

Africa Travel Association - Responsible Traveler Guidelines

Travelers to Africa have an opportunity and obligation to make positive and lasting contributions to the conservation of the continent's cultural and natural resources. Each visitor has choices which can have a lasting impact on Africa's people and wildlife. Being knowledgeable and making informed decisions about these options is the first step toward making your visit the most rewarding experience for you and your hosts.

- * Educate yourself about your people - their culture and customs - you plan to visit. Libraries, tourism boards and experienced travel counselors can provide literature and references which will make your trip to Africa more rewarding.

- * Choose a travel agency, tour operator or hotel which has written policies and proven practices to conserve natural resources including wildlife, energy, water and waste management. Ask if your accommodations have been certified by any of the associations now acknowledging progressive practices.

- * Pay particular attention to your tour operator's use of local produce and construction materials, and operators who have active staff training programs. Remember that imported foods and lodging materials do little for the local economy.

- * Leave only footprints in Africa means making sure the next visitor has access to the same quality experience you had - it is easy to inadvertently foul both environments and cultural integrity. Both humans and wildlife can learn bad habits so contemplate what your actions may have on both.

- * Remove your litter and leave historical artefacts behind. Stay on established trails, and remember that encouraging drivers to leave roads invites long-term damage to many fragile areas and may disturb animal populations during critical periods.

- * Respect the privacy and dignity of the cultures you visit by not imposing your values and cultures on them. Ask before photographing people. Respect your guide's advice on local customs, gifts and compensation for services, and be aware of expectations you may create for future travelers. Remember you are the visitor and others will have to follow your example.

- * Do not purchase products made from endangered plants or animals (check with U.S. Customs 'Know Before You Go' publication). Also do not support deforestation by purchasing only handicrafts made from managed forest and veld resources. Articles crafted in most African hardwoods are from 'mined' not managed forests. Ask your guide about which species are threatened.

- * Select tour operators and packages which provide expert interpretive services to maximize your ecological and cultural experience. Many agencies now offer specialized product with world-renowned experts in many subjects.

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