



Our set of Criteria forum anders reisen e.V.

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Preamble

Forum anders reisen e.V. is an association of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises whose common goal is the development and dissemination of a sustainable form of tourism.

For this purpose, basic criteria which serve the promotion and continuous expansion of sustainable touristic structures in one's own company as well as in the association and beyond that – in the German tour operator market and in the destinations – have been developed.

This overall concept of a sustainable form of tourism, which is – on a long term basis - ecologically maintainable, economically viable and ethically and socially just, is being specified in the following set of criteria. It was developed by the members in cooperation with the scientific advisory board comprising experts from politics, ecological organisations and sciences in order to translate the theoretical ideal of a sustainable form of tourism into concrete, practical contents.

Every member of the association obliges to abide by this set of criteria in all conscience and at the same time to pass through a CSR process with subsequent external certification in order to report transparently and comparably about its corporate sustainability to the public.

Basic principles of this understanding of a sustainable tourism development with regards to ecology, economics and social aspects are:

- **Forum anders reisen** comprises tour operators which made it their business to offer tours of a special quality. This quality can be characterised by a **particularly intensive experiential and recreational value of the tours** as well as **environmentally-friendly and socially responsible aspects**, which are central to their planning and implementation.
- **Principles of an environmentally-friendly form of tourism** are the protection and the preservation of natural resources (soil, water, air, flora and fauna). These are being implemented by means of transport, accommodation and activities, which are as eco-friendly as possible. Activities, that harm the environment excessively, for instance due to an unreasonably high use of energy or harmful fuels, are not being offered.
- **Socially responsible tourism** means respecting the society and the 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 and economical influences.
- Tourism influences human rights in manifold ways (e.g. labour norms, access to resources, land rights). The members **respect human rights** based on the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. They pay diligent attention to avoiding violations of human rights through their business activities and support measures which contribute to the strengthening and protection of human rights. They particularly support the protection of children from sexual and commercial exploitation in tourism.
- Tour operators bear responsibility to exercise due diligence in order to avoid causing negative impacts through their business activities. This applies to the direct as well as the indirect effects of their business operations. Thus, they also resume this responsibility in their supply chain.
- The members respect existing codes of ethics and maintain a fair business conduct towards all partners as well as all employees.
- Tour operators, which offer tours of other operators in their own catalogue or on their website, make sure that these tours comply with the criteria of forum anders reisen.
- A **responsible revision of and compliance with** the ecological and social aspects is the common goal of all members of forum anders reisen.

1. Mobility

Mobility is a core element of travel. The members of forum anders reisen are aware of the harmful impacts of mobility on the climate, particularly with regard to flights. It is our concern to minimise negative effects on the climate and therefore to inform the customers about the relationship between travel distance and duration and to promote the compensation of the resulting CO₂ emissions.

1.1. Travel to and from the destination

- 1.1.1. Environmentally-friendly means of transport to the destination (e.g. busses, trains) are being used where possible and maintainable (amount of time needed, quality of the connections, safety, distance); they will in any case be presented and offered preferentially.
- 1.1.2. Special offers for the use of public transport should be used as incentives (e.g. train ticket included in the price, Rail Inclusive Tours, Rail & Fly). When using air travel, the lowest-emission form of travel to the airport (by rail or bus) will be recommended explicitly instead of a domestic flight.
- 1.1.3. Regarding air travel the tour operator adheres to the atmosfair-Airline-Index when choosing airlines in order to give preference to airlines with a good CO₂-efficiency class. Direct flights are being preferred to connecting flights.
- 1.1.4. Feeder flights are not being offered without appropriate verbal explanation and advising the customer about the ecological impacts or a clear remark in the catalogue and on the website or on a separate information sheet, which has to be enclosed when answering customer enquiries.
- 1.1.5. The duration of the vacation, the travel time and the travel distance have to relate to each other justifiably and short trips by plane may not be offered. As a result, the following kinds of air travel must not be offered:
 - flights where the distance to the destination is smaller than 800 km, whose CO₂ emissions are not being compensated fully (see also 1.1.6.)
 - flights between 800 km and 3800 km with a duration of trip of less than one week
 - flights to destinations with a distance of more than 3800 km with a duration of trip under 2 weeks

The respective distances are based on the definition of short-, medium- und long-haul trips as given in the atmosfair-Airline-Index, which considers among others aircrafts and emissions. The duration of trip includes travel to and from the destination.

