



Watch out for human rights when travelling

The role of tour guides



TRADEMARK OF NATUREFRIENDS INTERNATIONAL

Tourism: Focus in people 3

Leading, communicating, mediating – the role of tour guides 4

As a tour guide, how can I contribute to respect for human rights in the travel destinations? 5

Where could I be confronted with human rights violations in my capacity as a tour guide? 6

How can I bring the topic of human rights closer to my customers – without moralizing? 7

What should I do if I notice human rights violations by partners (companies) or local actors involved? 9

What to do if one of my guests is affected? 9

Protecting children when travelling 10

Further information & reading tips 11

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Tourism: Focus in people



People are at the centre of the tourism and travel industry: the customers; the employees in travel agencies, in hotels, in bus companies and at suppliers, etc.; and the people who live in the travel destinations. They all contribute to the success and quality of tourism offers.

Only where employees are motivated, where fair business and working conditions prevail and where the local population is respected, high-quality tourism products can be established that are successful in the long term.

A lot has to be considered, starting with the working conditions for the own employees, the compilation of the travel offers and the selection of the partner companies up to the detailed planning of the journey and the implementation in the destination, where the local tour guides have a central function.

The Roundtable Human Rights in Tourism

The Roundtable ...

- ✓ initiates processes of recognising human rights issues and responsibilities in the tourism sector and promotes human rights due diligence amongst tour operators.
- ✓ develops criteria and concepts in order to implement human rights responsibility according to the UN Guidelines on Business and Human Rights, communicates them to the tourism industry and recommends them as guidelines.
- ✓ supports the implementation of human rights standards into the business practises of tour operators by providing information and materials and by creating access to good practice through dialogue and networking opportunities, valuable exchange and knowledge transfer.
- ✓ encourages travellers, businesses, investors, educators, students and responsible politicians to respect human rights in tourism by raising awareness in the public and the media.



 www.humanrights-in-tourism.net

Leading, communicating, mediating – the role of tour guides

Tour guides have an important role to play: they guide travellers through a country or – in the case of local travel guides – through their homecountry, they tell about cultural and natural features and are the interface between travellers and locals, between two often very different cultures.

Tour guides are usually the first point of contact for the most varied questions and often also those who can react directly to the behaviour of the travellers.

Thus the tour guides also bear a great responsibility with regard to the handling of human rights – this booklet is intended to support this!

“Tour guides bear a great responsibility with regard to the handling of human rights!”



As a tour guide, how can I contribute to respect for human rights in the travel destinations?

In principle, the following applies: Human rights are universal. We are all responsible in our field of activity for ensuring that human rights are respected.

In tourism we work daily for and with people – be they colleagues, customers, employees in the supplier or the people who live in the destinations. Many different actors and partners are involved in the development and implementation of a travel offer – respecting human rights along the entire value chain is no easy task.

Ensuring the human rights in tourism is based on respect – respect for the locals and their culture, respect for nature and the environment. As a tour guide, you will guide your groups through distant countries and foreign cultures, you will provide your fellow travellers with important information about the country and its people, culture and customs – and thus support respectful behaviour.

As a tour guide, you will also be in direct contact with the hotels and other service providers and partner organisations on site and thus act as an intermediary between your organisation or the tour operator and the destination country.

With your observations, feedback and practical suggestions for improvement, you can actively contribute to the development of high-quality tourism that guarantees respect for human rights.

You can also sensitize your fellow travellers to the topic – by giving them important information about the country and its people, culture and customs, but also by pointing out any grievances.

*“Human rights are universal.
We are all responsible in our field of activity
for ensuring that human rights are respected.”*

Where could I be confronted with human rights violations in my capacity as a tour guide?

To put it simply: human rights are violated when people are violated in their dignity, treated unfairly and disrespectfully, discriminated against or exploited.

In tourism, disregard and violations of human rights can occur directly through the actions of the tour operators themselves or their partners and (local) suppliers, but also through the travellers themselves.

Here are a few examples of human rights violations in tourism:

- **e. g. bad & unfair, exploitative working conditions (violation of the right to decent work):**
If the employees in a hotel do not receive adequate wages and / or have to work for days without appropriate rest periods.
- **e. g. child labour (violation of the rights of the child):**
For example, when children have to work in restaurants instead of going to school; when children are exposed to (sexual) assaults by tourists.
- **e. g. disrespectful behaviour (violation of the right to privacy):**
For example, when a village in a country of the global south becomes a tourist attraction because of its simple dwellings built of clay, and curious tourists invade the private areas of the locals.
- **e. g. the livelihood is destroyed (violation of the right to an adequate standard of living):**
When hotels close to the sea offer their guests private beaches that stretch over several kilometres and local fishermen are denied access to the sea and thus to their source of income.



How can I bring the topic of human rights closer to my customers – without moralizing?



Your own behaviour counts when travelling!

The basic rule is: meet the people in the host countries with respect, openness and at eye level. Put yourself in the position of the hosts and act as you would like to be treated.

Values or behaviour patterns and rules, which are important to travellers at home, should not be forgotten even on holiday, far away from home ... for example the respectful treatment of staff in restaurants, hotels or shops; or the personal contribution to environmental protection, such as taking garbage with you and not throwing it away on the way, avoiding unnecessary packaging material, etc.

If necessary, remind your travel group!



Building bridges by providing information ...

As a tour guide you can contribute a lot that human rights are respected. You accompany a tour group and thus build bridges between the cultures; you enable the travellers to perceive the holiday country from different points of view, to look behind the scenes here and there and to get to know and understand the people and the country better.

The one who is informed about the host country, can behave appropriately and respectfully and doesn't easily run the risk of hurting the feelings of the natives – this results in encounters with people at eye level and a more authentic, high-quality travel experience!

