

PANORAMIC JOURNEYS

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL POLICY

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1. PANORAMIC JOURNEYS ON TOUR

Panoramic Journeys has been committed to operating in a responsible way ever since its set up in 2003. On tour we aim, through working with suppliers, tour leaders, local crew and customers to:

- ensure local crew are treated well and fairly and paid a fair wage
- encourage positive relations with local people and be of economic benefit to them
- minimise our impact on the environment and local people's lives

The aim of Panoramic Journey's Responsible Tourism Policy is to:

- educate our staff, tour leaders, local agents, guides, suppliers and clients on the importance of sensitivity to environmental, cultural and economic matters in Mongolia and China
- give practical guidance on how to achieve our objectives and set goals to work towards to work together

We recognise that we are not perfect but through feedback from clients, leaders and suppliers we remain open to suggestions for improvement.

In addition, our In-House Responsible Practice Policy provides staff with policy and guidelines as to how to operate in a responsible and ethical way.

Below is Panoramic Journeys' full Responsible Travel Policy which is issued to our suppliers and leaders. This is constantly being reviewed and we welcome feedback from all sources which may heighten our awareness of our responsibility issues.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE IN MONGOLIA/CHINA

Panoramic Journeys seeks to use locally owned and operated suppliers and employ local people as staff to operate our tours.

We believe and try to ensure that our suppliers and local employees are:

- treated as equals socially. Where employees work with or accompany the group, our tour leaders encourage interaction, include them in group meals, whilst respecting the individual's wishes for privacy.
- given practical support by our tour leaders
- treated well and paid a fair wage promptly
- tipped fairly and appropriately for their efforts
- given training where appropriate
- appreciated for the contribution they make
- not given an unreasonable workload. Working hours should be reasonable and safe within local regulations and not involve dangerous practices in carrying out the job.

If issues arise of a problematic nature, matters will be discussed and resolved with the Mongolian Operations Manager. Panoramic Journeys directors will work together with local guides and drivers, agents and suppliers to identify areas for improvement and discuss good and bad practice.

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OUR INTERACTION WITH LOCAL PEOPLE

When two cultures come together it is inevitable that both are affected. The traveller is without doubt touched and inspired by the simplicity and authenticity of the nomadic life but how are they affected by us?

On our tours we try to:

- plan tours in a way which maximises the opportunity to meet local people and learn about the local culture
- wherever possible use homestays as an accommodation option rather than staying in tourist ger camps ensuring income goes directly to the families. Income brought to the countryside helps to reduce the need for urban relocation especially after a harsh winter when the number of animals is low.
- visit as many different families as possible in order to distribute income between groups and avoid causing jealousy
- limit our group size to 12 clients per classic trip in order to blend in with daily life of families rather than cause to great an impact
- limit our group size to 6 or 8 for expeditions involving more adventurous activities and when travelling to more remote locations
- provide employment for local people by using local guides and locally owned and operated services
- instigate discussions on all aspects of the history and culture to present a balanced view of the country
- encourage clients and tour leaders to dress appropriately
- brief clients on the significance of local customs, traditions, religion, body language and eating habits in Mongolia and China, so as to foster respect and understanding and avoid causing offence
- encourage and initiate contact with local people as much as possible. We promote cultural exchange through playing games, showing photos and conversation. We encourage our clients to learn a few words of Mongolian before they travel by providing them with language pages. For the client to communicate directly makes such a difference to all concerned.
- ask permission before taking photos. We don't condone giving money for photos as it can encourage a begging culture. Suggest that clients send copies of the photographs they take to the subjects of them if appropriate.
- discourage giving to beggars. Whilst in many countries some people depend on begging for their livelihood, we regard giving money as a short-term solution to a more fundamental problem. Panoramic Journeys tries to find ways we can offer more long-term support to the communities visited by supporting local charities and projects (Ref: 'The Sustainable Projects Fund').
- ensure that gifts customers bring for local people (postcards, useful food stuffs rice, flour, tea,) are presented in an appropriate situation – e.g. to a teacher in a school or in return for hospitality when visiting a local house. We discourage giving directly to children as this may encourage begging and can undermine parents who cannot afford to give their children such items.
- be of economic benefit to the communities visited by using a variety of local restaurants, shopping in local markets and buying locally produced goods but also by avoiding any overuse which may deprive locals of goods
- advise tour leaders and clients about local bargaining customs and give guidelines to reasonable prices where possible. Neither customers nor tour leaders nor crew should haggle too aggressively as their saving may be somebody else's shortage.