- 1.1.6. Should tour operators in justified single cases offer tours that do not comply with the distances and minimum durations of stay as given above, this needs to be disclosed and explained to the customer (mandatory identification). The tour operator needs to completely offset the CO₂ emissions resulting from the flight by way of a climate protection fee. This fee needs to be clearly identified as part of the included services.
- 1.1.7. The tour operator explicitly discloses the CO₂ emissions caused by travel to and from the destination for each tour. The customer is being advised to stay as long as possible in the destination – and to thus bundle vacation days at one place.
- 1.1.8. The members support a climate protection initiative which works according to the highest standards, e.g. atmosfair. This means:
 - For calculating the climate-relevant emissions of air transport, a so-called RFI-factor (Radiative Forcing Index) of at least 2.7 must be applied.
 - Projects chosen for the offsetting of greenhouse gas emissions have to comply with the CDM- and GoldStandard of the environmental organisations.
 - Selected projects need to comply with the definitions of sustainability and additionality as outlined in the GoldStandard process.

- The amount of donated money used for administrative purposes may not exceed 30%, which means that at least 70% of the donations need to be invested in the projects.
- 1.1.9. If the tour operator offers its own or an alternative possibility for offsetting emissions or talks about climate-protecting activities in his business (including voluntary activities), the climate protection models used for this purpose also need to comply with the standards stated above.
- 1.1.10. A possibility for off-setting the emissions caused by travel must be clearly recommended during the booking process.

1.2. Local means of transport

- 1.2.1. Overland transportation is being preferred to domestic flights. Domestic flights in the destination may only be part of an advertised packaged tour, if the use of ground transportation in comparison to air travel would require an unacceptable amount of time and / or money from the traveller or if safety aspects do not allow for overland transport.
- 1.2.2. As far as possible, travelling by public transport (e.g. trains and ferries) should be part of the tours on offer.
- 1.2.3. Slow, where possible non-motorised forms of travelling, like for example hiking, cycling, canoeing, observation of nature and city walks, are essential elements of the tours.
- 1.2.4. When selecting vehicles in the destinations, an environmentally-friendly and energy-efficient operation is being taken into consideration.

2. Destination

An intact environment in the destinations is the natural basis for every kind of tourism. The members of forum anders reisen support environmental and monument conservation in the visited countries and try to contribute to the preservation of biodiversity, eco systems and cultures through their tours.

2.1. Environment and monument protection

- 2.1.1. In their choice of destinations the members of forum anders reisen prefer regions, which strive towards a sustainable development. The visited regions should be motivated by the high requirements of the tour operators to embed the topic of sustainability with all stakeholders in the area. Regions, which are already being frequented by tourists to a point at which the danger of depletion exists, should be avoided.
- 2.1.2. Destinations, where a demonstrable, above-average disturbance of the environment by tourists exists, for example in remote mountain regions like the Mount Everest region, regions with an extremely low visitor frequency and a therefore still undisturbed flora and fauna (e.g. Antarctica, Arctic, Galapagos islands outside of the approved trails and tourist areas), are not being visited or only being visited under the following conditions:
- adherence to the scientifically determined, admitted "carrying capacity" (maximum arrivals per time unit)
 - supervision of the group by a qualified and trained conservation area guide (also see 3.2. tour guiding)
- 2.1.3. A clear specification of concrete maximum numbers of participants by the tour operator occurs for tours in ecological sensitive areas (conservation areas or areas where the visitor frequency per km² lies under 100 visitors per day). Generally, the tour operator sensibly adapts the number of participants to the destination and the kind of travel.

