

LINKING TOURISM AND CONSERVATION IN THE ARCTIC



**Ten Principles for
Arctic Tourism**

**Code of Conduct
for Tour Operators
in the Arctic**

**Code of Conduct
for Arctic Tourists**



TEN PRINCIPLES FOR ARCTIC TOURISM

1. Make Tourism and Conservation Compatible

Like any other use of the environment, tourism should be compatible with and a part of international, national, regional, and local conservation plans.

- Encourage tourism planning that supports conservation efforts and incorporates conservation plans.
- Cooperate with environmental organisations and other groups working to protect the environment.
- Support monitoring of and research on the effects of tourism.

2. Support the Preservation of Wilderness and Biodiversity

Vast areas of wilderness without roads or other traces of development are a unique characteristic of the Arctic. These areas are both environmentally valuable and one of the main reasons why tourists come to the Arctic.

- Support nature conservation throughout the Arctic, including the protection of wildlife, habitat and ecosystems, both marine and terrestrial.
- Support efforts to stop and, where possible, reverse the physical fragmentation of the Arctic landscape since fragmentation both reduces the quality of the tourism experience and degrades the environment.
- Support the further development of the Circumpolar Protected Area Network (CPAN).*



Photo: Peter Prelojsch

3. Use Natural Resources in a Sustainable Way

Conservation and the use of natural resources in a sustainable way are essential to the long-term health of the environment. Undeveloped areas in the Arctic are a non-renewable resource – once developed, it is impossible to return them to their original state.

- Encourage uses of natural resources that are sustainable, including undeveloped areas.
- For areas that are already developed, encourage uses that are sustainable and environmentally friendly.

4. Minimise Consumption, Waste and Pollution

Reducing pollution and consumption also reduces environmental damage. This improves the tourism experience, and reduces the high cost of cleaning up the environment.

- Encourage the use of waste disposal technologies with the least impact on the environment, such as recycling and waste management systems. Where communities have recycling systems, use them; where they do not, help develop them.
- Dispose of waste in a safe and appropriate way, for example by compacting your garbage and taking it with you.

Knowledge and a positive experience enable tourists to act as ambassadors for Arctic environmental protection.

* For further information see: <http://www.grida.no/caff>

- Use biodegradable or recyclable product packaging.
- Minimise the consumption of fossil fuels, avoid motorised transport where possible, and do not use motorised transport (snowmobiles, etc.) for purposes other than getting from one place to another.
- Support the development and use of lodgings that conserve energy, recycle, and dispose of waste and garbage in appropriate ways.
- Support efforts to clean up and restore areas where the environment has been damaged.

5. Respect Local Cultures

Tourism should not change the lifestyles of peoples and communities unless they want it to do so.

- Respect the rights and wishes of local and indigenous peoples.
- Ask for permission before visiting sites that communities currently use, such as churches and other holy places, graveyards, camps, and fishing sites.

6. Respect Historic and Scientific Sites

Archaeological, historic, prehistoric and scientific sites and remains are important to local heritage and to science. Disturbing them diminishes their value and is often illegal.

- Respect the value of these sites and remains and promote their protection.

7. Communities Should Benefit from Tourism

Local involvement in the planning of tourism helps to ensure that tourism addresses environmental and cultural concerns. This should maximise benefits and minimise damage to communities. It should also enhance the quality of the tourism experience.

- Seek and support local community involvement and partnership in

tourism.

- Promote the recruitment, training, and employment in tourism of local people.

8. Trained Staff Are the Key to Responsible Tourism

Staff education and training should integrate environmental, cultural, social, and legal issues. This type of training increases the quality of tourism. Staff should be role models for tourists.

- Encourage staff to behave responsibly and encourage tourists to do so as well.
- Familiarise staff with applicable laws and regulations.

9. Make Your Trip an Opportunity to Learn About the Arctic

When tourists learn about communities and the environment, tourism provides the most benefits for all concerned and does the least damage. Knowledge and a positive experience enable tourists to act as ambassadors for Arctic environmental protection.

