

# Charter of Ethics for Tourism & the Environment

## Presentation

The Charter on the ethics of tourism and the environment, drawn up by the Italian Touring Club, with the contribution of the European Community Commission and the Environment and Energy section of the Lombard Region, has the objective of defining tourism and of regulating the general ethical principles. Starting from the premise that tourism is one of man's rights, a factor of culture, peace and development, the Charter underlines how it must be practised respecting the environment, and the societies and economies of the various countries. The document contains "an ethical appeal" addressed to all the responsible bodies: tourists, Countries and Governments, tour operators and the tourist industry.

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By the Italian Touring Club  
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### General Ethical Principles

#### 1. Tourism, a human activity part of human rights

Tourism may be described as a complex of phenomena which are caused by the voluntary and temporary movement of an individual or a group to a place which is not their normal home for purposes of recreation and / or cultural improvement.

It is part of every person's right to mobility as recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The motives for tourism, broadly speaking, may be the desire for relaxation, communication or the acquisition of new knowledge.

National governments should respect this right and remove all restrictions limiting its application that do not stem from the justifiable exercise of national police power.

Like every instance of human liberty, this right is subject to ethical principles for its proper use.

#### 2. Tourism as a factor of culture, peace and development

Tourism generates the need for more information about other lands, their geographical characteristics and their people.

It can draw the attention of people and governments to values of culture and nature, to necessities for conservation and education programs related to them.

The discovery of other peoples' land and heritage in a respectful way creates a network of positive relations to nature, culture and people and therefore is an important foundation stone for peace.

The economic aspects of tourism are manifold: it creates jobs, the development of infrastructure hitherto lacking in many isolated places. In several countries, tourism generates a major part of the national income. Economic growth greatly affects the life and traditions of people; if it occurs in a disorderly way it creates major disturbances: hence the need for an ethical approach to sound development.

### **3. Tourism should be a self-sustaining activity, respectful of the environmental, social and economical carrying capacities**

Tourists are only guests in the host country and should therefore behave appropriately. Planning processes are a fundamental means of achieving sustainable tourism. The ill-conceived and badly planned development of tourism will inevitably harm or even destroy nature, monuments and indigenous human societies and cultures, and tourism itself will thus destroy its own *raison d'être*.

These planning processes must recognise the need and aspirations of the various component communities, thereby requiring an inventory of natural, cultural and built resources of the region; they should determine the biophysical, economic, environmental and other constraints to growth and to development, establish land use priorities and identity areas for development and for conservation, determine the limits of acceptable change to the area in a tourism context, and integrate tourism with other land uses.

Systematic studies on proper conservation and carrying capacities and limits of acceptable change must be carried out in anticipation to prevent irreversible damage, because safeguarding the right of present generations to tourism, and their cultural and natural heritage is the only guarantee of the rights of future generations.

### **4. Tourism and the environmental balance**

All those involved in tourism should consider that in all circumstances, all factors of the human, cultural and natural environment contribute to an equilibrium where damage to one factor inevitably affects the whole complex.

Planning and developing tourist activities must take into consideration the interrelations of all factors of the environment: physical, biological, human, animal, flora, cultural and spiritual in order to avoid negative effects. Scientific interdisciplinary studies by teams of experts should provide relevant environmental base-line studies and balanced impact evaluations.

Species diversity and ecosystem integrity cannot be replaced or substituted and it is therefore inappropriate to design tourism which threatens these values. Effective environmental impact assessment (EIA) processes and their application to tourism developments is an essential requirement for the achievement of sustainable tourism.

## **Code**

### **1. Tourism and human values of the host country**

Full respect must be paid to the cultural and spiritual environment of the hosts in the country visited, and all direct or indirect implications of the conservation of its heritage and traditions.

There are societies who do not want to be visited by tourist and others, where visits produce negative reactions, shock and disequilibrium. A list of such special cases should be drawn up, and international tourism should be strongly requested to respect these wishes of these protected societies.

In any case, the host country is entitled to respect of its lifestyle, of its moral and psychological sensibilities. Any form of intrusion by tourists disturbing the local environment, - such as noise, showy behaviour and pollution - or destructive activities must be banned.

Contrasts in economic status between tourists and hosts should not be emphasised by inappropriate behaviour.

### **2. Tourism and health**

Tourist organisations should advise their customers of any necessary health requirements prior to visiting a country, as well as any specific health risks in particular tourist destinations. Illnesses can be brought back from foreign countries but can also be brought into the host country with tourism. The precautions and rules of hygiene used in the host countries should be known to the visitor.

### **3. Tourism and protection of biological environment (fauna and flora)**

The environment of faunal or floral species which are locally fragile, rare or close to extinction should be the object of scrupulous respect, in order to save the existence of such populations and their habitats as much as possible, to inhibit damages and to allow a regeneration of territories and waters subtracted from them by tourism.

These precautions should also apply to animal life of all kinds and birds of all ecosystems in all continents, for animals in all waters and also for animals dwelling in caves. Forests, coastlines, fresh and brackish waters should be observed with special diligence.