- 2.1.4. Within national parks and other reserves the tour operator commits to cooperate with the local park administration in order to particularly adhere to the park rules and the related regulatory measures. The tour operator informs his clients accordingly.
- 2.1.5. Preservation of biodiversity:
- Offers for leisure activities / excursions which contribute to the degradation of eco-systems, e.g. excursions beyond the designated trails, excursions with off-road vehicles into dune areas or with motor boats into shallow water zones without keeping the legally allowed distance to the shore, do not take place.
 - Dolphin- and whale watching will only be offered in compliance with the UNEP/CMS criteria.
 - Hikes in sensitive areas during the breeding seasons of birds will not be conducted.
 - The consumption, the hunting and the acquisition of animal and plant species (respectively animal and plant products as souvenirs), which are in danger of extinction, or respectively mentioned on the list of the convention on international trade in endangered species (CITES), are not allowed during the tours.
- 2.1.6. A sensible use of natural resources with regards to water usage and energy use is being minded. Tourists should be urged to produce as little waste as possible and to only buy products, whose packaging can decompose or can be reused. Plastic bottles, aluminium cans or batteries should be avoided. Waste has to be carried along to the next disposal station.
- 2.1.7. The following activities are being excluded from tours (if they are meant as mere leisure activities and do not serve as means of transport)
- Off-road tours with all-terrain vehicles or motorcycles
 - Snowmobile and quad tours
 - Sightseeing flights with airplanes and helicopters
 - Heli-skiing
 - Jet-skiing
 - Visits of dolphinariums and other animal shows with no species-appropriate animal husbandry
 - Oceanic cruises with ships powered by fuel oil or nuclear power
- 2.1.8. Protection of cultural monuments: the members are aware that sights and archaeological remains from former times are cultural goods in the destinations and need to be protected accordingly. Therefore the members plan visits sensibly in terms of monument protection and inform their customers about this issue.
- 2.1.9. The company adheres to existing guidelines and codes of behaviour for visits of culturally and historically sensitive places with the aim to minimise strains by visitors. The tour guide gives advice about the appropriate behaviour on-site.

2.2. Local community

When planning and conducting their tours, the members of forum anders reisen are aware of the fact that with increasing cultural differences between guests and local residents the diligence in interacting with the local population needs to increase. Within the meaning of a socially acceptable form of tourism the tours should respect the needs of the local community and bring economic and social benefits. Particularly the international human rights are being respected.

- 2.2.1. The local community is being involved in the planning and implementation phase as extensively as possible.
- 2.2.2. Local customs and traditions are being respected.
- 2.2.3. Particularly in economically less developed countries the use of small-scale, local tourism infrastructure is preferred (e.g. private accommodation, local guides and drivers, privately owned restaurants and local tours by natives) in order to increase the economic participation of the local population and, hence, the acceptance of tourism as well as the value creation in the destination.

- 2.2.4. The number of tourists per trip is being adapted to the circumstances depending on the destination and the mode of travel. The tour operator defines a precise number of participants for tours in socially sensitive areas (social systems like for example village communities, whose culture needs to be protected).
- 2.2.5. The tour operators contribute to poverty reduction by supporting education and tourism employment in the destinations.
- 2.2.6. The tour operators pay attention to an adequate remuneration appropriate to the conditions prevailing in the country, regular work hours and the compliance with core labour standards according to their possibilities. In cases of doubt, working hours and labour standards should be measured against international norms (ILO).
- 2.2.7. The members respect the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation by the international organisation The Code and take into account their criteria when determining business principles. Part of the implementation of the criteria is the supplementation of the company's mission statement and the contracts with all partners with respective clauses stating the repudiation of commercial sexual exploitation of children. Furthermore the tour operators commit themselves actively to raise the awareness of their customers, employees and partners in the country of origin and the destinations.
All members of the association with more than ten employees sign the international child protection code independently. The association undertakes the signing representatively for the other members if they do not sign the code themselves.
- 2.2.8. Through their tours the tour operators contribute to the preservation of cultural diversity in the destinations. The protection of indigenous people and communities is being ensured as far as the company's possibilities of influence allow. The discrimination of minorities, ethnic or religious groups or persons with disabilities or the discrimination due to skin colour, gender or sexual orientation is not being tolerated.
- 2.2.9. Part of the tour operator's income should be invested in social projects and institutions in the destinations (for example schools, medical care, education etc.)
- 2.2.10. The local population's access to resources like water or land should not be impaired by the activities of the tour operator so that the livelihood of the local residents besides from tourism income is secured.
- 2.2.11. The members respect the religious diversity in the destinations and plan visits of religious monuments carefully so that religious believers are not disturbed or discriminated when practising their religion. Visits to areas or buildings are only conducted if the local faith allows the entering of the area (also by foreigners).