- Provide information about environmental, cultural, and social issues as an essential part of responsible tourism.
- Apply the codes of conduct as a way to promote responsible tourism attitudes and actions.

10. Follow Safety Rules

The Arctic can be a treacherous environment and everyone involved in Arctic tourism needs to exercise caution and follow safety rules and practices. Failure to do so can result in serious injury and costly rescue or medical intervention that burdens communities.

- Ensure that your actions follow accepted safe practices and comply with regulations.
- Ensure that everyone involved in Arctic tourism receive information and training about safety procedures.

Vast areas of wilderness are both environmentally valuable and one of the main reasons why tourists come to the Arctic.



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TOUR OPERATORS IN THE ARCTIC

Photo: Peter Prokoshch



1. Make Tourism and Conservation Compatible

- Support conservation. Ways you can support conservation include:
 - Develop a positive relationship with organisations and people that play a role in conservation, particularly in the areas that you will visit with your clients.
 - Encourage your clients to become members in conservation organisations.
 - Use personal contacts and letters to educate others and encourage governments and businesses to support projects such as new nature reserves.
 - Contribute time and money to conservation organisations and projects.
- Plan tourism so that it does not conflict with conservation efforts. Obtain permission before visiting nature reserves or other areas where access is restricted. When visiting these areas, be sure that your activities comply with the rules of the park or reserve.
- Know the laws and regulations that apply to the import and export of products made from wildlife, and make sure that your clients understand and follow these laws. Encourage your clients to buy products made from wildlife by local people, so long as these products are not made from endangered species and their purchase does not violate the law.
- Develop an environmental plan for your daily operations. If you are an operator employing more than 20 people, have a written environmental plan that states your company's commitment to conservation, to using resources sustainably and to the principles in this Code of Conduct. Include specific procedures that your company uses in its daily operations to prevent and minimise detrimental environmental impacts. Make the plan available to your clients.
- Use post-trip evaluations to confirm that your tour was environmentally sound. Use feedback from clients as a good way to find out if your tour met client environmental expectations. In your post-trip evaluations ask whether in your clients view, the tour avoided unnecessary negative environmental impacts, and whether the tour operator demonstrated consideration of the natural and cultural environments. As a rule, use written post-trip evaluation forms although oral evaluations are acceptable, especially for smaller operations.

There are several concrete ways to support nature conservation. Choose one!

2. Support the Preservation of Wilderness and Biodiversity

- Promote maintenance of large, undeveloped areas of the Arctic. The undeveloped regions of the Arctic have a unique value, and are one of the primary reasons why tourists come to the Arctic. This will be undermined by roads, pipelines and other kinds of unsightly large-scale development that fragments the environment.
- Support wildlife conservation programmes and projects. Make your clients aware of them and ensure that they do not hunt or fish protected or threatened species, go into sensitive wildlife habitat, or buy products made from protected species.

3. Use Natural Resources in a Sustainable Way

- Where laws permit hunting and fishing, follow all rules and take only what you require. Ensure that your clients obey the laws and regulations and fish and hunt in a way that does not deplete local stocks of wildlife. Cooperate with community and indigenous hunters' associations.
- Make sure that your clients use only appropriate and well-maintained hunting equipment, and that they know how to operate the equipment they will use.
- Consider the nature and any special vulnerability of the site you will visit when determining how many clients will go with you. In wilderness areas take the nature of the site (wildlife, nesting birds, fragile vegetation, etc.) into account when determining how many clients will be in the area at any given time. Inform other operators in the region of your plans in order to avoid over visitation of a site. If you are a ship-based tour operator, as a general rule, limit the number of passengers ashore in wilderness areas to 100.
- Use established trails and campsites

where they exist and avoid creating new ones.

- Avoid disturbing wildlife. Instruct your clients about local wildlife and its behaviour, especially polar bears, and make sure that they view it from an appropriate distance.

