience on your sustainability journey?

ecomadic is a curated marketplace for local & sustainable tourism businesses, aimed to make sustainability more accessible, diverse, inclusive, mainstream, and, most importantly, *trustworthy*.

We would love to connect with you.

Reach out to jaclyn@ecomadic.com