3. Partners in the destinations

The partners in the destination are being chosen not only according to quality and reliability, but also according to their ecological and social orientation and are being supported in further developing their business in this respect. The responsibility for the customers and their satisfaction has a very high significance for the specialists of forum anders reisen. Regarding customer care, great importance is being attached to the tour guide as a mediator between cultures.

3.1. Accommodation & meals

- 3.3.1. Accommodations with a strong link to the regional culture are being preferred. The following points are being considered for the selection:
- The construction method, material and architecture should be adapted to the region.
 - Businesses which are being owner- or family-run are preferably chosen in order to support the local economy.

- Attention is being paid to low-waste procurement policies, the avoidance of non-returnable packaging as well as waste separation and the use of environmentally-friendly cleaning supplies and detergents.
 - The accommodations prefer regional, seasonal, fair-trade, genetically unmodified products, if possible from ecological and / or small family farms.
 - Renewable energies are being used to a large extent.
 - The ILO core conventions are being observed.
- 3.3.1. Accommodations certified by an accepted eco- or sustainability label (like Viabono, CSR tourism certified, Green Globe or other national or international eco-labels) are being chosen preferentially.
- 3.3.2. The following kinds of hotels should be avoided:
- Hotels, which restrict the local population's access to local resources (e.g. to the sea, the beach, fishing).
 - Hotels belonging to international hotel chains with all-inclusive board, which does not come from the region, but is for example being flown in by a catering company.
 - Hotels with large pool or golf landscapes in regions which suffer from water shortages.
- 3.1.1. Accommodation employees in "risk destinations" (reference ECPAT e. V.) regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of children are specifically being trained in dealing with this issue. They should encourage travellers to notify them of suspicious observations in order to pass these on to the responsible reporting hotline.
- 3.1.2. Food is an essential element of travel, which has impacts on the destination. Therefore, local and genetically unmodified products from small and / or ecological, local farms are being preferred in order to not only support the economic added value but to furthermore contribute to the preservation of social structures (traditions, cultural identity) and an ecological use of the region, particularly the maintenance of soils, water bodies and landscapes and the preservation of biodiversity.
- 3.1.3. When composing lunch packages or picnics, single-use packaging should not be used. Reusable, natural materials are being preferred for the necessary packaging. If possible, drinks should not be issued in small plastic bottles.

3.2. Tour Guiding

- 3.2.1. Visits of ethnically and culturally foreign cultures are being planned carefully and are only conducted including a trained tour guide and / or mediator, e.g. locals, who form a bridge between guests and hosts. The tour guides and / or mediators possess knowledge of the local language in order to enable intercultural communication and encounters.
- 3.2.2. Tour guide trainings are being explicitly promoted so that a qualified tour guide is being used. The tour guides are committed and have a sense of responsibility towards the environment and social structures of the destination as well as towards the tour participants. They possess special knowledge of the local culture and history and can convey this knowledge capably. Trainings dealing with crisis management take place regularly.
- 3.2.3. Tour guides, who oversee travellers in "risk destinations" (reference ECPAT e. V.) regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of children, are being trained especially in dealing with this issue. They do not take groups into areas or localities which are known for the offering of children. Tour guides should encourage guests to notify them of suspicious observations in order to pass these on to the responsible reporting hotlines.
- 3.2.4. In ecologically sensitive regions tourist groups are being accompanied by a qualified and trained conservation area tour guide, who has the formal license for guidance of tourist groups through these areas, if such a license is being offered by the government of the destination. Alternatively, the tour operator ensures a training of the tour guides employed in this area and commits to make the local crews aware of the ecological dimension of the tours.

