

VoX International

Sustainable Policy - Internal

Building Sustainable and Responsible Tourism





Sustainability Policy

Introduction

VoX International has developed an in-house sustainability policy which reflects the company structure and activities and is supported by company management. The policy aims for a reduction of the negative social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of the company's activities, and includes employee related health & safety aspects.

The company policy provides staff with guidelines on how to operate in a more responsible way within our office environment as well as within their activities in Public Relations, Marketing and educational activities. The policy is available as part of the employee's handbook and is central to the company's commitment to sustainability as outlined in the company's mission statement. Employees are encouraged to provide feedback on an ongoing basis to enable everyone to perform better in our field of Public Relations and Marketing, as well as improve our office operations.

The Sustainability Policy is broken down into 3 sections:

1. Office Policies and work conducted on behalf of our clients
2. Event Planning Policy
3. Familiarization Tours (Fams) Policy

Terminology:

Clients – our clients are Tourist Boards and Travel Destinations; we provide Public Relations and Marketing services to our clients;

Suppliers – our suppliers are companies providing office products, printing and promotional items and event venues.



INTERNAL POLICY

Office

- No single use plastic items to be used in the office (plastic water bottles, plastic cutlery, plates, straws, coffee stirrers, etc.) Instead, we encourage our staff to utilize our existing supply of reusable dishes, cutlery, coffee cups and glasses in the office.
- Staff is encouraged to bring in reusable containers, water bottles, napkins only for lunches in the office.
- All non-re-usable containers and food waste is to be recycled according to the guidelines of the City of Toronto.

<https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/recycling-organics-garbage/houses/what-goes-in-my-blue-bin/>

- Only environmentally friendly cleaning products will be purchased for the office.
- Food and beverage deliveries and take out to the office – only use providers who package food with recyclable, reusable and/or compostable containers.
- Office temperature is to be controlled by the office manager, set at no more than 21 C.
- All computers are to be powered off, all appliances to be unplugged and where applicable lights are to be turned off at the end of the day to reduce energy cost.

Photocopying:

- Photocopies should be kept to an absolute minimum;
- Use only black and white printing;
- Use double sided printing only;
- Use recycled paper only;

VoX will be using FSC certified paper, recycled and offers a high percentage of post-consumer content and provides high sustainable use.

- All Staff to include the following line in their email signature: *VoX is committed to sustainability. Please consider the environment before printing this email.*

Transportation

- Where possible, replace single car commute with sustainable transportation modes, including EV, car share, bikes and/or public transport. Our office building offers convenient bike storage;
- Limit air travel as much as possible; use alternate transport for short haul, i.e., car or train; conduct online meetings/trainings where possible;
- If air travel is necessary, opt for shortest route possible, calculate the footprint and purchase an offset whenever it is offered. (Refer to Trees4Travel as an example);
- Booking fares in economy class for business travel is preferred;
- Car rentals for business travel must be booked with fuel efficient vehicles or EV where available;
- Select hotels with sustainability policy wherever possible for business travel;

External – Work on behalf of our Clients

- All presentations, webinars, and training sessions, conducted by VoX staff on behalf of our clients must include the destination's commitment to sustainability. Include examples of work being done toward sustainable tourism and stress the importance of responsible tourism.
- Every press release and social media post must include a header to promote our commitment to sustainability and our mission.
- Familiarization tours conducted by VoX staff must include our commitment to sustainability as it relates to the destination; it must include expected conduct as it relates to the environment and participants must adhere to the recommendations as outlined in the "Familiarization Policy" – see attached for details.
- All events planned and executed on the behalf of our clients will be held at sourced venues offering local farms/produce suppliers for food and beverage where possible. Venues with a sustainability accreditation will be given preference in our event planning process as outlined in the "Event Planning Policy" – see attached for details.
- VoX will encourage our clients to use paperless brochures only.
- Promotional material and giveaways will be selected from environmentally conscious suppliers only.
- VoX will support the destinations we represent in their efforts to protect the environment and wildlife wherever possible through donations and support to the communities.

