

# SUSTAINABILITY POLICY AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK



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Welcome to our ongoing commitment to sustainable development. At ORLA TOURS, we recognize our responsibility to the planet and to future generations. Our sustainability policy is based on a holistic approach that integrates economic, social and environmental dimensions. We are committed to minimizing our ecological footprint by adopting eco-responsible practices, promoting social equity by fostering fair relations with our employees and partners, and supporting the local communities in which we operate. We aim to follow, implement and promote good sustainability practices to maximize positive impacts and minimize negative impacts on tourism of our operations and to influence our clients and partners to do the same. This policy guides our day-to-day work, reinforcing our commitment to sustainability and our mission to make a positive impact in the world.

Our sustainability policy is divided into 10 themes. Each theme consists of a set of principles and practical actions accordingly.

## **I. Sustainability Management & Legal Compliance**

We commit to sustainability management, practised by these following actions :

- To have an accessible and written sustainability policy that aims for a reduction of the negative social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of the company's activities; and includes employee related health and safety aspects ;
- To conduct baseline assessment of the company's performance on sustainable practices;
- To have sustainability guidelines and assessment system in place to identify the sustainability performance of key partners
- To have a sustainability action plan with clear targets, actions, measures, responsibilities and time planning ;
- To develop documented procedures to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the sustainability policy, objectives, and targets ;
- To ensure company's transparency in sustainability by public reporting and communicating;

- To ensure that all staff are fully aware of our Sustainability Policy and are committed to implementing and improving it.

We commit to complying with all national legislation, regulations, and codes of practice.

## **II. Internal management: social policy & human rights**

We commit to sustainable internal management by having clear written and well-communicated social policy that includes the following principles :

- To grant employees the freedom of employment and contract termination with notice (ideally minimum one month) and without penalty
- To have a safe, healthy, and welcoming workplace
- To include labour conditions according to national labour law and a job description in the employment contract ;
- Wage rate is to be mentioned in the contract and equals or above the national legal wage;
- To determinate and compensate of overtime working hours based on agreement ;
- Inclusion and equal opportunity for all employees, particularly with regard to compensation, promotion, distribution of benefits, and professional development opportunities.
- To grant employees fixed paid yearly holiday and sick leave.
- To have health and safety policy for employees which complies to national legal standards;
- To have first aid sets and trained staff are available at all relevant locations ;
- To obey national concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment ;
- To have a clear disciplinary procedure that is effectively communicated with employees;
- To prohibit discriminations, in regard to recruitment, conditions of employment, access to training and senior positions, or promotion in terms of gender, race, age, disability, ethnicity, religion/beliefs and sexual orientation: Equality for all genders (women, men, LGBT+).
- Ensure that employees are able to express their grievances and comments at individual monthly meetings.
- To ensure all employees have an equal chance and access to resources and opportunities for personal development through regular training, and education.

## **III. Internal Management : Environment and community relations**

We commit to practice environmental protection and enhance community relations by ensuring the enforcement of following practices :

- Actively reduce the use of disposable and consumer goods
- Favour the purchase of sustainable goods and services, office and catering supply,
- giveaways and merchandise ;
- Promoting participation and communicating our commitment to responsible environmental management by promoting environmental responsibility amongst our employees and stakeholders and soliciting input from them to better achieve our environmental goals.
- Set copy and printing machines by default to double-sided printing or other forms of paper saving modes ;