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PROJECT SUPPORT and FUNDING

Panoramic Journeys is committed to supporting initiatives which improve the quality of life amongst local communities and their environment in Mongolia and China. We are also involved with providing information to people approaching us in the UK requiring help and information for their projects in Mongolia.

'The Sustainable Project Fund'

Whilst having supported others people's projects in Mongolia in small ways in the past we are now working more actively to build a fund of regular support for projects of a sustainable, ethical, environmental and social nature. Projects we are connected to are: 'The Gobi Oasis' – tree planting project, 'The Erdene Zuu Endeavour' – a project committed to improving access to education, reintegrating cultural values and developing life-long learning opportunities in Kharkhorin. (www.erdenezuu.mn), the Felt-Makers Association in Tsetserleg – a Finnish supported initiative training people in traditional felt-making skills in order promote local employment (<http://www.netoni.net/mongoliashop>). In 2007, we are hoping to sponsor the digging of a well at the ger camp at Khugno Khan where they currently have to carry water for daily use a considerable distance.

1% of the price of your journey will go towards 'The Sustainable Projects Fund'. We will also plant at least one tree per client in the Gobi.

We encourage our clients in our literature to make a donation to a carbon sequestration company e.g. Climate Care in Oxford, to make a contribution towards repairing the damage of carbon emissions caused by their air travel.

Please see the links page on our website for people and projects we are connected to. [LINK to links page?](#)

OUR IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

'Take only photographs – leave only footprints'. We are aware that wherever we go we are having an impact on the environment. We endeavour to minimise this impact and, where possible, engage in projects and activities that not only make the environment sustainable but also contribute to improving it.

We consider our impact on the environment is in many parts of what we do:

Tour planning

- tours are planned to visit destinations which are sustainable
- group sizes are determined by what is appropriate to the area we are travelling to. Tours involving wildlife visits and walking are often smaller in order to minimise disruption to wildlife and the natural habitat.

Hotels/Ger Camps

On tours where hotels are used, we endeavour to:

- advise clients to turn lights, TVs and fans off when not in room. TVs should be switched off, not left on stand-by as this uses electricity.
- be aware of and work within the limitations of local plumbing! In some countries toilet paper and sanitary protection cannot be put down the toilet as the sewage system is not able to cope with non-human waste. Ignoring this could cause a nasty blockage or flood! In these cases we advise clients appropriately and ensure that bins are emptied regularly.

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- look out for any hotels that use more sustainable resources – e.g. hotels with solar panels
- ask our agents and tour leaders to talk to hoteliers about towel washing options and encourage them to introduce a system where clients fold towels for reuse rather than wash every day
- ask our agents and tour leaders to check if hotels recycle any goods and encourage others to adopt the system if it works

We advise our clients of the following:

Ger Camp

- at busier times in the season a ger camp may be catering for large numbers of people. Timing of meals may require some flexibility and patience.
- safety issues: take care when walking around especially at night – the ground may be rough. Take a torch to the toilet.
- not to burn anything other than wood/dung on the stoves in the gers

Homestays

- be respectful of ger etiquette – this will have been discussed prior to meeting a family and entering their ger
- learn some Mongolian. The family will be delighted if you are able to show an interest in their lives.
- be complimentary about any food or drink you try. Do try everything offered if you possibly can.
- be patient. Sometimes things can happen at a slower pace in Mongolia than westerners are used to.
- take part in the families daily life – collecting wood, dung, milking for example. These are tasks which people have to repeat day in day out and they are delighted and appreciative if people find them interesting.

