



Founder Member of the Year Out Group  
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# TRAVELLERS' RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL POLICY



## CHANGE HISTORY

Issue	Date of Issue	CR/DR Numbers	No. of Pages	Pages Changed and Reasons for Change
1	29-May-07		8	

# TRAVELLERS' RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL POLICY

## Policy Aims

Travellers Worldwide was established in 1994 to provide the opportunity for people from all over the world to volunteer overseas and make a difference to local communities.

Travellers Worldwide have years of expertise and commitment in offering volunteer projects in conservation, sports coaching, teaching, work experience, structured language courses and cultural specific courses in 19 different countries. The majority of our placements are in the developing world where help is most needed and we are dedicated to aid local communities, underprivileged children, wildlife, conservation and the environment. Travellers selects all projects carefully and we vet them via personal visits to ensure that we work only with organisations that benefit from the help our volunteers can provide them and the resources that Travellers provides. We believe that protecting our planet is of vital necessity. Creating interest, taking action and increasing awareness now is necessary for our future generations.

With the increase of overseas tourism, there is a growing concern of the possible negative impact this has on the local economy, environment and culture. Travellers has an important role in encouraging fair, responsible tourism. Our main driving force is to minimize and eliminate damage of tourism by educating, respecting, improving, protecting and involving the local communities and environment.

Travellers ethos is for every volunteer to gain authentic, first hand knowledge and an insight into different cultures and environments, whilst also gaining a feeling of fulfilment and achievement, and an understanding that cultural tourism can actually make a positive contribution to conserving an area. Travellers concentrates on providing real travel experiences to our volunteers, whilst benefiting the recipients. We also aim to educate our volunteers on how to have maximum positive impact without inadvertently having a negative impact by their actions while they are in their host countries. In regard to teaching, we believe that our volunteers don't just contribute to the education of their pupils, but also shape the way they view the world and influence the impression they have on Westerners. We believe that it is important to give something back to the local community without upsetting the balance of the locality.

Travellers recognises that our social, environmental and ethical conduct has an impact upon our reputation, organization and personal development. We take our corporate responsibilities seriously and are committed to implementing appropriate policies and systems; maintaining long-term value, in cooperation with our UK office as well as our extensive international network. Travellers ultimately tries to maximise the benefits of cultural tourism and attempts to minimize any negative effects or damage to the economy. Our aim is to always create only a positive situation in terms of the benefits for the local communities and institutions that we work in, for our Volunteers, and for Travellers.

Travellers are committed to continually reviewing and updating our policies. We monitor our performance and volunteers' satisfaction and ask all our volunteers to constantly update us with feedback throughout their placement. We take all comments and suggestions on ways to improve each project seriously, especially if there are ways of reducing environmental impacts and increasing benefits to local communities. We believe deeply that Travellers makes a positive and lasting impact upon the environments, communities, affiliates, institutions, employees, volunteers and all beneficiaries that we work with by providing rewarding and fulfilling placement opportunities whilst ensuring that our own ethical standards are met.

Travellers is a Founder Member of the Year Out Group, which was formed in 1998 with the approval of UCAS and the DfEE to promote the concept and benefits of well-structured year out programmes and models of good practice.

## Economic Responsibility

Travellers volunteers work directly with communities and the surrounding environment, making only positive contributions to the local economy. In the majority of our countries, our staff force in-destination are locally employed workers. Travellers Worldwide is responsible for over 100 overseas staff in 20 different countries. In some destinations we employ as many as 20 staff alongside our Country Manager, such as; volunteer liaison officers, work supervisors and assistants, cooks, cleaners, house keepers, drivers and security personnel.

- We actively seek local people to become organizers and country managers whenever we establish a

new destination, and this enables volunteers to gain a genuine cultural experience and first hand knowledge of the local area.