- Use cleaning materials which are non-hazardous, non-eutrophic and biodegradable and are certified with an eco-label, at ORLA, we buy local and natural products to clean our agency.
- Have an active commitment to measure, monitor and reduce energy consumption ;
- Switch off Lights and equipment when not in use, and set equipment by default in the energy saving mode, where this is feasible ;
- We maximize the use of daylight by making sure all windows are accessible and clean.
- We use energy saving light bulbs, such as LED lights, which use up to 80% less energy
- Prefer low energy equipment when buying new items, including considerations of cost and quality;
- Use sustainable water sourcing, which does not adversely affect environmental flows;
- Comply with the national legislation concerning waste disposal;
- Practising a waste hierarchical approach to always reduce, reuse, and recycle commodities and products instead of waste, particularly waste to landfill
- Take action to reduce the amount of (non-refillable) plastic bottles of drinking water for office use ;
- Separate all materials which can be recycled and organize collection and proper disposal;
- Implement waste reducing methods when using ink and toner cartridges for printing and copying, whenever feasible ;
- Comply with national legislation of wastewater treatment, which should be reused or released safely ;
- Implement practices to minimize pollution from its buildings (as far as being able to be controlled by the company) ;
- Calculate its emissions, with the aim to reduce and compensate, through the CARMACAL available program; Monitoring and measuring carbon footprint with the aim to reduce as much as possible and offset remaining amounts
- Reduce transport related impacts by telework, tele/video meetings, work-at-home policies or other means ;
- Provide periodic guidance, training and/or information to all staff members, about their roles and responsibilities with respect to internal environmental practices ;
- Comply with land use, zoning and protected or heritage area laws and regulations; when planning, designing, constructing, renovating, operating or demolishing company buildings and infrastructure ;
- Contribute to the protection and preservation of local historical, archaeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites, and not impede access to them by local residents ;

## **IV. General suppliers' policy**

ORLA tours does not have domestic partners agencies, but it does have partners with whom it works actively for accommodation, excursions, guides, etc. Our aim is to make sustainable development concrete to each and every partner within our business.

We commit to this by ;

- Keeping a list of the sustainability practices of partner accommodations and agents;
- Only working with organizations who are truly implementing sustainability in their tourism policy ;

- Minimalizing the ecologic footprint of the office by travelling mainly via public transport, working as paperless as possible, separating waste, and to make use of certified recycled paper ;
- Paying attention to the local benefits of communities when selecting local accommodations and their social policy for employees ;
- Raising awareness amongst key partners on sustainable consumption by organizing (online) campaigns and trainings ;
- Informing key partners on the Travelife and national tourism standards ;
- Evaluating the sustainability practices regularly of our key partners to ensure their practices are truly sustainable ;
- Informing key partners about the travel companies' sustainability policy and that they are expected to comply with it and/or communicate it to final customers where relevant ;
- Including clauses in the suppliers contracts that enable contract partners to end the contractual agreement prematurely if the partner company does not take adequate measures to prevent sexual exploitation of children within the direct supply chain ;
- Ensuring that partner companies have a tourist code of conduct on prevention of sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse
- Ensuring that partner companies comply with all relevant national laws protecting the rights of employees ;
- Following a zero-tolerance policy, ORLA Tours will immediately terminate any relationships with suppliers that violate our policies, specifically through acts of bribery, corruption, discrimination, and violation of human rights.

## V. Transport

We try to ensure that vehicles used on tours do not cause more than average pollution. We believe that transport is an important aspect of sustainable tourism, and we do our best to decrease the average pollution level.

We commit to this by ;

- Selecting the most sustainable options considering price and comfort when selecting transport options to the destination ;
- Considering and giving preference to more sustainable alternatives when selecting transport options for transfers and excursions in the destination, taking into account price, comfort, and practical considerations ;
- Integrating and/or promoting one or more sustainable holiday products/packages based on a recognized methodology, including sustainable transport, sustainable accommodations, and sustainable activities
- ORLA Tours has implemented clear guidelines for reducing GHG emissions from transport and selecting the most environmentally friendly transport options, including the following measures :
  - Using appropriate vehicle sizes for group sizes and purchasing most efficient vehicles available*
  - Training drivers on eco-driving techniques*

## VI. Accommodations

We try to achieve a tourism supply chain that is fully sustainable. The partner accommodations play an important role in achieving this, and are stimulated and motivated to adapt sustainable practices.

We commit to this by ;

- Selecting accommodations that comply with sustainability and quality standards with a special focus on the following items ;
  - Are they certified for their sustainable commitments ?*
  - Do they have a water saving program ?*
  - Do they have an energy saving program ?*
  - Do they have a waste management program ?*
  - Do they have an energy reduction system ?*
  - Do they have a sustainable supply chain ?*
  - Do they have a child and young people protection policy ?*
  - Do they have a safeguarding standard to prevent sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse within their supply chain ?*
  - Do they train employees in Health & Safety ?*
  
