

**forumandersreisen**

# Our Set of Criteria

forum anders reisen e.V.

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## Preamble

The concept of "sustainable tourism" set out in the preamble is specified in the following set of criteria. The dimensions of sustainability - ecological, economic and social aspects - have been considered with regard to the chronological order of a trip (chapter 1) and according to the business operations (chapter 2).

This set of criteria is meant to provide members of forum anders reisen e.V. with clear and positive guidelines. All members have to comply with these criteria to the best of their knowledge and pass through a CSR-process with a subsequent external certification.

- A. All members of **forum anders reisen e.V.** (far e.V.) aspire to develop a **sustainable form of tourism**, which is – on a long term basis – ecologically sustainable, economically viable, and ethically and socially just.
- B. Forum anders reisen is an association comprising tour operators, offering tours of a special quality. This quality distinguishes itself by providing a **particularly intensive experiential and recreational value** as well as integrating **ecologically and socially responsible aspects**, which are a central to the planning and implementation of the tours.
- C. The principles of **environmentally friendly tourism** include the protection and/or conservation of natural resources (soil, water, air, flora and fauna), which is implemented by means of economically-friendly transport, accommodation and activities.
- D. **Socially responsible tourism** involves respecting the society and culture as well as the needs of the local population in the destination and pays attention to the participation of the local residents regarding structural but also economic influences.
- E. The **responsible monitoring of and compliance with** the ecological and social aspects is a jointly declared objective, shared by all members of forum anders reisen e.V.
- F. **forum anders reisen** is an association of small and medium-sized tour operators and travel agencies.
- G. The members of **forum anders reisen** respect each other as competitors and **conduct business in a fair manner**.

# 1. Travel Package (Implementation and Destination)

## 1.1 Transport to and from the Destination

### 1.1.1 Ecological Dimension

- 1.1.1.1 Environmentally friendly means of transport to the destination (e.g. bus, train) will be used whenever possible and justifiable (travel time, quality of connections, distance); in any case they will be given preference in the product description and presentation.
- 1.1.1.2 Alternative means of transport and the energy consumption of different means of transport will be indicated in the catalogue and on the homepage and/or voucher (e.g. with key data on energy consumption). This can also be ensured by presenting all different means of transport according to their ecological impact, in a selected place in the catalogue or on the homepage, on at least a quarter of a catalogue page or with the voucher on a separate reference sheet.
- 1.1.1.3 In the case of packages and trips with individual arrival (where customers can determine the travel duration themselves due to the programme characteristics), tour operators have to point out the ecological issues related to the choice of transport to and from the destination (the problems of air travel, climate change, etc.). This can be ensured by presenting all different means of transport according to their ecological impact, in an selected place in the catalogue or on the homepage, on at least a quarter of a catalogue page or with the voucher on a separate reference sheet.
- 1.1.1.4 In cases where customers have the possibility to organise their own transport (including trips to the airport), clear information must be given on the possible use of public transport and/or the most environmentally-friendly means of transport. This information can be given in the catalogue, on the homepage, on a separate reference sheet or appropriate space in the voucher (e.g. including the Fairkehr Special magazine 'Zügig durch Europa').
- 1.1.1.5 Special discounts for the use of public transport can be used as incentives (e.g. including the train ticket or the 1<sup>st</sup> class surcharge).
- 1.1.1.6 The members of forum anders reisen are aware that air travel contributes to a large extent to environmental pollution. Therefore the trip duration, travel time and distance have to be in reasonable proportion.