VoX International

Sustainable Policy for Event Planning

Building Sustainable and Responsible Tourism



VoX
VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

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VoX International will strive to plan and execute events with sustainable tourism in mind and will consider the impact of activities on our environment. VoX International's policy will be to select the most sustainable suppliers and partners possible to ensure carbon footprint is kept to a minimum.

1. Pre-Event Planning

Invitations

As part of our commitment toward sustainability, VoX will move to digital invitations reducing its overall use of paper. Digital invitations will be designed as per client needs and distributed to targeted lists ahead of the specified event. We will also create an online RSVP system for easy access.

Digital invitations will include a note to dissuade attendees from printing invitations and instructions on how to add event information to attendee calendars. All communication will be done via email or telephone before and after the event.

As part of our policy wherever possible attendee badges for events will be printed on recycled or specialty paper (seed paper: paper can be planted after use)

Check-In Procedure

As policy VoX will employ a digital check-in procedure for all events. Attendee lists will be uploaded on a laptop for digital sign in processes.

Collateral

As the industry shifts from paper digital, VoX will advise clients to switch to digital. Digital collateral will be loaded onto branded thumb drives. We will also try as far as possible to direct attendees to destination website for more information.

In the case that a client insists on paper handouts, VoX account managers will work with the client and suggest one fact sheet with cad and website information.

Decor

In keeping with our commitment of sustainability, where possible VoX will use décor specific to the client reducing any waste.

VoX account managers will also suggest that clients use reusable name tags for destination partners and VoX staff. We will also consider using recycled or specialty paper for place card printing.

We will avoid including fresh cut flowers as part of event décor and replace it with other plant options or other center pieces specific to the client. (e.g., Flags). Should a client insist on fresh cut arrangements, use smaller arrangements with fewer flowers.

2. Event Venue Sourcing

Location

VoX will source and select a venue that will be easily accessible using public transportation for attendees. VoX will suggest the use of public transportation or carpooling as part of our commitment.

We will also provide information to attendees on ways to offset their emissions from driving to the event

Sustainability Commitment / Certification

VoX will partner with venues that are committed to reducing their carbon footprint and have their own sustainability practices in place wherever possible. Venues with green / sustainability certifications should be given priority.

A few things to consider when selecting a venue:

- The venue must have some form of renewable energy source – Many venues in Canada are turning to renewable power and are bullfrog powered.
- If there is no renewable energy on site, the venue must show some support towards conserving energy like having smart room temperature controls and energy saving bulbs.
- Having an on-site greenhouse for growing produce used at the facility, a green roof option or live plants throughout the space can contribute towards more natural food options as well as better air quality.

- There must be a recycling program in place with the use of recycling stations around the space
- Water usage must be considered – replace plastic bottles with accessible water stations around the venue or glass bottles and glass pitchers of water on tables.
- The venue must show support for the local community by using local suppliers or organic food (locally sourced food from farmers, craftsmen, florists)
- Consider using reusable cutlery, saltshaker, sugar bowl and poured cream and reusable linen.
- There should only be the use of ecofriendly cleaning products or toiletries (soap, cream).

3. Post Event Wrap Up

Venue Procedures

The venue must show support for local charities and the community. This could include financial support to a charity, staff program to encourage involvement in giving back to the community and food surplus daily donations to local soup kitchens and/or charities.

Admin Procedures

VoX must continue being diligent in practices used even after an event. Waste disposal and recycling comes into effect and staff must dispose of material and reuse where possible.

VoX staff must consider the following:

- After the check-in procedure all powered machines should be turned off unless they are still needed.
- Communicate with venue to make sure needs are met, like table settings, temperature adjustments.
- After the event Vox staff must collect attendee badges and make sure name cards are disposed of in recycle stations and holders are held to be reused for the next event
- Vox staff to make sure centerpieces are given to attendees or brought back to the office for use

Communication

After an event VoX staff will follow up with attendees to provide any necessary destination information that may not have been handed out at the event. Downloadable collateral will be provided, website links and any links to images and videos. Event feedback will also be solicited to improve the VoX standard.