- Motivating and encouraging partner accommodations to become sustainably certified .
- Preferring and selecting accommodations that are locally owned and managed ;
- Selecting accommodations that employ local communities ;
- Encouraging accommodations to follow best practices/trainings on responsible tourism ;
- Clearly and actively communicating our sustainability objectives and requirements regarding accommodations to contracted and other relevant accommodations ;
- Giving clear preference to accommodations that work with internationally acknowledged (e.g. GSTC recognized) and/or Travelife certification ;
- Including standard sustainability clauses in all contracts with accommodation providers that focus on child labor, anti-corruption and bribery, waste management, protection of biodiversity ;
- Ensuring that through our accommodation supply chain, the rights of children and young people are respected and safeguarded by ;
  - Having a clause in contracts throughout the value chain stating a common repudiation and zero tolerance policy of sexual exploitation of children and young people ;*
  - Having a clause dedicated to this aspect in their contract that enables the travel company to end the contractual agreement prematurely if the accommodation supplier does not take adequate measures to prevent sexual exploitation of children and young people*
  - Training employees in children's rights, the prevention of sexual exploitation and how to report suspected cases ;*

## *Training employees in gender equality and inclusion (all aspects)*

- Working with accommodations and restaurants that incorporate elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage; while respecting the intellectual property rights of local communities ;
- Terminating cooperation with accommodation in case of clear evidence that contracted accommodations jeopardize the provision of integrity of basic services such as food, water, energy, healthcare, or soil to the neighboring companies.

## **VII. Accommodations**

We value animal and community welfare extremely high and aims at tours that only leave a minor footprint. We are safeguarding the authenticity of the communities, socially, and the natural environment, and are strongly against harming wildlife and polluting the environment.

We commit to this by ;

- Having an inventory of environmentally or culturally sensitive excursions which are offered in each destination ;
- Advising guests on behavior standards during excursions and activities with a focus on respecting the local culture, nature, and environment ;
- Communicating our sustainability objectives and requirements to our guides by distributing this information via code of conducts, representative agents, written guide, email, discussions, and/or meetings, to minimize negative visitor impact and maximize enjoyment ;
- Not offering any excursions that harm humans, animals, plants, natural resources such as water and energy, or which are socially and culturally unacceptable ;
- Not offering any excursions in which wildlife is held captive, except for properly regulated activities in compliance with local, national, and international law ;
- Not being involved with companies that harvest, consume, display, sell, or trade wildlife species unless it is part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilization is sustainable and in compliance with local, national, and international law ;
- Having skilled and/or certified guides to guide our guests in sensitive cultural sites heritage sites, or ecologically sensitive destinations; for example, when visiting Buddhist monuments and temples, our guides are Buddhists themselves, to provide the best possible guidance for our travelers.
- Promoting and advise our guests on excursions and activities which directly involve and support local communities by purchasing services or goods, traditional crafts and local (food) production methods, or visiting social projects ;
- Promoting and advising our guests on excursions and activities which support local environment and biodiversity such as visiting protected areas or environmental protection projects;

## **VIII. Tour leaders, local representatives, and guides**

We aim at involving as many locals as possible by employing them in the tourism business. We stand



for a fair and safe working environment that supports and respects local communities.

We commit to this by ;

- Ensuring that all employees have a written proof, including labor conditions, job description, planned program and salary. In doing so, we ensure that they fully understand the terms and conditions ;
- Preferring to work with local representatives, local tour guides, porters, drivers, cooks, and other local staff in case of equal ability, and provide training as required ;
- Ensuring that our local partners comply with all applicable international, national, and local laws and regulations, industry minimum standards, and any other relevant statutory requirements whichever requirements are more stringent ;
- Paying tour leaders, local representatives, guides, porters and other local staff contracted by us at least a living wage that is equal to or above the legal minimum or relevant industry standard ;
- Ensuring that our local employees are informed on relevant aspects of our sustainability policy and comply with it, by WhatsApp messages, emails, or training and information sessions ;
- Offering a special sustainable travel module in the trainings program for local tour guides and hosts, in which the main responsible tourism aspects are brought to attention followed by the role expected from the employees. This module will also include knowledge regarding the destination and its relevant sustainability aspects ;
- Having our tour leaders, local representatives and guides inform clients on relevant sustainability matters in the destination (e.g. protection of flora, fauna, and cultural heritage, resource use), social norms and values (e.g. tips, dressing code and photography) and human rights (e.g. sexual exploitation) ;
- Training our employed tour leaders and local representatives on the avoidance of sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse particularly children and young people. This will include training on how to check the requirements concerning exclusion of child and young people abuse ;

## **IX. Destination**

We aim to maximize positive impacts and minimize negative impacts at destination to ensure the sustainable development of the places that we operate in.

