



Tourism and Ethics

The growth of tourism brings with it important responsibilities, for operators, governments and individual travelers, towards local communities and their natural, social and cultural environments. Tourism is not simply an isolated economic activity, but a form of human interaction with very real impacts on everyday life. The direct and spontaneous contact tourism prompts between peoples of different cultures and ways of life raises a number of ethical questions.

Responsible and sustainable tourism is one which takes these ethical questions on board and reconciles any tensions between economy and ecology, environment and development, openness and the protection of social and cultural identities. It is a tourism that adheres to a number of basic principles and guidelines so that all will benefit; not only operators and travelers, but also host communities and their surroundings.

Did you know?

- The right to rest and leisure, including periodic holidays with pay, is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism was officially recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001.
- Every five years UNWTO reports to the UN General Assembly on the implementation of the Code.

The work of UNWTO

In order to maximize tourism's positive contribution for all and mitigate its possible negative impacts, UNWTO developed the **Global Code of Ethics for Tourism**. The Code was officially approved by the UNWTO General Assembly in 1999 and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001.

The Code outlines a set of principles to guide tourism development and the activities of different stakeholders, with the objective of minimizing the negative impact of tourism on the environment and on cultural heritage while maximizing its benefits in promoting sustainable development and poverty reduction, as well as understanding among nations.

The Code includes nine articles outlining the 'rules of the game' for central and local governments, local communities, tourism professionals and tourists themselves. The tenth article provides for a voluntary implementation mechanism through the recognition of the role of the **World Committee on Tourism Ethics**. This independent and impartial committee promotes and disseminates the Code, monitors its implementation and settles any disputes that may arise regarding its application. UNWTO further works to promote and monitor the inclusion of the principles of the Code into government legislation and policies, business practises and traveler's attitudes.





Global Code of Ethics for Tourism



Article 1: Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between persons and societies

Tourists should respect the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples and tourism activities should be conducted in harmony with their laws and customs.



Article 2: Tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfilment

Tourism activities should respect the equality of men and women, promote human rights and be free from exploitation in any form. The **UNWTO Protect Children from Exploitation Campaign** draws attention to one of the world's most vulnerable groups; children caught up in child labour and sexual exploitation, and encourages the implementation of professional codes of conduct to protect them.



Article 3: Tourism, a factor of sustainable development

Tourism development should safeguard the natural environment, protect natural resources and minimize waste production. A large part of this goal involves striking the balance between the volume, timing and location of visits.



Article 4: Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and contributor to its enhancement

Tourism policies and activities should be conducted with respect for artistic, archaeological and cultural heritage. Financial resources from visits to cultural sites and monuments should be used for their upkeep, development and enhancement.



Article 5: Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and communities

Local populations, in particular disadvantaged groups, should share in the economic, social and cultural benefits associated with tourism activities. This could be through the employment of the poor in tourism enterprises or the direct sales of local handicraft and products by the poor.



Article 6: Obligations of stakeholders in tourism development

Tourism professionals have an obligation to provide tourists with objective and honest information; governments should inform their nationals of the dangers they may encounter during their travels abroad; the press should issue honest and balanced information on events and situations that could influence the flow of tourists.



Article 7: Right to tourism

The many recreational and educational benefits of tourism should be respected and made as widely available as possible. Everybody should have the opportunity to enjoy a safe and fulfilling trip, without discrimination for gender, race, disability, or other issues.



Article 8: Liberty of tourist movements

Tourists should have access to places of transit and stay and to tourism sites without being subject to excessive formalities or discrimination.



Article 9: Rights of the workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism sector

The fundamental rights of salaried and self-employed workers in the tourism sector and related activities should be guaranteed. In exchange for the freedom to invest and trade, enterprises should become involved in local development and avoid the excessive repatriation of their profits, thereby enabling local communities to benefit from the growth of tourism.



Article 10: Implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

The public and private stakeholders in tourism development should cooperate in the implementation of these principles and monitor their effective application.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES:

UNWTO Ethics & Social Dimensions of Tourism Programme - ethics.unwto.org

Global Code of Ethics for Tourism - ethics.unwto.org

The Responsible Tourist and Traveller - ethics.unwto.org/en/content/responsible-tourist

Protect Children from Exploitation in Tourism and Travel - ethics.unwto.org/en/content/protection-children-tourism