

## GREENTREK Sustainable Travel.

Address: El Espectador E8-13 y Shyris. Edificio El Espectador. Oficina 203. Quito – Ecuador

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### LEARN WITH US

#### ❖ What is a sustainable traveler?



*“Whether you are traveling alone or arranging travel for others, remember that the Earth is our homeland. Give it the care and respect it deserves, learn about its environment and geography, spend time getting to know its people and their art, culture, history and livelihoods. While you derive pleasure, knowledge and understanding from your encounters, hold close the importance of preserving these treasures for those who may follow in your footsteps”.* Responsible Travel Handbook.

Travel is the world’s largest and fastest growing industry, providing 10 percent of the world’s income and employing one tenth of the world’s workforce. Travel to places known as “biodiversity hotspots,” such as Ecuador, are among the fastest growing segments of the travel industry. This growing interest will have many different impacts on both the environment and cultures of these tourist destinations.

Sustainable travel aims to protect these fragile places of extreme beauty from disappearing, while protecting the livelihoods and natural resources of local communities with limited economic resources, whose culture and traditions are also in danger of being lost.

#### ❖ What does sustainable tourism mean ?

Sustainable tourism translates into many benefits for travelers. It means a more enjoyable travel experience through meaningful interaction with local people and the natural world, and staying at smaller lodges with local flair that are locally owned and operated. It means trying local cuisine and learning local customs along the way, traveling in small groups and exploring

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national parks, nature reserves and culturally sensitive areas with a local guide. And it means asking the right questions.

Choosing your vacation wisely and evaluating your travel alternatives by asking the right questions are the first and most important steps in becoming a sustainable tourist. This will help you connect with sustainable tourism companies that are working to help ensure future generations will also have the chance to experience some of the most beautiful and intriguing places on our planet. By asking about sustainable tourism when planning your vacation, you can find out whether your trip can help protect the natural environment, traditions and culture of the places you visit, while spreading economic benefits to those who most need it.

### ❖ How can you be a responsible traveler?



Each time you make vacation plans you have the opportunity to have a positive impact on the places you visit. Everyone can be a responsible traveler, no matter what travel style you choose. You can get in touch with nature, go after a luxurious spa, hike into the rainforest, explore the city, visit classic destinations, or get off the beaten path. By using socially and environmentally responsible tour operators, hotels and outfitters, you can ensure that your trip contributes to the

conservation areas and well-being of communities.

Your choice makes a difference:

Responsible Travel starts with planning. Making informed choices before your trip is the single most important thing you can do to be a responsible traveler:

- Try to choose from destinations & hotels that are doing best practices in sustainable tourism; you can look for more information about possible places to visit in : <http://www.sustainabletrip.org/> Rainforest alliance has done a great deal of work pushing for sustainable tourism practices in Ecuador; many hotels are verified by this organization. We work with many of them in our tours.
- Consult guidebooks: Choose guidebooks with information on your destination's environmental, social and political issues and read before booking.
- Make contact: Contact operators who have firsthand knowledge of the place you are considering visiting.

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- Ask questions: Let tour operators/hotels know that you are a responsible consumer. Before you book, ask about their social and environmental policies. For example: What percentage of your employees are local citizens? Do you support any projects that benefit communities or conservation areas? How?
- Choose wisely: Are the businesses you are considering certified? Have they been recognized for their sustainable efforts by their industry?

### **❖ *While on Tour***

- Respect the local environment: Do not litter, pick wild flowers or plants; try to reuse water bottles and recycle when you can.
- Try to visit community tourism operations during your visit; Ecuador has a high number of community run-and-owned lodges in spectacular natural settings. We work with many of them in our tours.
- Preserve local resources when possible: If your hotel has a policy to minimize laundering of towels and sheets, try to support it. Remember to turn off lights and air conditioning when you leave your room. Try not to waste water when you are not using it. Try to use biodegradable soaps and organic bug repellent and sun block.
- Respect local culture and traditions: Be aware and sensitive to cultural differences in language, custom and dress. Ask permission before taking someone's picture.
- Learn a few words in the local language: And be open to learning about the local culture throughout the trip.
- Help ensure your money stays in the local community. Try local brands for food and drink. Buy hand crafted goods produced by local artisans.
- Protect national treasures: Never buy authentic archeological artifacts or souvenirs made from endangered plants animals, such as turtle shell, coral and non-plantation precious wood.
- If you generate solid waste during your travels (batteries, shampoo & sun block containers plastic bags, toothbrushes, etc) bring it back with you to the biggest closest city (Quito, Guayaquil or Cuenca) and dispose it there. In Ecuador many small towns don't have proper waste management systems, and most of the trash ends up in rivers or open fields.
- Make donations count: The best way to give back to the country is through donations to organizations, not to individuals. If you want to support our conservation projects in the field, let us know!

### **❖ *In national parks or other protected wilderness areas***

- Hire a local naturalist guide: Guides enhance the overall experience, and provide a wider interpretation of the natural areas you visit, as well as help you spot wild animals that are invisible to the untrained eye.

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- Avoid feeding, touching or harassing wild animals at all times. Contact with animals puts them at risk and can cause undue stress.
- Stay on the trail at all times: This helps lessen your impact on the forest and keeps you from getting lost.
- Increase your chances of seeing wildlife responsibly:
- Be ready to explore the forest in the early morning or at dusk.
- Wear clothes that blend into the background.
- Avoid wearing perfume or other strong scents.
- Remain very quiet on the trail.
- Tune into the sounds of nature with all your senses
- Watch where you walk: Look down when walking through the forest and don't move when you are observing animals or plants.

### ❖ *When you get back home*

Take some time to reflect on how the culture and wildlife of your trip destination may have benefited in the long and short term from your visit. If you have found a particular cause that interests you, find out how you can contribute by making a donation, volunteering your time, or recommending your Ecuador trip to friends and family.

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On this section you can find documents & links about sustainable tourism which we hope will help you learn more about this interesting subject.

<http://www.gstcouncil.org/>

<http://sustainabletravelinternational.org/>

<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/work/tourism>

<http://traveler.nationalgeographic.com/sustainable-travel-tips>