#### **The following kind of flights will not be offered:**

- 1.1.1.7 ➤ Domestic feeder flights without appropriate oral explanation and advice given to the customer regarding the ecological impacts, or without clear reference to these impacts in the catalogue, on the homepage or on a separate information sheet, which has to generally be included in responses to customer inquiries.
- 1.1.1.8 ➤ Flights where the distance to the destination is smaller than 700 km
- 1.1.1.9 ➤ Flights between 700 km and 2,000 km with a duration of stay of less than 8 days
- 1.1.1.10 ➤ Flights to destinations more than 2000 km away with a duration of stay of less than 14 days

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1.1.1.11 When offering tour packages to destinations which can only or which are predominantly reached by air, the tour operator needs to specify, both in the catalogue and on the website, the greenhouse gas emissions caused by the respective flights. The method to calculate the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the compensation fee to be paid in Euro is based on the current atmosfair standard. In case the tour operator offers possibilities to compensate for greenhouse gas emissions or mentions climate protection activities undertaken by the company (including voluntary activities), the climate protection models used for this purpose have to meet the standards set by atmosfair gGmbH. This means:

- When calculating the aircraft emissions which are relevant in the context of climate change, a so-called RFI factor (Radiative Forcing Index) of at least 2.7 must be applied.
- Projects selected to compensate greenhouse gas emissions must meet the standards of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and the Gold Standard developed by environmental organisations (see [www.cdmgoldstandard.org](http://www.cdmgoldstandard.org)).
- The projects selected must be in line with the definitions of sustainability and additionality outlined in the Gold Standard procedures.
- Not more than of 30% of the money donated may be used to cover administrative expenses. This means that at least 70% of the money donated must be invested in projects.

The tour operator is free to select a climate protection initiative or model of his choice, as long as it meets the standards mentioned above.

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## 1.1.2 Economic Dimension

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1.1.2.1 In the case of air travel, particular mention should be made of the external environmental costs

1.1.2.2 The members support the 'atmosfair' initiative as much as possible and preferably offer the compensation via atmosfair by bringing this option to the customers' attention in conversations and the booking documents where explicit information on atmosfair should be given.

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## 1.2 Destination

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### 1.2.1 General Sustainability Criteria

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1.2.1.1 Destinations where the impact of tourism has been proven to be higher than average, for example in isolated mountain regions (typical problem for example: tourism at the Mt. Everest), regions with very few tourists and therefore still undisturbed fauna/flora and/or local cultures (for example in the Antarctic, in the Arctic, in remote areas in the Amazon, on the Galapagos islands off the permitted footpaths and tourism areas, isolated indigenous tribes in the rain forest) are being avoided or visited only under the following conditions:

1.2.1.2 Observance of the 'carrying capacity', determined on a scientific basis (max. arrivals per time unit, proof by the tour operator, if such data exist) AND

1.2.1.3 Tourist groups are guided by competent and trained protected area guides authorised by the government in the host country to guide groups in these areas (if such governmental authorisation exists). Alternatively, tour operators may train tourist guides working in these areas and commit themselves to raise awareness among the local staff for the cultural dimension of tourism.

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1.2.1.4 The members of forum anders reisen prefer to select destinations that are making efforts to promote sustainable development in order to increase competition between regions in this regard. The burden of proof lies with the tour operator who may submit publications/actions/activities in the respective regions, describing developments towards sustainability (e.g. Local Agenda processes, joint EMAS certification of service chains, local council decisions, etc.)

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## 1.2.2 Ecological Dimension

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1.2.2.1 The number of tourists per trip is being adapted and limited depending on the destination and mode of travel. Tour operators stipulate a precise number of participants when travelling to ecologically and socially sensitive areas (areas under natural and environmental protection, areas where visitation per km<sup>2</sup> is less than 100 guests per day, social systems (villages, communities) with cultures that need protection).

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1.2.2.2 In national parks and other large protected areas, tour operators commit themselves to cooperate with the local park administration in order to obey the rules applicable in the park and the corresponding measures of visitor management.

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1.2.2.3 In the destinations, the partner agencies needed are assessed, among other things, on the basis of how they deal with environmental issues and the participation of local communities. Tour operators have to provide proof by filling out a questionnaire.