4. Minimise Consumption, Waste and Pollution.

- Your choice of products and how much you and your clients consume makes a difference.
 - Whether you bring supplies with you or buy them in the Arctic, choose biodegradable or recyclable products with minimal packaging.
 - Compress garbage and take it with you.
 - Recycle where possible and encourage the communities that you visit to develop recycling programmes if they do not have them already. If feasible, provide financial support to encourage the development of these programmes, and show your commitment to the communities you and your clients visit.
 - Limit energy use, including your use of heat and warm water. Keep records of your water and energy consumption, recycling efforts, and efforts to reduce waste.
 - The transportation you choose for your clients makes a difference –

Support wildlife conservation programmes and projects. Make your clients aware of them and ensure that they do not hunt or fish protected or threatened species.



Photo: Tom Schandy

choose the means of transport that has the least environmental impact. Minimise the use of fossil fuels and try to use non-motorised transport whenever possible. Where motorised transport is necessary, choose the technology that causes the least environmental damage and minimal noise (four stroke instead of two stroke engines, for example). Do not use motorised transport such as snowmobiles and helicopters unnecessarily; these should only be ways of getting from one area to another or seeing specific sites.

- Choose accommodations compatible with local traditions and that minimise negative environmental impacts. Choose lodging that has effective waste treatment systems, recycles, and disposes non-recyclable garbage appropriately.
- Support efforts to clean up waste and polluted areas. Find out about these efforts and support them by, for example, providing money, lobbying governments and businesses, contributing your time and that of your staff, and by encouraging tour clients to support them.
- Ensure that no evidence of your visit remains behind.
 - Follow responsible practices for camping and tours, including those that concern waste disposal.
 - If you are a shipborne tour operator, follow Annex 5 of the MARPOL Agreement. Retain all plastic for proper disposal on the mainland and compact all wood products, glass, and metal for return to a mainland disposal facility. Ensure that any incinerators you use function properly.
- Dispose of bilge and treated sewage properly. If you are a shipborne tour operator, do not dump bilge or treated sewage within 12 nautical miles from land or ice shelves or in the vicinity of communities or scientific stations.

5. Respect Local Cultures

- Coordinate with the communities that you will visit so that your visit is welcome, expected, and not disruptive.
 - Arrange visits to communities well in advance, and avoid visits or landings that are not pre-arranged.
 - Reconfirm your visit, preferably 24 hours in advance, and be prepared to pay the community for costs associated with cancelled visits.
 - Arrange with the community what you and your clients will do while there.
 - Find out what size of group the community prefers for the planned activities. Be sure you have permission to visit or land and to undertake the activities you have planned.
 - Keep away from sites where people are working, including hunting and fishing sites, unless you have specific agreements with locals.
- Be aware of the laws and regulations in the area or waters in which you are operating, and obtain the necessary permits.

Coordinate with the communities that you will visit so that your visit is welcome, expected, and not disruptive.



Photo: Peter Prokosch



Photo: Ashild O. Pedersen

Hire only knowledgeable, environmentally and culturally aware staff, or train your existing staff in these areas. Provide training in how to avoid negative environmental impacts, in safety, and in providing service. Evaluate the performance of your staff, including their compliance with this Code, at least annually.

- Respect the culture and customs of the people whose communities you visit, and make sure that your clients do so as well.
- Give all visitors a thorough cultural briefing before visiting local communities. Where possible, hire local lecturers to conduct these briefings. Include information on local customs and traditions, and on appropriate behaviour for tourists in the area. Use local “Codes for Visitors” if available.
- Ask permission to photograph or videotape.
- Ensure that your clients respect religious grounds, churches, cemeteries, and other sites with religious or cultural significance, and that they do not remove any artifacts.

6. Respect Historic and Scientific Sites

- Respect historic sites and markers, and make sure that your clients do not remove any artifacts. If access to historic or archaeological sites is restricted, get permission before visiting. Ensure that your clients behave respectfully particularly if a site has religious significance.
- Respect the work of scientists. Do not go to scientific installations or work sites without arranging your visit beforehand. Do not disturb scientists while they are working, and do not

disturb their work sites.