It is urgent to carry out studies for the inventory of all fragile zones and to communicate the result to the organisations responsible for tourism.

Tourists should respect international rules established by treaties protecting fauna and flora such as:

- the Ramsar treaty (2.2.1971) about wetlands of international concern.
- the treaty of Washington (3.3.1973) concerning the possession, transport and trading of threatened species or part of their bodies.
- the treaty of Berne (19.9.1979) about fauna, flora and natural environment in Europe.

These texts, as well as local and regional regulations, should be made available to tourists.

### **4. Tourism and protection of cultural heritage**

Monuments and sites, protected or not by guards or fences, must be fully respected as well as the laws prohibiting illegal use of prospecting or detecting devices, the trading of antiquities or their clandestine excavation.

Special attention should be paid to prevent inscriptions and graffiti on monuments, sites, trees, etc.

Moreover, the esthetical milieu of monuments and sites must be observed carefully and protected against advertising for tourists.

### **5. Tourism, waste disposal and fires**

Tourists must avoid leaving waste and litter or any refuse which cause a deterioration in the quality of the environment. They should be particularly careful to avoid any risk of forest fires.

Tourists should be educated to avoid the waste of objects of all kinds currently abandoned and scattered everywhere; they should be aware that beside the disfiguring the litter produces, it also contributes to pollute the environment and, in certain cases, may also start fires. Pieces of broken glass may act as lenses, humid piles of organic matter left by tourists may ferment, produce heat and burn.

### **6. Tourism and education**

Mass media, schools and colleges should implement appropriate educational programs at all levels, supported by visits to sites in order to enforce this code for tourism and environment. Such programs should encompass both scientific and humanistic matters related to tourism and the natural and cultural heritage.

At the level of higher education, professional schools and research departments in universities should unite their efforts to achieve a better understanding of the impact of tourism and a better grasp of improving the planning and behaviour of mass tourism.

## **7. Promoting alternative solutions and careful planning**

Natural parks with marked itineraries should be promoted, as well as new resorts with planned capacity, as alternatives to unplanned careless and overcrowded invasion of free nature, while the limits of carrying capacity require new ways of presentation and measures of conservation of sites and heritage without depriving the tourist public of its legitimate pleasures.

Alternative routes uniting less known sites and monuments are encouraged in many countries for tourists who wish a deeper and a more personal insight.

The responsible authorities have the obligation to organise carefully the quantity of visitors and schedules for fragile sites with limited capacity, they must clearly instruct the tourist in order to convey a proper cultural message and also to avoid damage to the natural and cultural heritage.

### **Addressing Ethics to the Responsible Groups**

#### **1. Tourists should enjoy, not destroy**

Tourists should be encouraged to prepare physically and mentally their journey, and to behave in a manner respectful of people and environment, this is more enjoyable than the unruly intrusion of noisy littering invaders who do no more than show; their own selfish way of life that spoils the environment of other people and communities.

No amount of regulations could solve these problems if the individual conscience is not sensitive to the ethics of behaviour as guests in foreign countries or neighbours environment.

No education program could be enacted, if the desire for knowledge and responsibility for the natural and cultural heritage is not inoculated and deeply rooted in every individual citizen from an early age.

#### **2. States and authorities should promote forecasting of tourism based on balanced studies, and educating with contemporary methods.**

The many and complex links of tourist industry and cultural and natural environment call urgently for interdisciplinary study and planning: research and forecasting should not only encompass the economics of tourism but also the problems related to finite, non-renewable dimensions of the environment.

The afore-mentioned interdependency of all aspects (I.4) should be matched by a true university approach in the newly created degrees in tourism, naturally related to research programs and institutes. International networking of these efforts is essential to achieve quality and horizon.

The development of human resources must be improved by new methods of sensitisation including advertising campaigns, television programs, new computer based training with new means enhancing and multiplying the impact of more traditional approaches like books, pamphlets and slides.

#### **3. Tour operators and tourist industries**

Short-sighted exploitation of mass tourism amounts to self-destruction while enhancing quality control at all levels of "tourism products" means being part of the dynamic forces of healthy future economies and environments.

As in every industrial production, only a continuous search for improvement guarantees a future.

Issues like health and safety are basic, of course, but the public has become more and more sensitive to ecological issues and to the proper conservation and cleanliness of sites and monuments.

The need for cultural and educational "components" in "tourist products" is continuously growing. Providing appropriate information, trained guides, pleasant and informative documentation should be at least an optional part of the packages and deals offered.

Consideration must be given to the architectural planning of tourist facilities by using building styles and materials in harmony with the natural environment: there is a time to think about esthetical and ecological alternatives to huge tourist hotel skyscrapers and concrete boxes or palaces where the conspicuous consumption of tourists advertises itself as a massive foreign intrusion, "producing" tourism, but lacking the imagination to enable a better integration into local environments.

Such constructions are demanding in maintenance and will soon end up as monumental witnesses to "the archaeology of the tourism industry".