

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE

Managing Environmental Impacts In The Rainforest Sector

USING THIS SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

This checklist has been developed to help tropical forest-based tour operators assess the level of good practices currently demonstrated by their businesses.

Following an introductory section on general good practices for tropical forest tourism, the checklist follows a similar structure as the guide, with each set of questions corresponding to the good practices suggested under a key action area discussed in the document.

Each question can be answered with a simple yes or no. In most cases, examples of the kinds of good practices that would constitute a “yes” answer are also provided. More examples can be found by referring back to the corresponding sections of the guide.

This checklist can be used as a tool for discussing and analyzing a tour operator’s conduct as well as that of its providers and suppliers. Visitors may also use the checklist to evaluate and choose tour operators and other tourism-related service providers that demonstrate good practices. The tool can be used to measure year-by-year progress on changes introduced to protect the environment and cultural heritage, foster local development or safeguard tropical forests. The checklist can also provide the basis for a code of conduct or service agreements with suppliers, or might serve as a yardstick for choosing new partners who share these priorities.

GOOD BUSINESS PRACTICES

VISITOR EDUCATION AND MESSAGING

What actions do you take to improve visitor awareness of how to contribute to the conservation of natural areas?

1. Do you provide information to visitors regarding appropriate environmental behavior in each tropical forest site you visit?

yes no

2. Do you have an environmental education or interpretive component in your tour that:
Explains the importance, uniqueness and distribution of tropical forest areas?

yes no

Identifies environmental values (including rare or native flora or fauna species) and sites of significance?

yes no

Identifies cultural and social values and sites of significance?

yes no

Identifies historical values and sites of significance?

yes *no*

3. Do you provide information regarding:
Local tropical forest conservation issues?

yes *no*

Broader conservation issues?

yes *no*

Local conservation projects and groups?

yes *no*

4. Do you recommend other suppliers (accommodation, transportation, tours, food, beverage and souvenir retailers) that follow good environmental and social practices?

yes *no*

BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE

5. Do you work together with other stakeholders to:
Identify sites with the greatest need for infrastructure?

yes *no*

Identify appropriate infrastructure types and design?

yes *no*

Share labor and construction costs?

yes *no*

Coordinate the timing of tours?

yes *no*

Encourage the development of buffer zones?

yes *no*

6. For areas without site-hardening infrastructure, do you have a site/route rotation plan to help avoid repeated use of the same (non-hardened) areas?

yes *no*

ENGAGING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES

What actions do you take to improve visitor awareness of how to minimize negative impacts and contribute to local communities?

7. Do you provide guidelines to visitors regarding:
Culturally appropriate behavior when interacting with local communities?

yes *no*

Culturally appropriate behavior when visiting cultural or historical sites?

yes *no*

8. Do you encourage and provide information to visitors on:
Buying locally made souvenirs and products?

yes *no*

Buying locally produced foods and beverages?

yes *no*

Visiting other local attractions and entertainment?

yes *no*

Opportunities to participate in community development projects?

yes *no*

What actions have you taken to minimize any negative impacts on local communities and contribute to local community development?

9. Have you consulted with local tropical forest communities to:
Identify sensitive or private areas?

yes *no*

Identify ways to avoid crowding shared infrastructure and services?

yes *no*

Minimize disturbance to local communities?

yes *no*

10. Does your business:
Employ local guides?

yes *no*

Employ qualified guides (assuming training courses are accessible)?

yes no

Fund or support your guides in attending language or training courses?

yes no

Purchase locally made food, provisions and services?

yes no

Use local facilities?

yes no

Offer locally made souvenirs?

yes no

Participate in work experience or mentoring programs to help local people develop tourism- and guiding-related skills?

yes no

Offer discounts for local groups, residents or community development workers or researchers?

yes no

Give priority to service providers who are environmentally and socially responsible (i.e. businesses from whom you purchase goods and services)?

yes no

GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

INTERACTING WITH WILDLIFE

What actions have you taken to help protect and conserve local wildlife?

11. Do you limit tour numbers to 15 or less people per guide?

yes no

12. Do you have mechanisms or technology in place to minimize non-natural noise?

yes no

13. Does your tour avoid breeding and nesting grounds?

yes no

14. Do you use low-wattage and diffuse lighting in natural and naturally dark areas?

yes no

15. Do you discourage the handling or feeding of wildlife?

yes no

16. Do you use or have you constructed “hides” or other structures to allow the viewing of wildlife with minimal disturbance?

yes no

17. Do you:

Abide by laws on harvesting animals and fish and by seasonal closures or zoning restrictions?

yes no

Limit animal harvest sizes to immediate needs?

yes no

Follow humane killing methods?

yes no

Avoid harvesting vulnerable or threatened species?

yes no

18. Do you discourage the purchase of souvenirs derived from rare or threatened species?

yes no

VEHICLES, VESSELS AND AIRCRAFT

What actions do you take to use vehicles and vessels efficiently and appropriately?

19. When using vehicles or vessels do you:

Slow down or avoid areas where wildlife are common?

yes no

Avoid skidding, rough riding/driving or excessive speed?

yes no

Keep colors neutral?

yes no

Sound proof where possible?

yes no

20. Are your vehicles:

Well-maintained and regularly serviced?

yes no

Fuel-efficient?

yes no

Not too powerful for the terrain covered?

yes no

Not larger than required to seat your average tour group size?

yes no

21. Do you plan tour routes to minimize distance traveled and to avoid congestion?

yes no

22. Before entering natural areas, do you clean vessels and vehicles to help minimize the spread of exotic species?

yes no

CONTRIBUTING TO CONSERVATION

What actions do you take to directly support conservation projects or schemes?

