

PANORAMIC JOURNEYS

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

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 an 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, crew, suppliers and clients on the importance of sensitivity to environmental, cultural and economic matters in our destinations
- Give practical guidance on how to achieve our objectives
- Set goals to work towards

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 Tourism Policy provides staff with policy and guidelines as to how to operate in a responsible and ethical way.

Below is Panoramic Journey's full Responsible Tourism 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.

PANORAMIC JOURNEYS ON TOUR

HOW WE WORK WITH LOCAL CREW

Where possible and practical, Panoramic Journeys seeks to use locally owned and operated suppliers and employ local people as leaders and crew to operate our tours.

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

- Treated as equals socially. Where the crew work with or accompany the group, our tour leaders encourage interaction and include them in group meals and activities 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
- Given contracts stating their terms of employment
- Not given an unreasonable workload. Working hours are reasonable and safe within local regulations and do not involve dangerous practices in carrying out the job.

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Local suppliers are audited to identify responsible tourism issues on the services they provide and we work with them to find solutions if issues arise. Tour leaders are able to identify areas for improvement and discuss good and bad practice with local crew, agents and suppliers.

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 do we affect the nomads?

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
- When possible use homestays as an accommodation option rather than staying in tourist ger camps ensuring income goes directly to the families involved. Income brought to the countryside helps to reduce the need for urban relocation especially after a harsh winter when animal stocks are depleted.
- Visit different families in order to distribute income between groups and avoid causing jealousy
- Limit our group size to 12 clients per trip in order to reduce our impact as incomers into community settings. We are also able to keep vehicle usage to a minimum.
- 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 with clients to present a balanced view of the country
- Encourage clients and tour leaders to dress appropriately especially when visiting monasteries
- 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 to 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.
- Encourage our clients to learn a few words of Mongolian before they travel by providing them with phrase books. For the client to be able to communicate directly makes such a difference to all concerned.
- Ask permission before taking photos. (We do not 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.
- Panoramic Journeys tries to find ways our clients and we can offer long-term support to the communities visited by supporting local charities and projects.
- Ensure that gifts clients bring for local people (postcards, useful food stuffs rice, flour, tea etc) are presented in an appropriate situation – eg to a teacher in a school or in return for hospitality when visiting a ger. We oppose 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 (e.g. guanz), 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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SUPPORTING LOCAL INITIATIVES

Panoramic Journeys is committed to supporting initiatives, which improve the quality of life amongst local communities and their environment in the countries that we visit. Please refer to the responsible Travel pages of our website for further information on the projects that we support.

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 contribute to improving it.

We seek to practice environmentally responsible tourism in the following ways:

Tour planning

- Tours are planned to visit destinations which are sustainably managed/maintained
- 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 and 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
- look out for any hotels that use more sustainable resources – eg 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 towels are reused rather than washed every day
- ask our agents and tour leaders to check if hotels recycle any goods and encourage others to adopt the system

Use of vehicles

Panoramic Journeys tries to ensure that vehicles used on tour should not cause more than average pollution

- we minimize the use of vehicles by suggesting hiking, horse/camel trekking options from location to location when 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 in order to reduce demand on the local supply

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Use of biodegradable products

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

Respecting the Flora and Fauna

- Our interactions with animals can be through wildlife viewing and through the use of animals for transport

Wildlife

- never feed animals/fish. Giving them food other than or additional to what they usually eat is likely to make them ill.
- do not pursue animals, thus distressing them, for the sake of a photo/better look
- do not try to touch animals; apart from being dangerous, it can distress them
- never pick flowers/leaves. Tour Leaders and local guides should provide a reference book where possible so clients can identify plants/birds in situ.
- do not touch or move fossils
- do not encourage stray animals to follow you by feeding them. Best policy is to ignore them and get away.

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 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.

Limiting generation of waste

- we encourage clients to avoid accepting plastic bags for everything in shops and to reuse the ones they have (for litter collection etc).
- clients are encouraged to reduce the amount of packaging taken on tour
- on camping tours, where possible we use reusable food containers rather than foil or plastic bags. We avoid using disposable plates, cups and cutlery.

Litter

- litter should always be disposed of responsibly. If it is not clear that rubbish bins are emptied regularly, rubbish should be carried to where it will be disposed of.
- cigarette ends should not be dropped but put in a rubbish bin or in a pocket until a rubbish bin is available.
- food waste – including apple cores etc – should not be dropped behind bushes, overboard boats etc. but carried until they 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, which may eat it and attract aggressive wild animals to areas used by humans. For these reasons dropping food waste like this is banned in many national parks.