VoX International

Sustainable Actions for FAMs

Building Sustainable and Responsible Tourism



VoX
VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

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VoX International invites travel professionals, journalists, and influencers on Fams to visit some of the most wonderful destinations in the world. These educational visits offer participants the opportunity to learn about the destination and all that it has to offer including culture, cuisine, nature and more.

VoX International will strive to plan and develop Fams with sustainable tourism in mind and select the most sustainable suppliers and partners possible.

1. Fam Trip Planning

Preparations

VoX account managers will familiarize themselves with the environmental, social, and human rights issues of the destination before planning their visits. Learning about local initiatives for promoting sustainable development in the region is a fundamental factor to take into consideration in the planning process.

Where possible, account managers will also coordinate with partners such as environmental organizations, nature education centers, cultural associations etc., in destination to have them included in itineraries.

Communication with Participants

Before traveling to any of our destinations on a FAM, VoX representatives should, if possible, organize a conference call with all participants to discuss the itinerary and include relevant information on sustainable efforts.

The inclusion of sustainable efforts in destination will be designed to build awareness of sustainable tourism. Some examples of the objectives to highlight will be:

- The importance of involving industry partners, local communities, and civil society members in establishing long-term sustainable solutions for tourism development.
- Discuss how the destination assesses and reduce plastic pollution by improving their planning and management.
- Provide testimonials of local organizations developing and implementing sustainable tourism actions.
- Discuss and explain the benefits of food waste prevention where applicable.

Sustainable Zero-waste Travel Kits

VoX account managers will work with the destination on putting together a welcome bag with sustainable zero-waste travel kits specific to the destination for all participants whenever possible.

Depending on the destination, here are some examples for inclusion in the kits:

- Aluminum screw top water bottles
- Reusable and Foldable Shopping Bags
- Organic Cotton Unpaper Towels
- Bamboo Utensil Set
- Bamboo Toothbrush
- Stainless Steel Straw with Cleaning Brush
- Travel Coffee Mug
- Soap and Shampoo Bars
- Reusable facemasks
- Eco-friendly shampoo and soap bars
- Reef-safe sunscreen

Itinerary Booklet

The itinerary booklet prepared by the account manager should include information on VoX's commitment to sustainability and the destination's efforts to promote sustainable tourism. The booklet could also include information on carbon offset programs and other ways to minimize their impact on the destination's environment. Where possible the booklet will be distributed electronically in order to minimize printing.

To ensure participants get the most out of their trip, the booklet will incorporate suggestions for traveling around the destination. For example --

- Always check local weather conditions and forecasts before a tour
- Be informed of safety instructions and regulations before beginning an activity.
- Visit the destination's Tourist Information Centre for information about accommodations, tours, national parks, and restaurants.
- Bring reef-safe sunscreen that does not contain hazardous chemicals used in many sunscreens.
- The dress code for the FAM is comfortable casual attire with closed-in shoes during the day and casual attire for evenings.
- As most activities will be held outdoors, pack some protective clothing for varying weather.
- You will also need comfortable walking shoes and do not forget a hat and sunglasses.

Suggested Packing List

VoX will suggest a list of items each participant should take on the fam to reduce waste and contribute to the positive, long-term growth of sustainable tourism.

<p>Luggage and travel bag</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Packing cubes ○ Reusable tote/day bag ○ Extra packable bags ○ Toiletries bag 	<p>For the Ladies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Makeup ○ Natural makeup remover ○ Reusable makeup wipes ○ Reusable beauty cotton swabs ○ Plastic-free hair ties ○ Feminine Hygiene products
<p>Toiletries/ Hygiene</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shampoo bar ○ Conditioner bar ○ Body soap bar ○ Face wash bar ○ Natural deodorant ○ Safety or bamboo razor ○ Natural shaving cream ○ Hairbrush/comb ○ Bamboo toothbrush with a travel case ○ Toothpaste tabs ○ Compostable dental floss ○ Plastic-free containers ○ Reef-safe sunscreen ○ Non-toxic bug spray ○ Compostable Band-Aids ○ Hand sanitizer ○ Bamboo cotton swabs or reusable ○ silicone ear swabs ○ Compostable wet wipe 	<p>Electronics and travel tech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Universal travel adapter ○ Solar power bank ○ Laptop and/or tablet ○ Laptop charger & power adapter ○ Noise-canceling headphones ○ Cell phone ○ Cell phone charger ○ Rechargeable batteries ○ Portable Wi-Fi hotspot ○ Extra charging cable ○ Portable Bluetooth speaker ○ Portable earbuds ○ GPS tracker if visiting remote areas <p>Food and Drinks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reusable water bottle ○ Reusable coffee mug ○ Collapsible travel cups ○ Reusable snack bags or containers ○ Reusable cutlery ○ Reusable straw ○ Reusable napkins/tissues ○ Wine key