23. Do you choose suppliers who follow good environmental and social practices in:

Energy management?

yes no

Waste management?

yes no

Recycling?

yes no

Supporting local communities?

yes no

Using local labor?

yes no

Using local goods and services?

yes no

24. Do you work with tropical forest area managers to participate in or encourage the development of:

Environmental monitoring programs?

yes no

Visitor monitoring programs?

yes no

Feral animal and weed management activities?

yes no

The development or maintenance of site-hardening infrastructure?

yes no

25. Do you provide:

Physical or financial support for rehabilitation activities?

yes no

Concession rates for groups/institutions studying/promoting conservation?

yes no

26. Does your tour include conservation activities such as:

Participation in local conservation projects?

yes no

Re-vegetation of tour areas?

yes no

Weed removal?

yes no

Monitoring or erosion and degradation of sites and tracks?

yes no

Monitoring of native and feral animal sightings or evidence of their presence?

yes no

Trash collection and removal?

yes no

27. Do you participate in:

Local conservation projects?

yes no

Re-vegetation of tour areas?

yes no

Recycling schemes?

yes no

Greenhouse gas abatement programs?

yes no

What actions do you take to monitor and minimize damage to landscapes and vegetation?

28. Do you:

Monitor levels of erosion at key sites and along tracks on your tour?

yes no

Photograph the site at regular intervals?

yes no

Keep consistent records of monitoring?

yes no

Share this information with tropical forest area managers?

yes no

TROPICAL FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

29. Do you participate in and promote carbon offset schemes and explain to visitors about the effects of climate change and how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

yes no

30. Do you calculate and offset the carbon emissions from your tours and clients?

yes no

31. Do you offer your clients opportunities to donate to forest conservation efforts which benefit climate change mitigation?

yes no

32. Do you educate your clients about the effects of climate change on tropical forests?

yes no

33. Do you support reforestation and restoration projects in degraded areas?

yes no

GOOD PRACTICES FOR SPECIFIC TOUR ACTIVITIES

HIKING, NATURE WALKS AND CAMPING

What actions do you take to help minimize erosion of landscapes and the removal of vegetation?

34. Do you keep tour numbers to 15 people or less for adventure activities?

yes no

35. Does your tour avoid highly sensitive sites?

yes no

36. On your tour, do you:

Utilize existing and defined roads, tracks, river and creek crossings and trails?

yes no

Avoid clearing new tracks and camping sites?

yes no

Focus on using areas which have site-hardening infrastructure (e.g. boardwalks, graveled paths, bird hides, designated camp sites)?

yes no

37. Do you discourage the removal of plants, animals or rock formations?

yes no

What actions do you take to ensure proper waste management and disposal?

38. Do you provide visitors with waste disposal facilities?

yes no

39. Do you collect all waste generated during your tour and dispose of this waste outside of tropical forest areas?

yes no

40. Do you bury human waste (where no facilities are available) at least 15cm deep and at least 100m from any natural water bodies?

yes no

41. Do you purchase goods and supplies that generate minimum amounts of waste by:

Having minimal packaging?

yes no

Being reusable?

yes no

Being recyclable?

yes no

What actions do you take to promote effective energy management?

42. Do you use battery-operated lights where possible?

yes no

43. Do you use fuel stoves instead of open fires?

yes no

44. What actions do you take to safeguard natural water bodies during camping trips?

yes no

45. Do you camp at least 30m away from water bodies?

yes no

46. Do you avoid the use of chemicals or personal cleaning products in natural waterways?

yes no

47. Do you bury human waste at least 100m from waterways and at a depth of at least 15cm?

yes no

48. Do you avoid the disposal of wastewater, sewage, trash, food stuffs, fishing line and tackle into freshwater bodies?

yes no

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES

49. Do you consult and work with local stakeholders to identify areas that can be accessible for visitation and to understand appropriate group sizes, behavior and activities?

yes no

50. Do you abide by established restrictions at archaeological sites and communicate those restrictions to visitors?

yes no

51. Have you established or adopted a code of conduct on appropriate behavior, attire and actions for your tours and effectively communicated that code to visitors?

yes no

LAND-BASED ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

52. If you use animals on your tour do you:

Keep them contained with portable, non-wire fencing?

yes no

Keep them away from water bodies, banks and sensitive areas?

yes no

Use soft ties when using trees as natural anchors?

yes no

What actions do you take to help minimize the spread of exotic species?

53. Before entering natural areas do you clean:

Equipment?

yes no

Clothing and footwear?

yes no

Any animals used in tour activities?

yes no

54. If you use animals in your tour do you ensure that animal feed:

Is not deposited into natural areas?

yes no

Contains treated/processed ingredients and not raw grasses and seed?

yes no

What actions do you take to use adventure activity equipment safely and appropriately?

55. Do you:

Minimize the use of fixed equipment on any climbing areas?

yes no

Use soft materials to cushion ropes and natural anchors?

yes no

Minimize the use of marking materials?

yes no

56. Is the adventure equipment you carry regularly serviced and maintained in good working order?

yes no

57. Is the adventure equipment you carry produced to high safety standards?

yes no

FRESHWATER-BASED RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

58. When using water-based vessels, do you:

Avoid damage to banks and vegetation when unloading, launching and coming on shore with vessels?

yes no

Use soft ties when using trees as natural anchors?

yes no

59. When conducting water-based tours or activities, do you:

Keep the number of non-motorized watercraft to eight or under?

yes no

Keep the number of customers per guide to 15 or less?

yes no

Avoid anchoring in muddy environments or dragging anchors?

yes no

What actions do you take to protect waterways from pollution by chemicals, trash and other waste products?

60. Do you avoid the use of natural waterways for cleaning vehicles or equipment?

yes no

61. Do you use non-toxic chemicals for vehicle and vessel maintenance and protection where available?

yes no

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