

Company Profile: "forum anders reisen e.V." - Business Association for Sustainable Tourism

The Association

forum anders reisen is a business association of small and medium-sized tour operators. The association promotes gentle forms of tourism based on sustainable development. For this purpose its members have committed to comply with a comprehensive set of criteria, which is monitored through a CSR process. The umbrella organisation is organised as a registered association (e.V.). It was founded in 1998 by 12 tour operators and comprises 131 members by now (May 2014). In 2013 the association's member tour operators achieved a total turnover of approximately € 181.1 million catering to about 102,150 customers.

The association supports its members with the implementation of this through basic groundwork, the coordination and channelization of communication as well as marketing their travel and tourism products. The association increases public awareness of the ecological, economic and cultural impacts of tourism and provides incentives for gentle and responsible tourism through specific offers and programs.

Mission Statement

forum anders reisen and its members strive for a form of tourism which is ecologically maintainable, economically viable and ethically and socially just in the long-term (sustainable tourism). It means that sustainability is the essential requirement for our members' offers. The members verifiably develop environmentally friendly and socially acceptable tours of high quality. They respect human rights and especially focus on protecting children from sexual and commercial exploitation in tourism

Set of Criteria

The members of forum anders reisen commit to comply with a comprehensive set of criteria for environmentally and socially sustainable tourism. The most important ecological criterion is an environmentally-friendly journey to the destination. This means that no flights will be offered for distances of less than 800 km. If air travel is offered for distances ranging from 800 to 3,800 km, the duration of stay must be at least one week, if flights cover a distance of more than 3,800 km, it must last at least two weeks. Economic criteria ensure, for example, that as much money as possible remains in and thus benefits the destination. More precisely, this means that accommodation, which is typical for the region, family-run and managed by the owner is being preferred. Other criteria have been defined regarding social aspects. These include respect for the society, culture and needs of the local population at the destinations. In practice, this means, for example, that cultural mediators accompany the groups and local people are being involved to a large extent in the development and implementation of tourism activities.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Tourism

The CSR reporting system is ground-breaking in the travel and tourism industry: in cooperation with the Center for Ecology and Development (KATE e.V.), forum anders reisen has developed and introduced a standardised and compulsory CSR process for its members. CSR stands for Corporate Social Responsibility and refers to the contribution of businesses to a sustainable development. By means of this CSR process all business units are being audited for their level of sustainability ranging from the paper consumption in the office to the accommodation at the destinations. Hence, for the first time it is now possible to audit and measure the sustainability of individual tourism businesses. The CSR reports truthfully provide information about the tour operators' strengths and weaknesses and thus assist in the continuous improvement of a company's performance regarding sustainability. They are being audited by an independent certification council. If a tour operator achieves all required benchmarks, the CSR certification is being issued.

The far members' tourism products

The tourism products of forum anders reisen's members stand for a special quality in two respects: when planning and conducting tours, the operators take environmental and social aspects into account. Furthermore, their tourism products are characterised by a high experiential and recreational value. The set of criteria strongly encourages these aspects: for example, by using slow means of transportation at the destination, travelling in small groups, using public transport, consuming food that is typical of the country or region, and by using family-owned accommodation. The travellers get to know other people and themselves better. By getting inspired to take responsibility and get active themselves, they can enhance their own personal development.

Products of forum anders reisen

www.forumandersreisen.de

Most of the member tour operators present their tourism products on the association's internet platform. The tours can be booked online or booking requests can be made. In addition, the portal provides comprehensive background information about the association, a media lounge, customers' travel reports and an online job market.

Shared trade fair stand of forum anders reisen

The association and its members present themselves with a joint stand at about 10 German and Austrian tourism trade fairs each year. The special feature of the stand: tour operators can choose how to present themselves ranging from catalogue displays to own floor space within the joint stand. The association thus takes the different capacities of its small, medium-sized and large member companies into account.

Reiseperlen (joint travel catalogue)

About 50 tour operators with approximately 150 sustainable, worldwide travel ideas participate in forum anders reisen's joint travel catalogue. This product, which has been reissued annually since 2006, is of special significance in the tourism industry as it offers exclusively environmentally and socially responsible tour packages. Furthermore, the varied offers come from small, specialised tour operators, who are real experts in their regions.

Projects of forum anders reisen



atmosfair – travelling with the climate in mind

The climate initiative was jointly launched by forum anders reisen and Germanwatch. Far's motive for this was to raise awareness among the travellers regarding their impact on the environment and climate and to create a possibility to mitigate the damage.