VoX Sustainable Tourism Pledge

VoX will ask every participant on the Fam to sign a pledge to sustainability. VoX Sustainable Tourism Pledge is one of our efforts to promote sustainable tourism, culture, and heritage. The intention is to spread the concept around the world, changing the nature and impact of global tourism.

The pledge takes a travel industry-first approach to environmental and cultural protection, requiring, tourism boards, airlines, hotels, and tour operators to introduce firm measures to promote eco-tourism and local culture.

Now more than ever, travellers are more inclined to look for memorable travel experiences in new and interesting cultures, staying in sustainable, responsible properties.

2. Transportation and Accommodation

Transport

Transport is responsible for the largest environmental impact of a Fam. When booking flights, VoX will be using the most sustainable option available, economy class bookings and charter flights are preferred and should be booked with air carriers offering carbon offset options (Trees4Travel for example); participants should be encouraged to participate in the carbon offset donations offered by airlines and travel agents making the arrangements for the flights.

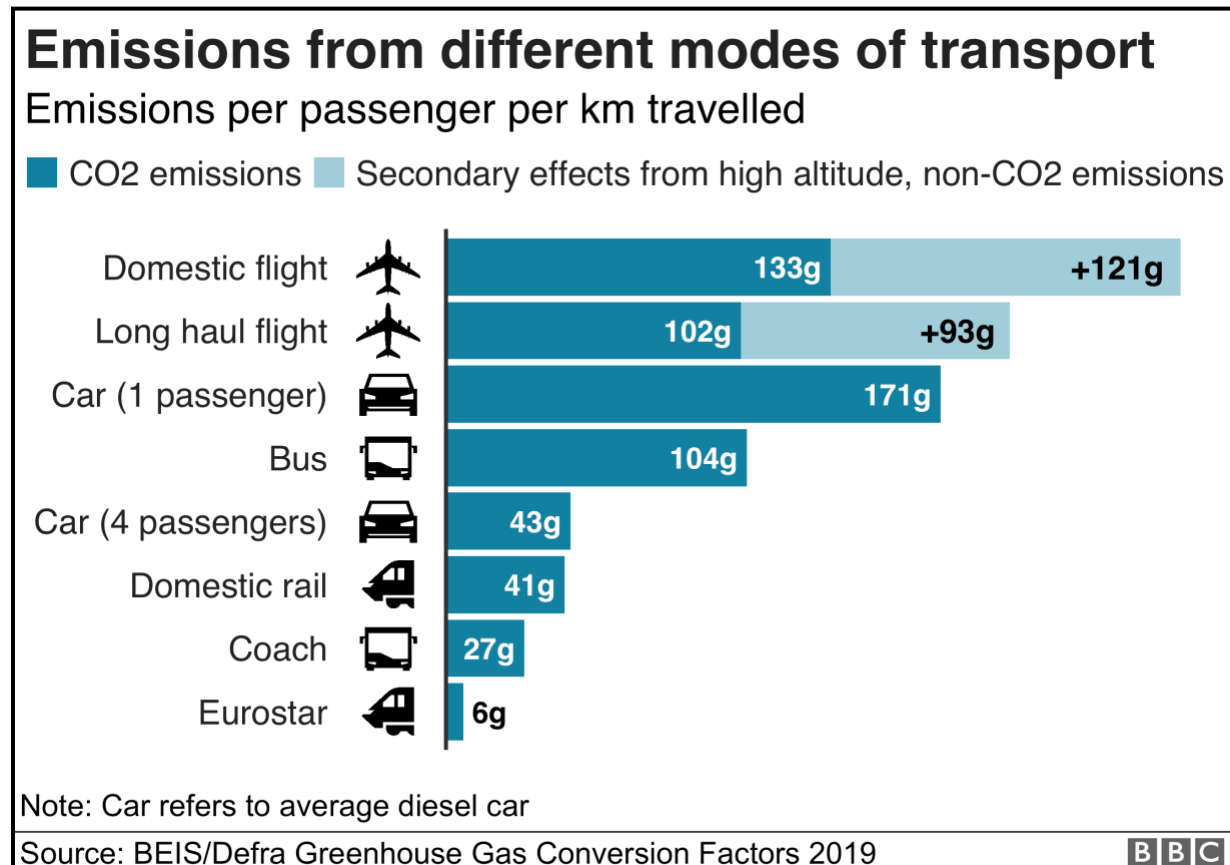
Where possible, preference should be given to a flight by charter or low-cost carrier when flying, that has more seats per plane and a higher occupancy level. It is encouraged to use airlines that are known for their sustainable policy.

