

TOURISM AND DESERTS

A practical guide to managing the social and environmental impacts

WHY WE CREATED THIS SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECK-LIST

This self-assessment check-list is designed to help you assess both where your company stands in terms of integrating responsible environmental and social practices into business activities, and where your partners and suppliers stand. The check-list is divided into two sections:

Part 1 will allow you to take stock of the work you do on raising customer awareness and involving local populations. Part 2 will enable you to evaluate your commitment, and that of your providers and suppliers, to sustainable development and environmental protection.

This questionnaire contains a total of 47 open-ended and multiple-choice questions inviting you to list any measures you have taken and/or intend to take and providing you with material for reflection on specific practices that concern the whole desert tourism industry.

This check-list can be used as a tool for discussing and analysing your conduct (the tour operator's), and also that of your providers and suppliers. It can be used to measure year-by-year progress on changes you have introduced to protect the environment and cultural heritage, foster local development or safeguard natural desert settings. The check-list can provide the basis for a code of conduct or service agreements with your suppliers, or might just serve as a yardstick for choosing new partners who share these priorities.

In any event, this check-list, supplemented by the Guide to Good Practice, is not only a tool for improving your environmental performance and your contribution to sustainable development, it will also help increase your profitability as you adapt your business to customer demands for a more responsible approach to tourism in the desert.

A COMPLEMENTARY REFERENCE SOURCE: THE GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE

The Guide to Good Practice was produced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in conjunction with tour operators, to promote responsible desert tourism as a force for both development and environmental protection.

The purpose of the guide is to encourage and help all tourism industry actors (tour operators, service providers, hotels, car rental agencies, etc.), together with the local communities and organizations concerned, to pursue and/or plan for the development of tourism in deserts with respect for local populations and sustainable development criteria. In eight main sections, the Guide clearly lays out the key issues for desert tourism, the problems associated with it and specific recommendations for reducing its impact. The reader is also guided to additional information sources.

PART ONE
INCREASING CUSTOMER AWARENESS OF SUSTAINABLE DESERT TOURISM AND
CREATING BENEFITS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

A) CUSTOMER AWARENESS

Inform and educate visitors about the need to respect the cultures of host populations

1 Do you provide to your customers a code of conduct for desert travel?

Yes No

2 How do you inform your customers of the economic, social and environmental situation of the country, its special cultural and religious characteristics and the type of behaviour expected by local tradition?

3 Are your customers aware of the advantages of using a specialised local guide?

Yes No

4 Do you encourage your customers to buy locally produced handicrafts?

Yes No

5 Do you encourage your customers to contribute to environmental protection initiatives, or development or humanitarian projects that you implement in the desert?

Yes No

List them, and for each project explain how you have encouraged your customers:

6 What methods do you use to increase your customers' appreciation of the social and environmental impact of the journey in which they have taken part?

Inform and educate customers about the environment

7 What advice do you give your customers about respecting the environment at the destination and sites visited?

8 Are your customers informed about when it is essential to use water sparingly, as well as how to use soap and other cleaning products without polluting the water?

Yes No

Inform and educate customers about cultural and natural heritage

9 How do you alert your customers to the importance of obeying local, national and international regulations (endangered fauna and flora, antiquities, national park regulations, etc.) and the harmful consequences of purchasing Neolithic artefacts?

10 How do you encourage your customers to make contact with the local population so that they can benefit from its culture and traditions?

B) INVOLVING LOCAL PEOPLE IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

11 Before developing a new product, do you first meet with local communities and other stakeholders affected by it?

Yes No

12 How do you educate local people about the appropriate way of treating visitors (intercultural understanding, tourist expectations, protecting the environment, preserving heritage)?

13 Do you give preference to providers who are natives or long-term residents of the region and reinvest their profits locally?

Yes No

14 Do you try to buy fresh locally produced food when the logistics of the journey allow this?

Yes No

15 Do you invest a percentage of your turnover in and/or participate directly in measures to improve the living conditions of local communities or the environment (health care, education, reforestation, employment and training)?

Yes No

C) IMPROVING PRODUCTION PROCESSES

Adopt a responsible management, communication and production policy

16 What methods do you use to monitor and control the quality of your products and activities/services?

17 Do you systematically carry out environmental and social impact studies of the tourism projects you implement?

Yes No

Give details :

18 Does your training plan for staff involved in creating, selling and supervising journeys and visits include measures to make them aware of the need to respect the host cultures and populations and the environment?

Yes No

If so, what type of measures:

19 Do your tours include a few hours or days of walking or horse or camel riding?

Yes No

If yes, do you employ local guides from nearby communities?

Yes No

If you have increased the share of transport of this type, explain how and to what extent:

20 Do you know what proportion of the turnover generated by your travel packages benefits local communities (direct employment and land services)?

The table below may help you to evaluate this for each of the journeys concerned:

BREAKDOWN BY JOURNEY	Unit Cost	Quantity	Turnover	%
Total Turnover of the Journey				
Services offered by the Tour Operator (TO)				
Courier from the TO local guide				
Expenses of the TO courier				
Logistics provided by TO on departure				
Transport				
Air				
Land				
Other				
Services on the Ground				
Local receipt margin				
Lodgings				
Land transport: 4X4, minibus, transfers				
Food (other than in lodgings)				
Logistical material (camping, cooking)				
Direct employment				
Guide team: courier, driver guides, local guides				
Accommodation logistics: cooks, aides de camp, etc.				
Employment associated with the logistics of animal portage				
Rental of pack animals				
Tips, if included in the package price				
Charges for admission to protected areas or sites				

PART TWO
CONTRACTUAL RELATIONS WITH LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS AND SUPPLIERS

A) RELATIONS WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS

CONTRACTUAL UNDERTAKINGS

Work with competent, committed and capable training providers who share the same working principles and values

21 Have you included the sustainable tourism criteria you have set for yourself in your contracts with service providers?