- 3.2.5. In order to support the local value added and to secure qualified jobs, particularly in economically less developed countries, local tour guides are being employed. In economic areas with cross-border free choice of employment qualified tour guides are being used flexibly.
- 3.2.6. The tour guides receive fair wages / fees which are regulated by contracts. Regular work hours are being stipulated. Regarding permanently employed tour guides attention is being paid to dismissal protection and social security. The organisation of employees into labour unions is not being prohibited.
- 3.2.7. For group tours the guide to tourist ratio generally should not exceed 1:20. Justified exemptions, e.g. for bus tours in less sensitive areas like big cities, are acceptable. The group size is being adapted to the destination and the on-site activities in order to ensure an active relaying of information and a sensitisation of guests.

3.3. Incoming Agencies

- 3.3.1. Required partner agencies in the destinations should also be judged according to their handling of ecological and social matters as well as the inclusion of the local population.
- 3.3.2. Contracts or agreements (also known as "Codes of Conduct for Suppliers") stipulating the cooperation with the agencies need to be concluded. These should include general rules and declarations regarding ethical policies, the observance of human rights (especially child protection), environmental management and the compliance with local safety standards. Agencies employing primarily local workers are being preferred.
- 3.3.3. The local partner agencies maintain fair business practices and ensure regular work hours for their employees. The agencies are being urged to pay wages appropriate to the conditions prevailing in the country.
- 3.3.4. Employees of partner agencies in "risk destinations" (reference ECPAT e. V.) regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of children are being especially trained in dealing with this issue. When choosing service providers they consider the principles of child protection and respect human rights.

4. External communication

The members of forum anders reisen offer their customers high quality services in accordance with the guidelines of the preamble and based on the given criteria. The customer receives truthful and detailed advice as well as transparent, honest and authentic travel information in the advertisements and travel documents.

4.1. Responsibility towards the customer

- 4.1.1. The tour operators keep themselves informed about the political situation in their destinations. Tours in conflict areas do not take place (travel warnings of the Federal Foreign Office).
- 4.1.2. Tour advertisements: beyond the legal provisions, the offers of the tour operators include the following descriptions in the utilized media (catalogue, detailed programmes, websites, travel documents):
 - Authentic and detailed presentation of the destination (society, culture, environmental problems, political background, especially concerning political problem countries). This can happen by way of provision of a detailed tour description, the "Sympathie-Magazine" magazines by Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung or by way of providing respective guidebooks.
 - Information about CO₂ emissions and possibilities for compensating these
 - Identification of tours deviating from the flight criteria of the association
 - Information about sustainable tourism in the company profile
 - Publication of the prepared CSR report on the website

- 4.1.3. The tour operator ensures that the travel information used in the tour description and for customer advice has been researched and / or verified by the operator himself or the local partners in order to guarantee a level of quality that is as high as possible.
- 4.1.4. Customer satisfaction is an important criterion for the quality of the tours. The members purposefully gather customer feedback about their tours, including explicit questions about sustainability in the destination, and evaluate this regularly.