An internal flight is quicker, but by traveling by a local train or bus participants are guaranteed adventure, they will see a lot of the country and can interact with the locals.

In order to protect the climate and the environment, where possible, it is recommended, to travel on foot or by bicycle in the destination of choice. For short and medium distances, busses and trains are preferable for the most environmentally friendly option. Another sustainable action is to ensure that chartered vehicles are suitable for the number of participants to prevent the vehicle from being half full and relatively more emissions per passenger. The VoX representative should encourage the local transport company to observe environmentally

conscious practices – for example VoX representatives must ask the local transport organizations not to leave the engine running when the participants are not in the vehicle. Buses can generally be cooled down or warmed up rapidly, just before the passengers board.

Below is an interesting chart on how the main modes of transport compare in terms of emissions (per passenger, per km traveled).



Carbon compensation

Carbon offset programs allow travellers to invest in environmental projects around the world in order to balance out their own carbon footprints. This might involve rolling out clean energy technologies or soaking up CO2 directly from the air through the planting of trees.

VoX will highlight the importance of carbon offset and will provide participants with links to these Industry-leading programs.

- [NativeEnergy](#)
- [Trees4Travel](#)
- [Sustainable Travel International](#)
- [TerraPass](#)
- [Clear](#)
- [my climate](#)
- [3Degrees](#)

Responsible Accommodations

When possible, VoX account managers will work with the destination to include at least one environmentally friendly accommodation in the itinerary. The goal is to try and include properties with a sustainability certification mark and that prioritize sustainability across its operations taking into consideration the following factors:

- Reduce negative environmental impact.
- Energy consumption
- Water waste actions
- Maximizing the social and economic benefits of the community.

Sustainability Certification

VoX International's policy will be to give preference to and include suppliers and companies that have a sustainability certification on Fams as much as possible. This will reinforce our commitment to sustainability within the tourism industry, encourage our destination partners to work with us to promote environmentally conscious behavior and increase our participants' awareness and promote substantial improvement in the environmental and social impacts of tourism.

The implementation of this policy will produce direct benefits to local businesses while offering substantial environmental and social guarantees to the local population. At a marketing level, it serves as a unifier and a common basis for the promotion of sustainable tourism in the destination.

3. In Destination

Responsible Experiences

VoX will consider the impact on the environment of various activities in the destination and ensure participants are aware and educated accordingly. Aspects such as environmental pollution, noise nuisance for people and animals, safety, disruption of the natural surroundings, erosion, etc. will play an important role in the decision-making process.

VoX account managers will make a point to educate participants about this and how they can limit any negative impact while in the destination.

Coastal and Marine Activities

A sustainability guide with suggestions for marine activities is provided to help VoX identify and facilitate the selection of responsible business partners and suppliers based on sustainability criteria. These suggestions can also help suppliers understand the issues important to companies committed to responsible product sourcing.