7. Arctic Communities Should Benefit from Tourism

- Whenever possible, hire local staff and contract with local businesses. Train and hire local people for your operations whenever possible. Where local people lack the training you require, provide it. Use locally-owned businesses as subcontractors. Develop long-term partnerships with local operators, businesses, and suppliers. A local connection most often means a better tourism experience.
- Operate in ways that benefit the communities you visit, particularly with respect to supplies. If feasible buy supplies and services locally. Ask communities what supplies you should bring with you so that your visit and use of supplies does not cause hardship to local people. Encourage your clients to buy locally-made handicrafts and products.
- Where possible, choose accommodations owned, built, and staffed by local people.

8. Educate Staff

- Hire a professional team.
 - Hire only knowledgeable, environmentally and culturally aware staff, or train your existing staff in these areas. Provide training in how to avoid negative environmental impacts, in safety, and in

providing service. Evaluate the performance of your staff, including their compliance with this Code, at least annually.

- If you are a ship-based tour operator, hire lecturers and conservation-oriented naturalists who will not only talk about wildlife, environmental protection, history, geology, and local cultures, but who can guide passengers ashore and are familiar with safety and local conservation requirements.
- Hire staff that are familiar with the Arctic. In the high Arctic, at least one member of the staff must hold a current remote location first aid and survival qualification. A majority of the staff should have previous experience in the Arctic and should be familiar with Arctic conditions.
- Educate and brief the staff on this Code and the Code of Conduct for Arctic Tourists. Provide all staff with copies of the Principles, this Code, and the Code of Conduct for Arctic Tourists, and be sure that they are familiar with the contents. Include information about specific local requirements. Do not allow unsupervised crew to go ashore.
- Have a proper staff-client ratio. For land-based tourism, the recommended ratio is 8–15 clients to one staff member; for ship-based tourism the recommended ratio is one staff member to 15–20 passengers.
- Make sure that your subcontractors also comply with this Code of Conduct. Provide a copy of the Principles, this Code, and the Code of Conduct for Arctic Visitors to all of your subcontractors. Include a clause in all subcontracts that requires your subcontractors to comply with this Code of Conduct and explain this requirement verbally.

9. Make Your Trip an Opportunity to Learn About the Arctic

- Provide your clients with information about the Arctic environment and Arctic conservation. Provide lectures and written materials about the Arctic environment, its special characteristics, and its global significance. Include information about Arctic conservation in general, specific conservation efforts in the areas that you will visit, and specific ways – financial and otherwise – that your clients can support these conservation efforts.
- Provide your clients with specific information about the regions you will visit. Include information about climate, species, and habitats, as well as appropriate behaviour for these areas.
- Ensure that your clients follow the Code of Conduct for Arctic Tourists. Enforce the Code in a consistent way. Make sure that clients understand the responsibilities outlined in the Code. Be prepared to use stricter rules when necessary (e.g. when safety is an issue).

10. Follow Safety Rules

- Provide local authorities with your itinerary. This is both for safety reasons and to be sure you are complying with local regulations.
- Brief all clients and staff on the dangers of wildlife encounters, particularly encounters with bears.
- Have at least one staff member who is responsible for coordinating safety and avoiding dangerous encounters with wildlife.

Brief all clients and staff on the dangers of wildlife encounters, particularly encounters with bears.



Photo: Barbara Gantner

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ARCTIC TOURISTS



Photo: Staffan Widstrand

1. Make Tourism and Conservation Compatible

- The money you spend on your trip helps determine the development and direction of Arctic tourism. Use your money to support reputable, conservation-minded tour operators and suppliers.
- Get any necessary permits before visiting nature reserves or other protected areas. Leave these areas as you found them and do not disturb the wildlife there.
- Find out about and follow the laws and regulations that protect wildlife in the areas you will visit. Learn about the endangered species in these areas, and avoid hunting and fishing of these species, or buying products made from them.
- Your feedback makes a difference. If a tour, tourist service, or supplier was environmentally sensitive and informative, or if it could have been better, tell the owner or operator.
- Join Arctic conservation organisations, and support Arctic conservation projects.

2. Support the Preservation of Wilderness and Biodiversity

- Learn about efforts to conserve Arctic wildlife and habitat, and support them by contributing money, doing volunteer work, educating others on

conservation, or lobbying governments and businesses.