We commit to this by ;

- Consider sustainability aspects in the selection process of new destinations and possibly offer alternative, non-mainstream destinations ;
- Not selecting destinations in which tourism leads to structural negative local effects, (unless the company's involvement results in clear counter balancing effects); ORLA Tours does not support destinations that have a questionable human rights track record.
- Consider selection of new destinations, which are reachable through more sustainable means of transport ;
- Comply with legally based spatial planning, protected areas and heritage regulations. Also with destination management strategies of local, regional and national authorities ; ORLA Tours aims to send visitors to secondary or lesser-known tourist areas to avoid overtourism.

- Support initiatives that improve the relationships between accommodations and local producers ;
- Influence and support local government (when possible, together with other travel companies and stakeholders) concerning sustainability, destination planning and management, use of natural resources and socio-cultural issues ;
- Support biodiversity conservation, including protected areas and areas of high biodiversity through integration in product offers ;
- Not promote souvenirs which contain threatened flora and fauna species as indicated in the CITES treaty and the IUCN 'Red List'; or historic and archaeological artefacts (except as permitted by law); But encouraging guests to shop responsibly.

## **X. Customer communication and protection**

Customer's welfare and information are very important to us. At ORLA, we ensure clear and constant communication and high protection to our clients.

Prior to booking, we commit to this by :

- Make available a company guideline for client consultation, which is followed by client advisors; On our website, We have created a special page dedicated to our privacy policy so that everyone can read and understand clearly how data is processed and how we protect you.
- Ensure that customer privacy is not compromised ;
- Comply with relevant standards and voluntary codes of conduct in marketing and advertising messages, and not promise more than is delivered ;
- Make product and price information clear, complete and accurate, with regard to the company and its products and services, including sustainability claims ;
- Provide destination information, including sustainability aspects, which is factually correct, balanced and complete; on our website, we have created a page clearly explaining our commitments and values in terms of sustainable development
- Inform clients about the environmental impact of different transport options to reach the destination (in case these are not included in the package), and to offer sustainable alternatives, where available ;
- Promote (Certified) sustainable accommodations, excursions, packages and/or transport options, with logos or other messages; ensuring they are recognizable to consumer and presented as the " better " option ;
- Inform the customer about sustainable alternatives concerning accommodations, excursions, package holidays and transport options, if available ;
- Clearly inform (potential) direct customers, about sustainability commitments and actions ;

After booking and during holidays, we commit to this by :

- Provide Information to consumers about the natural surroundings, local culture and cultural heritage in the holiday destination; in our regularly updated code of conduct, travelers will find all the information they need for their stay
- Inform consumers about key sustainability aspects and issues in the destination and receive recommendations on how to make a positive contribution ;



- Inform customers about risks and precautions related to health and safety matters in the destination ;
- Keep a contact person and a telephone number permanently available for emergency situations ;
- Train personnel and keep guidelines available, on how to deal with emergency situations ;
- Provide clients with documented guidelines and/or codes of conduct for sensitive excursions and activities, to minimize negative visitor impact and maximize enjoyment
- Provide customers with information about commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation and harassment, particularly of children and adolescents ;
- Inform clients about applicable legislation concerning the purchasing, sales, import and export of historic or religious artefacts and articles containing materials of threatened flora and/or fauna in the destination ;
- Motivate clients to go to local restaurants and shops (where appropriate) ;
- Inform clients on sustainable transport options in destinations, when feasible ;
- Encourage clients to donate to local charity and sustainable initiatives ;

After holidays, we commit to this by :

- Measure systematically client satisfaction and take into account the results, for service and product improvements ;
- Include sustainability as an integral part of the research into client satisfaction ;
- Have clear procedures in case of complaints from clients; on our website, customers will find a page dedicated to receiving any complaints they may have. We have also drawn up internal guidelines to manage complaints as effectively as possible.



**Explore Laos Responsibly with Us !** 