- Support of integrated maritime & coastal planning through an ecosystem-based approach
- Staying within designated anchoring sites and staying beyond the furthest visible reef patch in unknown or unmarked coral reef areas.
- Obeying all speed signs (where available) and using common sense to avoid hurting or harassing marine mammals and other large marine animals.
- Identifying dark water areas as possible important shallow ecosystems, such as shallow reefs.
- Having boat engines regularly serviced by a certified mechanic and, when possible
- Explain to participants the sensitive nature of the ecosystem and the importance of avoiding shallow areas with motorized vessels.

Diving and Scuba Diving

- Explain the vulnerability of underwater life.
- Work with environmentally aware diving schools
- Ask the diving instructor to tell the group what is done in the area to protect the underwater life.
- Leave underwater flora and fauna intact: touch nothing and take nothing away.

Motorized Activities

Avoid motorized activities (such as quad bikes and jeep safaris) as far as possible as they destroy the vegetation, disturb the wildlife and cause air pollution through the excessive use of fossil fuels. If possible, choose environmentally friendly alternatives, such as bicycles and horse riding.

Visits to Nature Reserves

When visiting nature reserves obey the park rules concerned and communicate them to the participants:

- Stay on the paths (zoning/route)
- Do not disturb flora & fauna.
- Explain changes in flora and fauna as a result of climate change.
- Follow park guidelines concerning waste management.
- Do not make any unnecessary noise.
- Be careful with fire (campfires are often prohibited)
- Keep away from wild animals and do not feed them.
- Explain nature conservation in the area, so that the vulnerability of nature is understood.

Activities Involving Contact with Animals

Animal attractions such as zoos, safari parks, animal hospitals etc. are dependent on wild animals, they have a responsibility to the public to contribute to the conservation of the animals in the wild. Public interest in the protection of nature can be increased in the following way:

- Obtain information on-site on which animal attractions contribute to nature conservation, and which do not.
- Avoid poorly managed animal attractions (low welfare standards and poor animal care)

Here are some activities to be avoided.

- Swimming with dolphins in pools. They may look happy, but any wild animal should not be held in captivity for entertainment. For dolphin swimming experiences that are biodiversity and sustainable tourism approved, Travellers will have to meet them (naturally) in the wild.

- Riding elephants. Although they are big animals, they are not built for carrying human weights. Moreover, most of these animals have been removed from their natural surroundings at a very young age to be trained for human interaction.
- Meeting 'friendly' tigers. These wild animals are often drugged so they are friendly and mistreated into being docile. Tigers are dangerous natural predators that belong in the wild.
- Hugging sloths and koalas. Not only are Travellers disturbing the animal's habitats, but microbes passed from humans can kill both these animals.
- Other animal activities to avoid holding baby sea turtles, monkey dances, bullfighting, snake charming, pictures with lion cubs, cage diving with sharks, seahorse fishing, donkey rides, horse and carriage rides, camel riding.

In any situation where the public interacts with captive animals, either directly or indirectly, high standards of animal welfare should be paramount.

City Visits

- Where possible use non-motorized and/or public transport, such as a bicycle (taxi), scooter, tram, and bus as far as possible
- Where possible, use sustainable transport initiatives introduced, such as the bicycle taxi.
- Pay a visit to the popular sights at a quiet time, to reduce crowding at the attraction concerned and to increase the participants' enjoyment.
- Give the participants a unique experience by immersing them in the local culture, and, if possible, visiting local festivals and markets.
- Explain initiatives that indicate the sustainable character, such as UNESCO-protected heritage sites, accommodation with eco-labels.
- Advise participants about habits and customs such as clothing regulations when visiting religious shrines.

Contact with the Local Community

Travellers may pay a visit to a local community and be a part of their daily life, without causing a disruption. The community profits from the arrival of tourists. The level of comfort is often minimal but on the other hand, it produces real contact, which can be a captivating and interesting experience for both parties.

The keyword is respect for other lifestyles, beliefs, local customs/traditions, manner of dress, etc. Adapt to this as much as possible and ask the participants to do the same.