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1.2.2.4 In particularly sensitive areas, on request, customers are given additional reliable (written or oral) information by their guide concerning the following topics:

- General information on the protected area
  - Protected species
  - The value of visitor experience in relation to the potential threat that tourism poses to the protected area.
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1.2.2.5 Domestic flights in the destination are allowed as a component of a package tour only if the use of land-based means of transport would require an unacceptable amount of time and/or money as compared to air travel.

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## 1.2.3 Social Dimension

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**The members of forum anders reisen take into account the fact that when planning and conducting a tour, increasing cultural differences between guests and hosts require increasing care in dealing with the local population. The following criteria need particular consideration:**

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1.2.3.1 Visiting people who are ethnically and culturally different from the Germans requires careful planning and implementation, and the assistance of a mediator, e.g. a local person who can build a “cultural bridge” between hosts and guests.

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1.2.3.2 Highest possible involvement of the local population in the planning and implementation phase.

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- 1.2.3.3 The members respect and recognise the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation (Reference: ECPAT e.V., Freiburg). In detail, this means:
- Including the Code of Conduct when defining company principles.
  - Information and awareness raising among personnel/local guides/travel agents in the country of origin and in the destination.
  - Information and awareness raising among customers, for example by distributing flyers such as "Kleine Seelen – große Gefahr" ("Little souls – great danger") in the country of origin, or by having them distributed by tour operators in the destination.
  - Information for so-called key persons in the destinations, e.g. cooperation partners, such as transport businesses.

- 1.2.3.4 The members of **forum anders reisen** regularly keep themselves informed about the political situation in the destinations. Conflict areas are avoided (see travel warnings by the Federal Foreign Office) unless tour operators have explicitly and truthfully informed travellers about the risks.

## 1.2.4 Economic Dimension

- 1.2.4.1 Especially in economically underdeveloped countries, the use of small-scale, local tourism infrastructure is to be preferred, such as private accommodation and restaurants, local guides and drivers, tours guided by local people, in order to increase the economic participation of the local population, and hence the acceptance of tourism and local value creation in the destination.
- 1.2.4.2 Attention will be paid to the respective national requirements concerning appropriate payment, regulated working hours and compliances with minimum labour standards. In case of doubt, working hours and minimum labour standards should be measured against international labour standards (ILO).
- 1.2.4.3 In the destination, part of the tour operators' income should go to social projects and institutions (e.g. schools, health care, training programmes, etc.).
- 1.2.4.4 The members are aware of the fact that the sights and archaeological heritage from the past are cultural goods, which need to be protected. Members therefore discourage their customers (in the travel documents) from buying and exporting antiquities or other cultural goods, from damaging sights and from collecting archaeological remains and taking them home.

## 1.3 Accommodation

### 1.3.1 General Sustainability Criteria

- 1.3.1.1 Accommodation businesses closely connected to the regional culture are given preference:
- The architecture and style should be adapted to the region
  - The accommodation businesses are giving preference to regional (seasonal) and, if possible, organic products.
- 1.3.1.2 Accommodation businesses which are family-owned and family-run are being preferred.
- 1.3.1.3 Information on environmentally friendly behaviour, cultural particularities and local public transport will be given to the customers free of charge, either in the destination or in advance along with their travel documents (e.g. brochures such as "Reisen mit Respekt", SympathieMagazine published by Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung (Institute for Tourism and De-

velopment), selected travel guide books, references in the detailed travel descriptions).

### 1.3.2 Ecological dimension

1.3.2.1 Sourcing policies are designed in such a way as to minimize waste and to use environmentally friendly cleaning supplies and detergents.

1.3.2.2 The selected business partners give importance to saving energy.

1.3.2.3 Accommodation businesses distinguished by a recognised ecolabel or ecological trade mark (such as Viabono, 'Blaue Schwalbe', VISIT ecolabel, other European ecolabels, see [www.yourvisit.info](http://www.yourvisit.info)) will be preferred.