→ **Reading tip:** “The Role of Tour Guides” (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e. V.) (see “further information” on page 11)



Enlighten your fellow travelers about (generally valid) rules of conduct! There is often ignorance and uncertainty, for example about taking pictures, dealing with begging people, especially children, or how to behave in religious sites.

→ **Reading tip:** “Travel photography. Recommendations on how to take photographs respectfully on a journey” (Naturefriends International – respect) (see “further information” on page 11).

Inform yourself about the human rights situation in the host country before your departure (see “further information” on page 11)



A glimpse behind the scenes and insights into the practice

As a tour guide, you are also an ambassador for the tour operator or the organisation for which you are carrying out the trip. Show and explain to your guests what your tour operator's commitment to human rights is in practice. You can do so on appropriate occasions and situations during the trip. This does not only give travellers the opportunity to take a look behind the scenes and learn more about the country and its people, but also shows the honest commitment of the tour operator.

Here are some examples:

In the accommodation

The hotel has been selected, ...
... because it is run by locals and the added value thus remains in the country.
... because the employees work under fair working conditions and are fairly paid.
... because the minimum standards for rest and holiday periods are observed.
... because the hotel obtains most of its food from farmers or fishermen in the region.
...

On the way

The itinerary has been planned to ensure that bus drivers can take breaks and rest periods. They will also have decent accommodation during the journey.

The coach company has been selected as a local partner, ...
... because the legal requirements for drivers' rest periods are observed.
... because the drivers are paid fairly.
... because buses are regularly serviced to ensure safety for guests and drivers.
...

In a restaurant

This restaurant has been chosen ...
... because it is run by locals;
... because the food is sourced from farms and fishermen in the region;
... because local specialities are prepared in this restaurant;
...

In a protected area

The area is visited, ...
... because here the focus is on conscious visitor guidance in order to protect sensitive ecosystems;
... because the local population is involved in planning, supervision and organisation of the sanctuary;
...



What should I do if I notice human rights violations by partners (companies) or local actors involved?

As a tour guide you are in direct contact with the local actors and partners. If you notice anything in the course of the trip or if fellow travellers report any grievances, then it is best to inform the tour operator or the organisation for which you work.

Contact the responsible contact person in the company or use internal reporting mechanisms set up by the tour operator specifically for these cases. They will follow up the reports and take the necessary steps to solve the problem or remedy it.

Do not be afraid to report – it is in the interest of the tour operator that any human rights violations are avoided.

Gross human rights violations, such as sexual abuse of children, must always be reported to the authorities (see also info box on page 10).

What to do if one of my guests is affected?

Your guests could also become victims or perpetrators.

If a guest behaves disrespectfully – e. g. when taking photographs or towards hotel employees – you should address him politely but definitely. Often it is simply ignorance or uncertainty that leads to such situations.

If you notice that a traveller is seeking sexual contact with minors, do not look away! Sexual abuse of children and adolescents is a crime!

For information on what you can do in such a case, see the info box on page 10.

Protecting children when travelling

Children need special protection. Unfortunately, children's rights are often violated – also in tourism: they are forced to work in restaurants or are sent to the streets by their parents to beg, or they become victims of sexual exploitation.

If you observe the sexual abuse of children, do not look away and report it! This is also possible anonymously.

The basic rule is: Document your own observations or messages from your customers immediately, take notes. In the excitement, important details are often forgotten. If a member of your travel group reports an incident to you, assure him/her that you will investigate it.

Is the travel company you work for and/or the hotel you are staying at a member of The Code (www.thecode.org)? Then it has signed the International Child Protection Code of the Tourism Industry. In this case, inform the responsible person at the head office of your travel company or the hotel management about the incident or the observations. These persons are trained and they know what to do afterwards.

Are you unsure how to react?



Then contact a local child protection organisation for advice. The child protection organisation „ECPAT International“ has listed the contact details of its national groups in 96 countries on its website (www.ecpat.org). In addition, other child protection organisations such as Unicef or “Save the Children” also offer hotlines.



If there is no satisfactory solution on site, you can anonymously report the incident or the observation on the **reporting platform www.dontlookaway.report**, which is available in several languages. This website can be used to quickly and easily report child abuse suspicions anywhere in the world, regardless of language skills. Here you can find information and pass on your observations directly to the Federal Criminal Police Office or to the child protection organisation ECPAT.

Please note: Inform yourself about the human rights situation in the destination country and about possible contact points that you can contact in an emergency before embarking on your mission as a tour guide.



Further information & reading tips

Video “Naturefriends explain: Human rights in tourism”

(Naturefriends International – respect, in cooperation with Forum Anders Reisen, 2015)
www.nf-int.org/en/publikationen/videos

Video “Naturefriends explain: Respect childrens´ rights – in tourism too!”

(Naturefriends International – respect & ECPAT Austria, 2016)
www.nf-int.org/en/publikationen/videos

Management Guideline Human Rights in Tourism

(Roundtable Human Rights in Tourism, 2016)
www.humanrights-in-tourism.net/implementation-guidelines

The Role of Tour Guides

(Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e. V., 2019)
www.studienkreis.org/eng/news/latest-news/die-rolle-der-reiseleitung

Information on the human rights situation in countries all over the world:

Amnesty International: www.amnesty.org/en/countries

Video: How to spot signs of sexual exploitation

(ECPAT International)
www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1846362252108526

Protecting children from sexual exploitation in tourism and travel

(ECPAT International, 2015)
www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Flyer_ENG_2015FEB24_3.pdf

Dossier “Travel photography. Recommendations on how to take photographs respectfully on a journey”

(Naturefriends International – respect, 2015)
www.nf-int.org/sites/default/files/infomaterial/downloads/2020-01/NFI_Dossier_travel_photography.pdf

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www.tourism.nf-int.org