- The large undisturbed wilderness areas of the Arctic are a unique environmental resource. Oppose development that fragments these areas or that may disrupt wildlife populations and ecosystems.
- Visit parks and nature reserves. Visitor demand and tourist expenditures support existing protected areas and can lead to the protection of additional nature areas.

3. Use Natural Resources in a Sustainable Way

- Walk or use skis, kayaks, boats, dogsleds or other non-motorised means of transportation as much as possible to avoid noise pollution and minimise terrain damage. In particular, minimise use of snow scooters, especially where the snow cover is thin.
- View and photograph wildlife from a distance and remember that in the optimal wildlife viewing experience the animal never knows you are there. Suppress the natural temptation to move too close and respect signs of distress such as alarm calls, distraction displays, laid-back ears, and raised hair.
- Where laws permit hunting and

View and photograph wildlife from a distance and remember that in the optimal wildlife viewing experience the animal never knows you are there. Suppress the natural temptation to move too close and respect signs of distress

fishing, obtain the necessary permits, follow all rules, and take only what you require. Fish and hunt only where it is biologically sustainable, and in a manner that does not disrupt local communities.

- Undeveloped natural areas are a resource too – leave them the way that you found them so that others can enjoy them. Don't collect specimens unless it is allowed or you have a permit to do so. Use minimum impact camping techniques, and use existing campsites and trails rather than creating new ones.
- If you travel with a tour, ensure that your tour operator briefs you properly beforehand on the area to be visited, and on what you should do to minimise damage to the site.

4. Minimise Consumption, Waste and Pollution

- Your choice of lodging and products and how much you consume makes a difference. Choose biodegradable or recyclable products and products with minimal packaging.
- Use recycling facilities where available. If you travel with a tour, choose a tour operator who recycles.
- Limit energy use, including your use of heat and warm water.
- Leave as little trace as possible of your visit and take your garbage with you.
- Choose transportation with the least environmental impact – avoid the use of fossil fuels and motorised transport.
- Choose lodgings that have effective waste treatment systems, that recycle, that are energy efficient, and, where possible, that use environmentally friendly energy sources such as solar energy or hydroelectric power.

5. Respect Local Cultures

- Learn about the culture and customs of the areas you will visit before you go.
- Respect the rights of Arctic residents. You are most likely to be accepted and welcomed if you travel with an open mind, learn about local culture and traditions, and respect local customs and etiquette.
- If you are not travelling with a tour, let the community you will visit know that you are coming. Supplies are sometimes scarce in the Arctic, so be prepared to bring your own.
- Ask permission before you photograph people or enter their property or living spaces.

6. Respect Historic and Scientific Sites

- Respect historic sites and markers, and do not take any souvenirs. Even structures and sites that look abandoned may be protected by law or valued by local people.
- Keep out of abandoned military installations.
- Respect the work of scientists by arranging your visits to scientific installations beforehand, and by leaving work sites undisturbed.

7. Arctic Communities Should Benefit from Tourism

- The money you spend as a tourist can contribute to the economic survival of the communities you visit. Buy local, and choose tour companies, excursions, and suppliers that are locally-owned and that employ local people.
- Buy locally-made products and handicrafts.



Photo: Ashild Ø. Pedersen

Choose transportation with the least environmental impact. Avoid the use of fossil fuels and motorised transport.

- Choose accommodations owned, built, and staffed by local people whenever available.

8. Choose Tours With Trained, Professional Staff

- Select a reputable tour operator who employs trained staff, preferably with Arctic experience.
- Choose a tour operator with staff-client ratio of 15 clients or less per staff member for land-based tours, and 20 passengers or less per staff member for cruises.

9. Make Your Trip an Opportunity to Learn About the Arctic

- Learn about the Arctic environment, particularly in the areas you will visit, before you go. Make your trip an opportunity to learn about conservation in the Arctic.
- If you travel with a tour, choose one that provides information about the Arctic environment, Arctic conservation, and ways to support Arctic conservation efforts.
- Choose tours and excursions that provide specific information about the climate, species, habitats, local peoples and cultures, and appropriate behaviour in the area you will visit.