1.3.2.4 The accommodation businesses use renewable energy to a large extent.

### 1.3.3 Social Dimension

1.3.3.1 With regard to the social conditions of the local employees, attention will be given to paying them fairly.

## 1.4 Leisure Activities

**1.4.1. In order to ensure economic and cultural benefits for the host country, forum anders reisen respects the following points:**

1.4.1.1. Local customs and traditions are being respected.

1.4.1.2. The tour operators aim at organising common events/meetings between the guests and the local population, such as expert guidance, language classes, programmes to learn more about the culture, history, social and political situation, religion and nature of the destination. Purely folkloristic performances are avoided.

1.4.1.3. Public transport is preferred to individual motorised transport. Slow, if possible non-motorised forms of transport such as walking, bicycling, canoeing, nature observation, city walks, etc. are important elements of the tours. The use of regional public transport is favoured as much as possible. Appropriate information on public transport, renting bicycles and walking routes, if available, is provided in the travel documents.

1.4.2. The following forms of travel are not offered as sole components of offered and bookable packages:

1.4.2.1 ➤ Off-road-tours by jeep or motorcycle

1.4.2.2 ➤ Snowmobile tours

1.4.2.3 ➤ Sightseeing flights by plane or helicopter

1.4.2.4 ➤ Heli-skiing

## 2. Company

### 2.1 Responsibility Towards Customers

The tours offered by members of forum anders reisen are fair regarding their pricing structures.

The members of forum anders reisen offer high quality services to their customers in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the preamble and by complying with the stipulated criteria. Honest and detailed advice is provided to the customers as well as transparent travel information, fulfilling the requirements detailed below. Catalogues contain the following specifications:

- 2.1.1 Indication of the minimum and maximum number of participants for each trip.
- 2.1.2 Authentic and detailed description of the destination (society, culture, environmental issues, political background, especially with regard to countries facing political problems (dictatorship, etc.). This kind of information can be provided by detailed travel descriptions, "SympathieMagazine" published by Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung (Institute for Tourism and Development) or appropriate travel guide books.
- 2.1.3 The tour operator ensures that the travel information provided in the travel advertisement and during the customer consultation have been researched and/or checked by the tour operator or his local partners in order to achieve the highest quality level possible.
- 2.1.4 Training courses for tourist guides are conducted on a regular basis. The tourist guides are committed and act in an environmentally friendly and socially responsible manner, both with regard to the host country and the tourists. The guides have specific knowledge of the culture and history of the destination.
- 2.1.5 For group travel, the guide/tourist ratio of 1:20 will not be exceeded. Exceptions are allowed if justified (e.g. trips by coach, special educational trips).
- 2.1.6 All members of forum anders reisen issue insurance vouchers to their customers as a guarantee for the travel price payments in accordance with the German travel law.

### 2.2 Communication with Customers

- 2.2.1 Members of forum anders reisen represent in their external communication the principles of the association specified in this document. This is being done by printing the forum anders reisen logo in the members' catalogues.
- 2.2.2 Tour operators are free to mention the web link of the association in their catalogue and/or on their homepage, and to send out the image booklet of forum anders reisen.

### 2.3 Office Administration

The members' "green mentality" and the efforts to conduct business in a sustainable manner are also reflected in their offices and the behaviour of their staff.

#### 2.3.1 The Office Building

- 2.3.1.1 Energy and water saving measures as well as insulation measures are being implemented.

2.3.1.2 Local wood as well as non-polluting and reusable materials are preferred when furnishing the office and when buying equipment and stationary.

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### 2.3.2 Catalogues

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2.3.2.1 Catalogues are printed on paper that has been produced in a manner which has been proven to be as ecologically friendly as possible.

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2.3.2.2 Customers are invited, in the accompanying letter or clearly visibly in the catalogue, to pass on catalogues to interested acquaintances or to return them to the office after use.

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### 2.3.3 Internal Matters

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2.3.3.1 Regular provision of environmental information for employees (e.g. tips and timetables).