- Many of our Country Managers are involved in local activities within the community and are respected for their goodwill and contribution to society. We select our Country Managers with these attributes in mind. Communication between the local community and Travellers is open and honest.
- We encourage all our overseas units to support the particular needs of their communities and the organization as a whole contributes to local overseas charities and community initiatives.
- Travellers provides manuals and first hand training to develop our Organisers and Country Managers into responsible and skilled workers of the community. Our volunteers also benefit the locals by passing on their skills and professional knowledge during their placement.
- We endeavour to conduct all our business activities ethically and in compliance with applicable national and international laws, especially when dealing with developing countries and different cultures. Appropriate ethical behaviour is constantly reviewed during our day-to-day working practice.
- Travellers aspires to be a responsible and fair partner in the communities in which we operate. All overseas staff are paid substantially and most of them are rewarded with higher than average wages for local standards.
- Travellers attempts to financially support projects throughout the year.
- Travellers ensures that all new projects are researched fully, considering the local economic and cultural factors as well as the level of impact. We do not embark on any project that is not beneficial to the communities, institutes or volunteers.

Our Organizers and Country Managers purchase all produce, such as food, materials, equipment and supplies, from locally sourced manufacturers and services, thus supporting trades people and local business incentives. Travellers UK staff always liaise with the in-country Organisers to find the best resources and necessary equipment in the destination country. Purchasing products in the UK and transporting them out to the destination country only happens as a last resort.

We also encourage all volunteers to support the local economy in as many ways as possible.

- Our volunteers interact with the indigenous community and make the most of local opportunities available to them, such as shopping at local markets, eating in local restaurants and using local services and transport.
- Travellers fully support and recommend purchasing local produce in preference to imported goods, with the aim of contributing to the economic growth of every project's destination.
- In many of our destination countries we give the option of accommodation in host families. This gives our volunteers an opportunity to experience the culture "from the inside". We have also invested in accommodation in various countries, as well as supporting local universities by utilising their accommodation.
- We encourage volunteers to buy locally made crafts for souvenirs but also to pay fairly for goods and services. We stress the importance of keeping the value of money in perspective. Over-payment for goods and services or payments to beggars can have negative consequences and unbalance the economy, resulting in the over-reliance on tourism within the local community.
- We very strongly advise against purchasing wildlife souvenirs or anything which may perpetuate the death or cruel treatment of animals for the purpose of profit.

We provide extensive advice and pre-trip suggestions throughout our website, Extranet (an information website solely for our volunteers), Project Coordinators and Volunteer Liaisons. Before their departure, the volunteer is given comprehensive information about their placement and the project as well as in depth knowledge about their chosen country, including geography and weather, language, cultural issues, history, political information, places of interest, religion, economy and health and safety issues. Travellers also emphasize the cultural differences - we present areas which will need to have the volunteer's full respect.

Volunteers receive a full induction on arrival in the country and have full-time support from the UK office, the Project Coordinator and in-country Organizer/Manager and staff during their placement.

- Our in country Organisers give invaluable advice on where to go and, more importantly, where not to go, what's on offer in the local community, as well as travel guidance for weekends.
- In most destinations Volunteer Liaisons accompany volunteers to local sights of interest as well as ensuring that our volunteers are enjoying their placement and stay by continually doing house and host visits. Our UK staff also stay in regular contact with our volunteers. Local in-country Organizers also have an important role in maintaining the volunteer's contentment, helping with local issues and arranging transport etc.
- We also suggest hiring a local guide when exploring the country during or after the volunteer's placement, not only to learn more about the culture and way of life but also to help them earn an income.
- Travellers also offer cultural specific projects and add-ons alongside their projects and this helps to fully immerse the volunteer and assist them in gaining a deeper insight into their destination.

## Environmental Responsibility

We provide projects to enable voluntary assistance in areas of environmental conservation and believe that education and first hand experience promotes a deeper care and affinity for nature. We feel that Travellers' contributions are exposing Western society to the reality of other cultures and that this engenders dissemination of cultural awareness to others when our volunteers return to their home countries.

As believe that we can make a difference to our world's endangered species and eco-systems by stressing the importance of conservation and educating the consumers in the Western world, the local people who live close to wildlife, and local authorities and councils who have the power to protect their immediate environment but not necessarily the knowledge. By helping to educate as well as teaching alternative methods, Travellers projects are strongly contributing to saving the environment.