10. Follow Safety Rules

- Polar bears, walrus, muskox and other wildlife are all potentially dangerous and must always be treated with respect. Ensure that you or your group carries a gun and other scaring devices in polar bear areas.
- Sled dogs are working animals. Don't feed or caress them. Dogs and arctic foxes may also carry rabies.
- Hiking over ice and glaciers demands specific skills in the use of ropes,

crampons, ice axes, and other safety equipment. Trained guides should be employed.

- If you go on a trip alone or with others, be sure that local authorities know about your itinerary.
- Be aware of weather conditions, and be prepared for weather that changes suddenly from pleasant to dangerous. Avoid becoming too cold, tired, or wet.
- Basic equipment, even for short excursions, includes warm clothes, sturdy footwear, gloves, a hat, and windproof outer garments. A map, emergency rations like chocolate, and a basic first aid kit are also essential.

Make your trip an opportunity to learn about the Arctic. Choose tours and excursions that provide specific information about the climate, species, habitats, local peoples and cultures, and appropriate behaviour in the area you will visit.



Photo: Bryan and Cherry Alexander



ARCTIC TOURISM PROJECT

■ Arctic tourism has grown substantially in recent years and will probably continue to do so. This presents both opportunities and challenges: opportunities to increase awareness of Arctic environmental issues and support for conservation, while providing a sustainable income source for northern communities; and environmental and cultural problems if tourism does not take these issues into account.

■ Recognising both the positive and negative potential of this development, in 1995 the World Wide Fund For Nature (wwf) Arctic Programme began to develop principles and codes of conduct for Arctic tourism, and a mechanism for implementing them. The goal was to encourage the development of a type of tourism that protected the environment as much as possible, educated tourists about the Arctic's environment and peoples, respected the rights and cultures

of Arctic residents, and increased the share of tourism revenues that go to northern communities. wwf believes that the development of this type of tourism is in the interest not only of conservation, but of residents, business, and government.

■ The Principles and Codes for Arctic Tourism were developed in cooperation between wwf Arctic Programme, tour operators, conservation organisations, managers, researchers, and representatives from indigenous communities during workshops held on Svalbard in 1996 and 1997. The participants developed a list of Potential Benefits and Potential Problems of Arctic Tourism, Ten Principles for Arctic Tourism, a Code of Conduct for Tour Operators, and a Code of Conduct for Arctic Tourists.

■ The next stage of the project will be to implement the Principles and Codes. An important aspect of this process will be to establish pilot projects for implementing the Principles and Codes and evaluating compliance. This may lead to the establishment of an independent organisation to monitor tourism in the Arctic.

For further information about the WWF Arctic Tourism Project, contact:

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WWF Arctic Programme

The World Wide Fund For Nature Arctic Programme was established in 1992 by wwf International to coordinate activities of the different wwf national organisations in the Arctic nations. From its headquarters in Oslo, Norway, the Arctic Programme promotes circumpolar environmental protection and projects in Russia, USA, Canada, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, and Greenland/Denmark. Since its beginnings, the Arctic Programme has worked hard to raise public awareness and government consciousness of the importance of the Arctic and its need for protection through a variety of mechanisms. A quarterly publication, *wwf Arctic Bulletin* has been instrumental in achieving this end.

*Based on number of nights spent in the area. Visitors during summer season at Nordkapp 184 000 (Arvid Viken, Høyskolen i Finnmark, 1997).

**Svalbard: 10 000 (land), 20 000 (cruiseship)

Sources: Arctic Alaska: Johnston and Hall 1991

• Arctic Yukon (Canada): Juri Peepre 1997 • North West Territories Canada: Johnston and Hall 1991 • Greenland: Greenland Tourism 1997 • Svalbard: Info-svalbard 1997 • Iceland: Icelandic Tourist Board 1997 • Northern Scandinavia: Arvid Viken 1997

Where are they going?

Tourist numbers for selected areas in the Arctic (early 1990's).