Use of vehicles

- Panoramic Journeys tries to ensure that vehicles used on tour do not cause more than average pollution
- we minimize the use of vehicles by suggesting hiking, horse/camel trekking options from location to location where ever possible
- we are working on itineraries that involve an absolute minimum of motorised transport
- we encourage our drivers to keep to existing jeep tracks rather than pioneering new trails

Use of water

Water is a precious commodity particularly in Mongolia where families in the countryside rely entirely on water from wells which sometimes has to be transported by horse/camel over considerable distances. Economical use of water is therefore a must.

- our clients are informed about the water situation prior to their travel in Mongolia and encouraged to be sensitive in their use of available supplies. It is explained that going without showers and running water in toilets is to be expected when staying with a family.
- we carry water with us at all times in order to reduce demand on the local supply

Use of biodegradable products

- we use only biodegradable products for any washing and cleaning activities and we ask clients to bring biodegradable soap/face and body wash products with them

Respecting animal life

Our interactions with animals can be through wildlife viewing and through the use of animals for transport or milking.

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Wildlife

We ask our clients to comply with the following:

- not to feed animals. Giving them food other than or additional to what they usually eat is likely to make them ill.
- not to pursue animals, thus distressing them, for the sake of a photo/closer look
- not to touch animals; apart from being dangerous, it can distress them
- not to pick flowers. Tour Leaders and local guides will provide a reference book where possible so clients can identify plants/birds in situ.
- not touch or move fossils
- not encourage stray animals to follow you by feeding them
- not to stroke dogs. Dogs outside/in gers can be aggressive. Stray dogs can carry rabies.

Where animals are used for transport on tours we try to ensure that animals are well cared for and have no signs of mistreatment, illness or malnourishment.

Litter and reduction of waste

Since the increase of packaged goods, litter, in particular plastic waste, has become a problem in Mongolia where there is limited or no infrastructure for waste disposal, let alone recycling facilities. The first step is to ensure that we minimise our use of resources in order to generate less waste. Then we try to ensure that waste is disposed of in the most effective way possible.

We encourage our clients to:

- avoid accepting plastic bags for everything in shops and to reuse the ones they have (for litter collection etc).
- reduce the amount of packaging taken on tour as it is usually more effectively disposed of at home than on tour
- on camping tours, where possible, to use reusable food containers rather than foil or plastic bags and avoid using disposable plates, cups and cutlery
- to dispose of litter responsibly. If it is not clear that rubbish bins are emptied regularly, rubbish should be carried out to where it will be disposed of.
- not to drop cigarette ends on streets/in the countryside but to put them in a rubbish bin or in pocket until a rubbish bin is available. We recommend smokers carry a receptacle to collect their butts. Plastic film cases are excellent for this and reduce the smell!
- compost food waste – if possible. Alternatively it should be carried until it can be put in a rubbish bin. NB: orange peel takes 6 months to decompose in temperate climates and is therefore unsightly for a long time. It can also poison wildlife that may eat it and attract aggressive wild animals to areas used by humans.
- take a plastic bag and collect a few pieces of litter and dispose of it at the end of the walk, leaving the environment cleaner than when we found it!

Use of local shops and restaurants

What is available in local shops and restaurants can have an impact on the environment! We recommend clients do not:

- buy items derived from endangered/fragile species e.g. fur, ivory and bone etc. Be aware which goods are from sustainable sources.
- buy goods that may be manufactured through child labour

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Visiting ancient/sacred sites

We advise our client to:

- not disturb or remove fossils
- avoid touching deer stones or cave paintings
- avoid climbing on ruins
- at ovoos (stone cairns), it is acceptable to touch the objects and stones there but to avoid disturbing them
- walk around Buddhist monuments and temples in a clockwise fashion

On walks

We try to ensure we and our leaders are aware of local guidelines and regulations regarding walking. To avoid erosion, the following general guidelines always apply:

In popular areas

- concentrate use on existing trails
- walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy

In pristine areas

- disperse use to prevent the creation of trails
- avoid places where impact is just beginning to show

TOURS WITH CAMPING

Camping can have a very visible impact on the environment. In addition to the above policy, we issue our leaders and crew with the following guidelines to operate the trip and share with clients and thus ensure our impact is minimised.