Good environmental practice and the impact our operations have on the environment are of great importance to us. Our main aim is to comply with all relevant legislation in all areas in which we operate and to adopt responsible environmental practices.

Travellers Worldwide has excelled in environmental efforts in the UK office to minimize waste and are continuing to come up with new ideas and initiatives to be even greener. Most of our staff are ex-volunteers and are by nature enthusiastic and environmentally aware; through this we encourage our volunteers and local communities we work with.

- Travellers initiated the reduction of paper and postage by setting up an Extranet site for our volunteers. This Extranet gives access to all information online. We also store the majority of documents and correspondence electronically.
- Travellers' staff liaise with volunteers by phone and email; sending the majority of information through by electronic attachments. We try to send minimal documents by post.
- The UK office has a strong code of recycling all recyclable waste produce; from general plastic and tins, to printer ink cartridges and computers.
- We have significantly reduced printed brochures by giving the option to download a brochure instead. For each brochure that is downloaded instead of printed, we donate 50p to worthwhile tree planting projects, with the aim of directly helping the environment.
- We are currently researching printing necessary printouts onto 100% recycled paper. We already use recycled envelopes.
- Travellers constantly reuses paper before it's recycled and we recycle all shredded paper. The costs we save in paper reduction allows Travellers to donate even more to worthy projects.
- The UK office has a strong policy of switching off all electric equipment (where appropriate) when leaving the office and is continually aware of turning off appliances when not in use.

- We are energy efficient throughout the office and also looking into the possibilities of using more resourceful ways of power such as solar energy.
- Staff have set up car-share schemes and encourage cycling to work when possible.

Our conservation projects help in important scientific research, rehabilitation, enclosure enrichment projects, hands-on and interactive work, and animal welfare development. We are actively involved in many important conservation initiatives around the world. Travellers encourages motivated and conscientious volunteers out into the wilderness to absorb first-hand and appreciate nature and the local environment at its best and its most vulnerable. The projects our volunteers work on benefit and improve the quality of life of marine and terrestrial wildlife and our eco-systems.

In our overseas destinations we ensure volunteers are informed about the customs and cultures of the countries they are visiting and encourage them to respect the local environment and host community. We endeavour to provide volunteers with as many suggestions and solutions to minimize damage to the environment, wildlife, terrestrial and marine ecosystems as possible.

We carefully choose all Travellers projects thoroughly; bringing specific attention to their involvement in the sustainability of their practises/project goals; particularly making a positive effect to the environment.

- Travellers staff stress to volunteers that water in developing countries is used sparingly and it is extremely important to respect and appreciate their host country's situation. We suggest purifying water and re-filling bottles to minimise buying and throwing away plastic. We ask every volunteer to conserve and where possible, minimise consumption of resources such as water, food and energy.
- We also strongly suggest using environmentally friendly toiletries and cleaning products as well as bathing or swimming downstream from the locals' water supply. We want all Travellers volunteers to share the local community's goal of sustaining their natural surroundings.
- We encourage volunteers to avoid touching or removing any local flora/fauna or purchasing any natural objects such as shells, rocks and corals to preserve the natural environment. We also make volunteers aware not to buy wild animal products such as skins, bone or ivory and to only purchase wooden products made from sustainable forests.
- Travellers strongly advocates for volunteers to not leave litter. We inform volunteers to take rubbish home (e.g. Batteries) as it cannot always be properly disposed of in developing countries and remote places.
- We warn volunteers working with wildlife to never touch or approach wild animals beyond the suggested distance. Also, to not use a flash when photographing animals as this could startle them.

We strongly recommend volunteers to minimise emissions by 'carbon neutralising' their flights. We provide several websites which calculate the flight length; giving an estimate of how much it would cost to offset the CO2. Volunteers can donate to the various eco-companies, which have set up relevant projects and carbon reducing initiatives around the world to 'carbon neutralise' flights. Travellers are currently negotiating with [www.climatecare.org](http://www.climatecare.org) to quick offset every flight each volunteer goes on, which will encourage the urgency to look after our environment and decrease the extent of global warming.

