

Sustainable Tourism Development Policy



We are aligned with the basic and advanced sustainable tourism development programmes and policies designed, instrumented by UNWTO, GSTC, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and every Responsible Tourism patron across the country.

We adhere to the following SDGs -

- **No Poverty:** We contribute to reducing poverty in the local communities by employing local individuals and supporting local businesses. This helps create more job opportunities and stimulate the local economy in the region.
- **Zero Hunger:** We promote sustainable food practices and support local farming to help ensure that everyone has access to healthy, nutritious food. In the process, we partner with local farmers and promote local food products as part of our walking tours, and help create direct market linkages for them.
- **Good Health and Well-Being:** We prioritise the health and well-being of our travellers and staff by implementing safety protocols, providing access to clean water and sanitation, and promoting healthy lifestyles. We also support local healthcare initiatives and promote traditional healing practices like meditation and musical chanting.
- **Quality Education:** We support education and cultural exchange by partnering with local schools and cultural centres, providing training and internship opportunities for the local communities and our staff, and offering educational tours and activities for our travellers.

- Gender Equality: We promote gender equality by ensuring women and marginalised groups are represented in our staff and leadership positions, and promoting gender-sensitive tourism practices. We also inspire women and men in the remote and economically disadvantaged communities to represent their cultures equally well and benefit from it.
- Clean Water and Sanitation: We promote sustainable water and sanitation practices by reducing their water consumption, supporting local water conservation efforts, and promoting access to clean water and sanitation for the local community. During our tours, we take the opportunity to create and establish a dialogue between the locals and our travellers to create awareness regarding the persistent water crisis faced by the local communities.
- Affordable and Clean Energy: We promote the use of renewable energy sources and reduce their carbon footprint by minimising the use of any kind of vehicles, strictly promoting walking tours, using eco-friendly vehicles, promoting energy conservation practices, and supporting local renewable energy initiatives.
- Decent Work and Economic Growth: We contribute to the culture of decent work and economic growth by creating direct and indirect employment opportunities, supporting local and homegrown enterprises, and promoting sustainable tourism practices that benefit both parties.
- Reduced Inequalities: We help reduce inequalities by promoting indigenous cultures and inclusive tourism practices that benefit all members of the community, including marginalised groups.
- Responsible Consumption and Production: We promote responsible consumption and production by reducing waste, promoting recycling and composting, and supporting local sustainable products and businesses.
- Climate Action: We contribute to climate action by reducing our carbon footprint, promoting sustainable transportation options, and taking charge in local climate change initiatives as a change-maker.
- Life On Land: We promote land conservation and responsible wildlife tourism practices by implementing local conservation initiatives, promoting sustainable wildlife viewing practices, and spreading awareness among our travellers about the importance of protecting wildlife and their habitats. As the region is prone to frequent landslides and earthquakes, we utilise our tours to educate our travellers and locals about the hazards of unregulated

development on land. We also consider the capacity and fragility of natural sites while determining the size, frequency and timing of our visits.

- **Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:** We support peace, justice, and strong institutions by promoting respect for human rights, supporting local community development initiatives, and engaging in transparent and ethical business practices. We are a research led, community-driven travel organisation and we take charge in creating a cohesive ethnographic study of the region.
- **Partnerships for the Goals:** We collaborate with local stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and local communities, to promote sustainable tourism practices and achieve the SDGs. This involves partnering with local conservation initiatives, supporting local development projects, and engaging in transparent and ethical business practices that benefit both parties. By building strong partnerships and working together towards common goals, we promote only sustainable tourism practices and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

Our measures to protect the Intangible Cultural Heritage: We emphasise strict principles of identification, acknowledgment, respecting, and valuing the incredibly fragile nature of our cultural heritage. Our Explorers are trained and passionate about working toward every bit of Sustainable Tourism Practices while supporting the local communities.

Darjeeling Walks is awarded the #1 Walking Tour Operator in Darjeeling by Tripadvisor.

Darjeeling Walks is the only Tour Operator in the region to have been recommended by the prestigious Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society, U.K.

Darjeeling Walks has been the Official Tourism Partner to the first ever Ghum Festival'21 organised by the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, A UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Darjeeling Walks is featured in leading travel journals and media such as National Geographic Traveller, BNNVARA - The Dutch National Television, The Guardian, The Times of India, The Financial Express, The Outlook Traveller et al.

We have been awarded as the Silver Winner in the Outlook Traveller Indian Responsible Tourism Awards'23 under the Category of Sustainable Travel Enterprise in Eco-fragile Landscapes.

Responsible Travellers' Guide

We welcome everyone to travel responsibly and experience the best of Darjeeling with us! On today's Earth, we cannot afford to ignore and abandon our responsibilities while travelling. We motivate our travellers to learn and upscale themselves to adapt to travel in eco-fragile landscapes such as the Himalayas and its foothills. Going further, we also encourage every traveller to share their incredible experiences and knowledge with fellow travellers and future generations.

Happy travelling!

- **Respect the local environment:** When visiting eco-fragile landscapes, it is important to be mindful of your impact on the environment. Avoid littering and disturbing natural habitats and stick to designated trails.
- **Conserve water:** Water is a scarce resource in many eco-fragile landscapes. Be mindful of your water usage and avoid wasting water. Take shorter showers and turn off the tap while brushing your teeth.
- **Reduce waste:** Minimise your waste by bringing your own reusable water bottle, food containers, and utensils. Avoid using single-use plastics such as straws, bags, and bottles.
- **Support local businesses:** When travelling to eco-fragile landscapes, support local businesses such as locally-owned shops and food outlets, homestays and tour operators. This helps create local employment opportunities, supports the local economy and encourages sustainable tourism practices.
- **Prefer walking or choose eco-friendly transportation:** If you must use a car, use public transportation or eco-friendly modes of transportation such as bicycles or bikes. Avoid using private cars, especially off-road vehicles, that can damage the fragile environment. Avoid creating pressure on the landscapes by visiting during off-peak times, and be respectful of local residents and their quality of life.
- **Learn about the local culture:** Take the time to learn about the local culture and customs when visiting eco-fragile landscapes. This helps promote cultural exchange and respect for different ways of life. Show respect for local traditions and belief systems, and be open to learning and understanding new perspectives.

- **Travel responsibly:** Choose sustainable travel options and make choices that minimise your carbon footprint to control the impact of your actions on the environment and the local community. Consider participating in eco-friendly activities like volunteering with local conservation efforts or participating in eco-tours that promote responsible tourism practices.
- **Leave no trace:** When leaving eco-fragile landscapes, ensure that you leave no trace behind. Pack out all trash and leave the environment as you found it.
- **Share your knowledge:** Spread the word about responsible travel and encourage others to be responsible travellers too. Share your knowledge and experiences with others and help to raise awareness about the importance of protecting eco-fragile landscapes.