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2.3.3.2 Offers of training programmes, workshops and information tours for the employees.

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2.3.3.3 Fair and appropriate payment of employees.

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## 3. Membership

### 3.1 Tour Operator

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3.1.1 Tour operators and travel agencies can be members of forum anders reisen if they fulfil the requirements laid down in the current version of the rules of procedure, and if they satisfy, recognise and respect the criteria specified in this set of criteria. Details are indicated in the current version of the rules of procedure.

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### 3.2 Intermediaries/Travel Agents

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3.2.1 Travel agents who are members of forum anders reisen promote the products of the member tour operators consciously and in a targeted manner.

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3.2.2 Tour operators offering other tour operators' travel products in their own catalogues ensure that these products correspond to the criteria of forum anders reisen.

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3.2.3 The travel agents communicate intensively with the respective tour operators in order to be up to date with information that guarantees qualified and service-oriented travel advice.

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## 4. Evaluation of Compliance with the Criteria and CSR-Process

4.1 New members are being reviewed with respect to a high compliance with the set of criteria. The board reserves the right to decline applications for membership due to potential incompatibilities with the set of criteria.

The audit of the set of criteria is being organised by the office in coordination with the managing board. New members are made aware of potential weak points in their range of products and services.

In case a member clearly 'violates' the set of criteria within the first two years of membership, the Board will approach this member in a pro-active manner in order to point out the problem. If no agreement is found after repeated discussions, procedures will follow Art. 4.2.

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4.2 If a member refuses, in the case of a non-compliant behaviour within the first two years of membership, the implementation of the requirements negotiated with the board under 4.1., giving the reasons in writing, the board will, after the first hearing and failure to reach an agreement

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with the member, set up a committee of five members of the advisory board and will appeal to this committee. The information about the objectionable travel product along with a statement of the board and of the member concerned will be presented to the advisory board committee. The committee will then decide with a simple majority whether the criteria violation is to be accepted as an exceptional case. The advisory board committee may recommend compensatory action (e.g. payments to atmosfair) and / or impose conditions and request the member to disclose the violation of criteria in publications (catalogue, internet, etc.). If the advisory board committee decides that the violation is unacceptable, the board will, on the basis of this decision, set a final appropriate deadline for the member to follow the requirements. If the member fails to do so, all travel products offered by this member will be removed as quickly as possible from all forum anders reisen publications (internet etc.) and the member will be expelled from the association with immediate effect.

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- 4.3 Upon joining forum anders reisen, every member obliges to start the so-called CSR-process within 2 years after joining, which includes different training units, appointing a CSR-promoter and preparation of a CSR-report in the respective company. Details about this process can be found under [www.forumandersreisen.de/csr](http://www.forumandersreisen.de/csr).
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- 4.4 Every member obliges to apply for certification of the whole company conducted by an external certification council not later than 9 months after running through the CSR-process. If no application for certification exists at this point of time, an additional training is compulsory (CSR-workshop, subject to charge).
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- 4.5. If the certification is successful, the member receives a quality label, which can be used any time until expiry of its validity when marketing its products and company. If a member is denied certification with the quality label due to insufficient adherence to the stipulated quality requirements, the member has another two years, to implement necessary improvements. Not later than two years after this, the member has to undergo the certification process again. If this is successful, the member receives the quality label mentioned above. If the member fails repeatedly to achieve the necessary quality requirements for receiving the quality label, its membership at forum anders reisen expires automatically by the end of the current year.
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- 4.6 The quality label has a maximum validity of two years after the first certification. After the first re-certification process, it is valid for three years. If a tour operator intends to obtain the label again after expiry of its validity, a new certification process is necessary. If the certification is not passed successfully again after 2 (3) years, the membership at forum anders reisen expires automatically by the end of the current year.
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- 4.7. Entrepreneurs have to pass through the CSR-process within 5 years after the foundation of their business. The accruing fees may be paid by instalments (every 2 months) within half a year.
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