- We try to prevent arranging flights with stopovers as it has been recorded that the worst carbon emissions are emitted during take off and landing.
- We encourage volunteers to travel light; not only is it easier but also reduces harmful emissions on all forms of transport.
- We provide volunteers the opportunity to view our responsible travel policy explaining how all Travellers projects minimize environmental impacts and support the local economy.

## Social Responsibility

Travellers recognises responsibility for the health, safety and environmental performance of our operational areas. Travellers is seriously committed to meeting all relevant health and safety legislation and performance, significant risk exposures, regulation and codes of practice, within the limitations of the constraints imposed in our destination countries and they are reviewed regularly.

- Travellers has always considered the health and safety of a country and project to be of paramount

importance and we never knowingly put our volunteers in danger. We are constantly updated with reports from the FCO so that we can act immediately to either remove volunteers out of the country or postpone placements if there is any kind of threat.

- Where a risk arises, we also add that information to our Volunteer Extranet. All volunteers are told to constantly check the Extranet before and during their placements.
- Extensive pre-trip information is provided about their placement and chosen country, including the social and political situation in each country.
- Each of Travellers placements have Project Descriptions, Country Books and Safety books (prepared in-house) and all are provided on the Travellers Extranet website for downloading. The extranet was set up to allow the volunteer 24 hour access to invaluable information before and during their placement.
- We also provide a Contact Sheet especially designed for volunteers to give to their parent/guardian. This sheet contains all the contact details of Travellers in the UK and our staff and host organisations overseas relevant to the country that the volunteer is going to
- We have an extensive website packed full of invaluable and accurate information. We also provide a colourful, informative brochure filled with our countries and projects descriptions. Travellers are currently compiling a newsletter to keep past, present and potential volunteers updated on Travellers news, combining hyperlinks to our website.
- All volunteers have full support and backup, 24/7, from the UK staff, Project Coordinators as well as in-country Organisers, Volunteer Liaisons and Country Managers.
- All Project Coordinators based in the UK experience their country and project first-hand by making regular inspection trips to their countries and projects. They thus gain first hand knowledge funded by Travellers. All staff and work personnel are trained to a high standard and are selected with high environmental and ethical standards.
- Travellers have a diligent, dedicated team and high standard work ethos. Travellers staff work in a close network system both in the UK office and internationally.

#### **CULTURAL ISSUES:**

Traveller's volunteers are well prepared for the cultural differences. We provide a Cultural Sensitivity page on our website to encourage, educate, respect and enhance integration in the area and culture wherever their destination. The cultural differences are also explained to our volunteers by our Project coordinators and again by our country staff when they arrive.

We also advise volunteers to research their country fully through their own books and Travellers suggests helpful websites that volunteers can peruse.

By giving the volunteer as much knowledge as possible regarding each destination, Travellers believes that each volunteer will have a better understanding of the culture, thus settling in and adapting to the local way of living and therefore minimising any negative impact. We have faith that our volunteers make a positive impact to the locals by becoming mentors to the community and forming invaluable friendships.

- Travellers encourage all volunteers to not just take from their placement but give something back to the local community and environment, making a positive difference.
- We advise on dress codes and codes of behaviour in all of our destination countries to ensure volunteers don't cause offence to local communities.
- We suggest that volunteers learn a few words of the local language; not only is it etiquette but also respectful.
- We strongly recommend all volunteers not to intrude but rather to observe and respect local cultures, religions, traditions and holy places.
- We explain to volunteers that local people may have different ways of thinking and concepts of time but that this is not necessarily wrong, just different.

- We recommend that volunteers are sensible and sensitive regarding their money and to be aware that the local society may not be as fortunate in terms of wealth.

Travellers offer a TEFL qualification which helps prepare and train people to teach English as a foreign language as well as bringing awareness of the cultural differences and language barriers. We believe the English language is now essential to learn on a global scale and by using these skills gained on the TEFL course, we feel it allows the host recipients the opportunity to be successful in the future, improving and impacting the lives of children and adults internationally.