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- on walks, at sites or other areas where appropriate, we suggest a voluntary system where customers take a plastic bag and collect a few pieces of litter from the trail and dispose of it at the end of the walk, leaving the environment cleaner than when we found it! Our aim is to encourage locals and tourists alike to take care of the environment.

Use of local shops and restaurants

What is available in local shops and restaurants can have an impact on the environment! So:

- do not buy items derived from endangered/fragile species eg fur, ivory and bone etc. Be aware which goods are from sustainable sources.
- be aware of local laws regarding purchase and export of antiquities
- in local restaurants, do not eat food from endangered/fragile species

When visiting ancient sites

It is important that we:

- Do not touch ancient monuments, as oils, acid and dirt from hands can cause erosion
- Respect laws against flash photography in sites as the bright light can cause damage to frescoes etc
- Do not pick up stones, fossils or potshards. These are part of the site!
- Keep to the set paths
- Never climb on or over ruins /walls

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

In pristine areas

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

In China, only walk on planted ground if there is no other choice. Where a walk crosses a field or planted area, we recommend our groups go carefully at the edge, in single file and ask permission from the owner first if possible.

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

In popular areas:

- concentrate use on existing campsites
- keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.

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- 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, eg 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.
- 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:

- Trowel/s 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 does 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 or the site of a previous fire
- only paper goods are burned on the campfire
- we are 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 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.

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*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. Customers and crew should help in this respect.
- check if any recycling facility exists locally and use it where possible. If it is possible to recycle cans, consider investing in a can crusher to save space.

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, eg 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 bio-degradable 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

- it's everybody's moral obligation to do so and we will always lead by example
- it saves us money
- it's good to feel we are doing something positive and working for a company that genuinely cares

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

Reducing Waste

Recycling is good, but not generating the waste in the first place is even better! Doing so also saves us money, and this is ultimately in everyone's interest.

- **Re-use paper** – rather than ordering a new notepad, please keep used paper for general jottings.
- **Buy recycled computer paper** – it is priced competitively.
- **Stationery** – Ensure you check the back of your drawer before ordering stationery. Give any excess stuff to the person responsible for ordering stationery in your department who will put it back into circulation.
- **Stop printing!** Think: do you really need to? Try to avoid printing every document you and try filing electronically on the system – it is often easier to locate files and it keeps your desk clear!
- **Print double sided** where you can – reducing the font size or margins can save pages too
- **Print on used paper for internal documents**– usually one side is blank
- **Use the larger printers:** they are more energy efficient
- **Disposable cutlery / plates:** please don't use these – we have plenty of glasses and plates for most occasions

In general, look at ways you can reduce the amount of waste generated by your department and by yourself. Is there a more efficient way of doing things? – eg using email rather than writing letters; it may not always be appropriate but it is quicker and saves paper and postage.

Recycling

Why recycle? Because we're filling up too much of the country with ugly landfill sites. At Explore we recycle pretty much everything we can, from old brochures to old computer equipment.

Here's the list of what we recycle in the office:

- Paper, including newspapers, magazines, envelopes
- Any cardboard, including food packaging
- Glass jars / bottles
- Food & drinks cans
- Plastic bottles, including tops
- Milk bottle tops

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- Plastic food (& other) packaging
- Carrier bags
- Plastic magazine / brochure sleeves
- Foil
- Stamps
- Old & foreign coins
- Mobile phones
- Toner cartridges
- CDs
- Computers
- Old brochures

Energy Efficiency

The Panoramic Journeys office is a fairly eco-friendly building, but we work with what we have to try to be efficient! You wouldn't leave all the lights/ heating on in every room at home would you? No! You'd try to reduce your bills? Yes! We try to do the same here...

- **Lighting:** Please consider whether you need the light on or not. We've tried to reduce the number of strips in the fixtures to use less electricity
- **Heating:** Heating is turned on once we feel the temperature warrants it. It can be regulated by individual thermostats on radiators – please turn off heaters rather than open windows if it is too hot.
- **Air Conditioning:** This is often necessary but hugely energy guzzling, so be a/c wise!! It must be kept set at 23 degrees so don't tamper with the settings; all units must be on and all windows closed, otherwise you are wasting a lot of energy! Please get the consensus of your colleagues before you put the a/c on. Some parts of the building have very different temperatures; but a lot of the time, opening a window creates just as good an effect. A/C is on timers but please do turn off the system at the end of the day.
- **PCs:** switch your monitor off at night as this saves electricity and reduces the fire risk

Charity Events

We often have charity fundraising events/sales/raffles etc. and it's great to support colleagues in this way. Every little helps, even if you can't afford to give much! Let us know if there is anything you'd like us to support.

Other

We try to always use fair trade tea and coffee in the office, as this supports vulnerable farmers rather than adding to the profits of global enterprises. We use biodegradable washing up liquid in the kitchen.