Selecting camp area

- keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.
- if camping by a river or stream, always try to camp downstream of a community so as not to pollute their water source
- In pristine areas, consider moving pitches or camp to avoid creating a camp or trails. The essence is to leave no trace.

Bush toilets

If no fixed toilets exist at camps, a hole should be dug and a toilet tent should be provided where possible. This provides privacy, is more hygienic and better for the environment. The following is our guideline for the construction and use of the toilet tent:

- hole should be dug at least 30m (100ft) from any water source. The hole should be as deep as you can dig it. Pouring water on soft ground, e.g. sand, before digging will make the ground more solid and prevent the hole caving in
- a trowel should be provided for customers to lightly cover waste with the diggings
- a rubbish bin should be provided for toilet paper and burn and bury ashes. Ensure bin is emptied regularly.

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- The hole should be filled in before it overfills and a new hole dug if necessary

If there is no toilet tent facility, the following policy should be followed:

- a trowel should be provided for customers to bury waste
- clients should be instructed to 'go' at least 30m (100ft) from any water source and dig hole at least 6ft deep to bury waste. NB: microbes are most active at this level and decomposition will be quicker.
- provide matches for clients to burn and bury paper where appropriate or suggest clients bring paper back to a central bin to be burned or disposed of. Tour Leaders and local crew should assess the fire risk and brief clients accordingly.

Campfires

Panoramic Journeys will make occasional campfires when it seems appropriate. On these occasions we make sure that:

- wood collected is dead wood off the ground and only collected in moderation in order not to deplete any local supplies. We do not strip branches from trees.
- the fire is kept small
- a pre-existing fire ring is used where possible
- only paper goods are burned on the campfire
- be aware of fire hazards and local fire regulations
- on leaving camp, the campfire is 'dug in' so that we are sure it is out and that it is not an unsightly mess

Waste disposal

The following policy should be adhered to when disposing of rubbish from camps:

- items that should be burned: paper & card
- items that should be buried: vegetable & food waste*
- items that should be carried out: plastics, glass & cans. Rubbish should always be disposed of where it is sure to be collected

*NB in national parks and where the local laws or guidelines stipulate, ALL waste must be carried out including vegetable matter. As the food waste is not indigenous, it can potentially make animals sick. Furthermore, it can attract animals to camp.

- campsites should be checked for all litter before departing, including bottle tops and cigarette ends. Clients and crew should help in this respect.

Use of water

- in delicate areas do not take water from springs if not necessary – you may be depriving local people
- does the provision of hot water for personal washing mean burning more fuel or is it solar generated? Restrict use if so
- if using 'bucket' showers or similar, turn off water supply whilst soaping up
- dirty water, e.g. from washing dishes, should be disposed of by scattering over ground at least 30m (100ft) away from water source/river if a drain is not available
- do not use non-biodegradable soap in lakes or streams. Locate sources selling biodegradable products where possible and use these products.
- do not pour oily water into streams
- wash dishes in a bowl/sink rather than running tap as this uses less water

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2. PANORAMIC JOURNEYS IN-HOUSE

It is not only what we do on tour that counts; here in the office we have to ensure that we too act to minimise our impact on the environment. We do this because:

- we care about our environment and it makes us feel better to act positively to protect it
- it saves us money

The following is the policy we issue to all Panoramic Journeys' staff:

REDUCING WASTE

Rather than recycling it is better not to create waste in the first place. We endeavour to do the following:

- re-use waste paper for note pads, internal printing
- buy recycled computer paper. It is priced competitively.
- avoid printing every document. It is often easier to save files on your computer and it takes up less space.
- print/photocopy double sided where you can

RECYCLING

- we have an efficient recycling system in the office where we are able to recycle paper, card, plastics, glass, metal. We are 2 miles from a recycling centre where we are able to take larger items.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

We are consciously aware of the following:

- Lighting/heating/air conditioning are only turn on when necessary
- Items of electrical equipment are not left on standby overnight

CONSUMABLES

We use fair trade tea and coffee in the office. We use biodegradable washing up liquid in the kitchen.