### **TRAVELLERS' DONATIONS:**

With regard to supporting the social and economic structure of our destinations, Travellers makes regular, substantial and on-going donations of money, equipment and other types of aid to underprivileged communities, children and animals, even though Travellers is not a charity. Travellers donates to a wide variety of worthwhile projects and countries, particularly focusing on projects providing long-term contributions to the community. Travellers has aided all the countries we work in, striving to make an impact on all areas of the world.

Travellers also set up The Phil Perkes Trust in 2004 and this also funds research and rehabilitation plans for threatened animals, expansion and education programs relating to conservation and endangered species, as well as to pay for education and necessary equipment for underprivileged children. Every penny in the Trust funds goes directly to the projects. No salaries or other expenses are taken from the Fund. Numerous ex-volunteers also undertake further fundraising after their placements to support the projects where they have worked. We ensure that any money they donate to the Phil Perkes Trust is spent on exactly the project and materials that they intended, thus ensuring that none of the money is 'inappropriately diverted' into local individuals' pockets.

Travellers donates money constantly and allocates according to how much an area is in need. We consider all donations carefully. Some institutions we work with are relatively wealthy and therefore don't need as much financial assistance as others. Some of our donations have an obvious and very dramatic effect, but we also believe that small donations are just an important token and can benefit a project without seeing a direct result straight away. Some donations are spent more directly, such as paying for the education of specific needy children. The outcome is that most countries benefit from our help, directly and indirectly. Below is an abbreviated list of just some of the donations we have made:

- A donation of £2,500 was sent to Sri Lanka immediately after the Tsunami hit to help with aid relief. Our staff and our Volunteers were involved in preparing and distributing aid packages, and more money has subsequently been donated.
- Travellers has funded and built a new classroom for a school in Sri Lanka, enabling 60 additional local children to receive an education.
- We have donated money to provide additional teachers for a South African school.
- We have painted schools and classrooms in other countries and paid for new school signs.
- We have donated many computers, TVs and DVD players to schools and centres.
- We currently are aiding orphanages in India to create a better environment and fundraising to help create a play ground on a building site – this will give the children the opportunity to finally be able to play outside and in safety.
- In Sri Lanka we are currently part funding the cost of a new library for a small village near one of our teaching projects.
- In several countries we have paid for the purchase of school uniforms and shoes for underprivileged children.
- We have also sponsored school sports events and tournaments in many countries and provided sports equipment and trophies.
- Travellers has provided numerous classroom necessities like furniture and stationary supplies and lots of

other educational aids to children in numerous schools internationally.

- Travellers sponsored the Director of Colombo Zoo to attend a conference on animal enrichment in the UK, covering all of his expenses to enable him to learn the latest enrichment/stimulation techniques. This awareness has given him inspiration and has allowed the Sri Lankan animals to have a better existence.
- We pay for the medical insurance for all the staff at Colombo Zoo.
- Travellers donates money to various Nature Reserves and animal sanctuaries so that research projects that would stop due to lack of funds can continue. We have donated enough money to purchase lots of very necessary equipment, such as monitoring collars for elephants, lions and other game animals.
- We built an educational amphitheatre in a Crocodile centre to teach visitors, volunteers, school children and the locals the necessity of conserving this species. In Kenya we assist with transport/petrol expenses so that Wildlife Department Patrol Vehicles can continue to operate.
- Each month for the past few years we contribute financially to a Home in **Buenos Aires** to support children whose parents are infected with or who have died of HIV. The Home is very poor and relies on Travellers funding as it receive a pitiful amount from the government which is barely enough to buy basic food.
- In various countries we pay the ongoing annual education costs of a selection of needy children. In one instance, we support 10 children at a school which is not one of our projects.
- In most of the schools we work with, we give a donation to the school for each volunteer who assists in that school.

This list is just a small sample of the donations we make. We have provided medical care and wheelchairs, food and nutritional drinks, we support a couple of soup kitchens in townships, our donations have enabled the expansion of enclosures in sanctuaries to provide a better quality of life for animals who cannot be rehabilitated back into the wild, we contribute to the salaries of staff in some projects that cannot afford to pay for much needed help ... the list goes on and on.

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