4.2. Customer information

- 4.2.1. The members of forum anders reisen represent the principles of the association specified in this catalogue of criteria publicly. This takes place with regards to content as well as visually by placing the association's logo on the first or second level of their website and by printing the logo in the tour operator's catalogue.
- 4.2.2. Generally, the tour operator informs about the climate-damaging impacts of travelling and recommends to stay as long as possible in a destination (see also 1.1.). This also happens concerning individual tours or dynamic packages, where the customer can determine the duration of stay himself.
- 4.2.3. Environmentally-friendly possibilities of travel to the destination and the differences in energy consumption of the respective means of transport are being indicated in the catalogue, on the website and/or in the travel documents as well as on a separate information sheet (for example by using energy indicators).
- 4.2.4. If independent travel to a destination is possible (also when travelling to the airport), the customer needs to be clearly informed either in the catalogue or on the website or in the travel documents about the use of public transport and/or the most environmental-friendly way of travelling.
- 4.2.5. When travelling into particularly sensitive areas (national parks, conservation areas, nature reserves), the customer receives further, qualified information (either in writing or verbally through the tour guide) about the following topics:
 - General information about the conservation area
 - Protected species
 - Experience value for the visitor in relation to the potential endangerment of the area through tourism
- 4.2.6. With the travel documents or on-site the guests receive information about environmental and social behaviour, culture-specific characteristics and the availability of public transport (e.g. brochure "Fair Reisen mit Herz und Verstand" by Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst, brochure "Reisen mit Respekt" by Naturfreunde Internationale / respect, "Sympathie-Magazine" magazines by Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung, selected travel guides, advice in the detailed tour description).
- 4.2.7. The tour operators inform customers, who travel in "risk destinations" (reference ECPAT e. V.) regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of children, prior to departure about the issue in the destination (e.g. information leaflets by ECPAT, "Sympathie-Magazin Kinderrechte verstehen" (magazine "Understanding children's rights") by Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung).
- 4.2.8. With the final travel documents at the latest the customer receives details about prohibited souvenirs, for example cultural goods or products made from protected species.
- 4.2.9. In order to avoid waste and use resources sensibly, customers are asked in the cover letter of the ordered catalogue or at an exposed position in the catalogue to pass it on to interested acquaintances or to return it if it is not being used.
- 4.2.10. Customers are requested in the travel documents not to bring unnecessary packaging materials or plastic bags in order to avoid additional waste in the destinations. Instead, for example reusable water bottles should be taken along.
- 4.2.11. Customers are being advised not to buy or take abroad antiques or other cultural goods and not to damage sights or collect or take along archaeological remains.

5. Company

The company publicises its ethical principles in the form of a mission statement and a public sustainability report. Likewise the office of the members and the behaviour of the employees working there reflect the environmentally conscious attitude and the effort towards sustainable business operations.

5.1. Office Ecology

- Energy- and water-conserving as well as thermal insulation measures are being undertaken and the tour operator uses 100% green electricity in the office spaces.
- With regards to furniture, furnishings and particularly office utensils, local wood species as well as low-pollutant and reusable materials are being preferred. Eco-fair and regional products are given preference when purchasing goods.
- Catalogues are being printed on papers, whose production is being carried out demonstrably as ecological as possible. The use of paper from 100% recycled recovered paper, which is certified by the "Blue Angel" label, is being pursued.
- The number of catalogues per traveller should be kept as low as possible. This can be realised for example by using a digital catalogue provided online.
- Business trips of the company's employees are conducted preferably by train. Emissions of business trips are being compensated according to the atmosfair-standard with a share of at least 50%.
- An environmentally-friendly journey to the workplace should be promoted by the employer (e.g. by providing tickets for the public transport system).

5.2. Responsibility for employees

- A fair and appropriate remuneration of employees is being ensured. Recognized labour standards are being observed.
- Environmental information (tips and schedules) is being provided regularly to the staff.
- The employees are being trained regarding the ethical principles and sustainable business operations as well as issues such as human rights and child protection to such an extent that enables them to communicate these credibly.
- The employees get the opportunity to participate in trainings, workshops and information tours for personal professional development.
- The company is also concerned about the participation of its employees in their own business.
- Employee satisfaction is being surveyed and evaluated on a regular basis.

6. Evaluation and observance of the criteria and CSR-process

- 6.1. Upon joining forum anders reisen every member obliges to pass through a certification process regarding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR process) within a given time period and to report on this publicly. Details are being regulated in the charter and the internal rules of procedure.
- 6.2. If the certification is successful, the member receives a quality label, which can be used to promote its products and business until the validity expires.
- 6.3. New members are being reviewed on the basis of the tours offered for a compliance with the set of criteria which is as high as possible. The board of directors reserves the right to decline membership applications due to possible incompatibilities with the set of criteria. The review of the criteria is being organised by the head office in cooperation with the board of directors. Potential weaknesses in the portfolio are being pointed out to new members.
- 6.4. In case of striking infringements of the set of criteria, the board of directors pro-actively seeks a dialogue with the respective member in order to call its attention to the issue. If no agreement can be reached after repeated discussions, the member can be excluded from the association according to article 10, paragraph 3 of the association's charter.