By visiting local events and festivals, the participants can immerse themselves right into the culture, which is often felt to be an extraordinary experience and can also reinforce the feeling of solidarity with the local population.

Encourage the participants to make their expenditures as local as possible. They will then have a much more valid experience and contribute to the local economy, for example by eating in local restaurants and shopping at souvenir stalls. But also, for example, switching from Coca-Cola to local fresh fruit juices.

Advise participants about clothing regulations. Make a distinction between desirable (clean, covering clothing) and necessary regulations (such as head covering, torso and legs, and taking off your shoes when visiting mosques and temples).

Visits to Native People

Native people are the original inhabitants of an area and often live close to nature, as they have done for centuries. The way of life is centuries old, as is the language, the traditions, and rituals. They often have a marginal position in society. They also come increasingly into contact with tourism, which puts their culture under even more pressure. Take the following points into consideration when visiting native people:

- Always ask for permission in advance to visit native people.
- Inform the participants so that an interactive exchange of cultures can take place instead of a purely unilateral contact.
- An organized visit is preferable to an unexpected visit so as not to disturb daily life.
- Use a skilled local guide as much as possible who is part of the people who will be visited so that both parties can profit from the meeting.

Initiatives are increasingly being taken to raise the awareness of the local population (including native people) to tourism using cooperative associations with various parties, such as NGOs, local governments, and the local travel industry. By being informed of these initiatives, the participants can be informed about this, and a visit may also be made.

Natural Resources

VoX will encourage participants to be economical with natural resources, such as fossil fuels, gas, wood (coal), and water. Prevent/limit the pollution of open water.

Drinking Water and Food

Encourage participants to drink water from the tap or pump (if there are no health risks) instead of plastic bottles of mineral water which produce a lot of environmentally harmful waste.

Enjoy local delicacies: When possible, plan meals in restaurants that use local food and produce instead of imported products as much as possible. It contributes to the small-scale cultural landscape of the destination's farmers and helps the local economy.

Souvenirs

Communicate about bad souvenirs at the destination concerned. Inform the participants regarding what souvenirs can be bought there, such as pottery and wood carvings made by the local population.

- Emphasize the protection and conservation of nature and culture.
- Avoid souvenirs that include endangered animal and plant species and objects belonging to the cultural heritage of the destination.
- Pick nothing up and take nothing away: cultural heritage belongs in the country of origin.
- Trade is prohibited: fine and seizure at customs checks

Photography

Ask permission before taking photographs, obey prohibitions on photography. Explain that local people have the right to refuse to be photographed and explain which cultural, religious, or personal motives may play a role. Debunk the idea that tourists have the right to photograph because they paid for the trip.

Giving Tips

Tips are generally an indispensable supplement to low local wages in non-Western countries. This means that a relatively high tip is expected from Travellers in proportion to the low wages. Giving tips must be considered as a direct form of reducing poverty: the money goes straight to the guide/cook/driver and their dependents (family) also profit.

Provide information about the background of low wages and seasonal labor so that participants understand about giving tips. Tipping is not an obligation but inform participants of its importance.

Follow the guidelines concerning the amounts of tips from your travel organization. Guidelines often differ for each destination, service provided, duration of the travel, size of the group, etc.

Make a clear distinction between tips that can be paid from a common group pot (common activities) and tips to be given individually (to chambermaids, luggage porters).

3. Upon Return from the Destination

In an effort to continue improving our Fams, where possible, VoX account managers will submit a report to the travel organizations and Tourism board involved in the project. The report may include the following suggestions.

- Report abuses that have occurred during the trip to travel organizations and Tourism boards so that measures can be taken. Examples: illegal dumping of waste, disruption of flora and fauna, wasting of natural resources, lack of respect in dealing with the local population, etc.
- Describe how the participants react to information concerning sustainable tourism and where necessary, suggest points for improvement.
- Propose local sustainable tourism initiatives to the tourism boards. Perhaps extra attention can be paid to them in marketing campaigns.
- Investigate whether there are possibilities for including less-visited regions/activities in the Fams so that there is a more varied offer for the participants.