Yes No

If so, list the main criteria:

22 What do you do to forge lasting relationships with your providers and ensure that prices remain fair?

Skill levels being equal, employ local people directly at every level where possible

23 Are the guide staff and other personnel employed by your local partners people from the country or the region?

Jobs	yes	no
Management		
Logistical coordination		
Tour guides		
Secretaries		
Drivers		
Cooks		
Camel drivers and others		
Porters		
Other jobs		

Encourage learning and skills transfer

24 Do you have a checklist or do you apply a training plan to your local service providers and/or suppliers?

Yes No

25 Do you fund language courses for your local guides?

Yes No

26 Do you try to employ qualified guides, assuming suitable training courses exist in the country?

Yes No

Ensure that basic social norms are respected

27- What is your method for ensuring that local staff are fairly treated and basic social norms respected (monitoring and improvement of working conditions, wages and tips, etc.)?

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

28 What methods have you put in place to improve protection for the natural heritage in the regions where you operate tourism programmes?

Apply a waste management policy

29 What measures have you taken to eliminate or reduce the amount of waste generated by your activity?

Detail the measures you have taken and plan to take, and the countries where they are being/will be implemented:

Country	Measures taken	Measures planned

30 Do you encourage your customers to take toxic refuse (used batteries, ointment tubes, aerosols, photographic film packaging, etc.) back to their home countries and to leave packaging there before setting out?

Yes No

Apply a natural resource management policy (water, wood, energy, food, etc.)

31 How do you limit your use of natural resources, energy and water consumption, and pollution?

Detail the measures you have taken and plan to take and the countries where they are being/will be implemented:

Country	Measures taken	Measures planned

PRESERVING THE CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Support limitations on access to certain vulnerable areas

32 Do you and your service providers develop partnerships with local and national authorities and protected areas to encourage the introduction of protection systems for the natural and cultural heritage (environmental taxes, zoning, patrolling) and criteria for regulating access?

Yes No

Detail the measures you have taken and plan to take and the zones affected:

Zones affected	Measures taken	Measures planned

B) EDUCATING STAFF, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND LOCAL TEAMS

Educate staff about the need to respect the environment and preserve the local heritage

33 Have you taken measures to educate your staff about the need to respect the environment and preserve the local heritage at your destinations?

Yes No

If so, specify the types of measures:

Educate service providers and local teams about the need to respect the environment and preserve the local heritage

34 Do you inform and educate your service providers about the need to comply with local, national and international regulations (endangered fauna and flora, antiquities)?

Yes No

35 Are your guides trained to protect the cultural heritage (no flash photography in rock shelters, no touching of carvings and paintings, no removing of fossils and archaeological items)?

Yes No

36 Do you invest a percentage of your turnover in or participate in measures to conserve, restore or develop the natural and cultural heritage?

Yes No

If so, detail the measures you have taken and plan to take for the benefit of the natural and cultural heritage:

Zones affected	Measures taken	Measures planned

C) WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Adapt travel methods in the desert

37 Do you leave your vehicles at a respectable distance from cultural, rupestral and archaeological sites, villages you visit, encampments and natural sites (dunes, etc.)?

Yes No

38 Are your service providers' vehicles properly maintained and inspected in accordance with regulations?

Yes No

39 Are drivers and guides trained in safe desert driving?

Yes No

Protect natural resources

40 Have you limited your routes and group sizes to avoid overburdening the ecosystems and sites you visit?

Yes No

41 In planning your tour logistics, do you ensure you are self-sufficient in fodder (if pack animals are used), water and food, if acquiring these during the journey would present a risk to local populations and the environment?

Yes No

42 Do you change your itineraries and camping sites from one journey to the next, even if only slightly, to allow the ecosystem to recover after you have passed?

Yes No

43 Have you selected types of accommodation that can be dismantled and moved elsewhere for the time the ecosystem needs to recover?

Yes No

44 Have you selected desert accommodations with building designs and operating systems that optimize energy and water consumption?

Yes No

45 Do you and your service providers limit, as far as possible, the amount of packaging and the use of non-biodegradable products in food logistics and purchasing?

Yes No

46 Do you and your service providers avoid supplying your customers with bottles of mineral water when they travel in deserts?

Yes No

47 Can your local teams explain to customers the advantages of purifying water chemically?

Yes No

RECOMMENDATIONS

The questions above have allowed you to take stock of your desert activities. Analyse your replies and compare the measures you have already taken with those you have yet to implement. Use this self-assessment check-list to set your priorities, establish a programme of measures and put them into effect, even if it is on a small scale to begin with, to strengthen and follow through on your commitment to the protection and sustainable development of deserts.

THIS ASSESSMENT CHECK-LIST IS A JOINT INITIATIVE OF:

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

The Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) at UNEP encourages decision makers in government, local authorities and industry (including the tourism industry) to develop and implement policies, strategies and practices that are cleaner and safer, make efficient use of natural resources, ensure environmentally sound management of chemicals, reduce pollution and risks for humans and the environment, enable implementation of conventions and international agreements, and incorporate environmental costs.



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THE TOUR OPERATORS' INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development (TOI) is a network of more than 20 tour operators that have committed themselves to integrating sustainability

principles into their business and to collaborating with a view to promoting and spreading practices compatible with sustainable development. The TOI has been developed with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).



TOUR OPERATORS INITIATIVE

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