



SimienEcoTours

Enjoy Ethiopian Diversity

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL POLICY



Dear Esteemed Clients and Business Partners

I hereby wish to share with you our commitment to Responsible Travel. Our sector of activity is probably one of the most rewarding; we are designing services that convey happiness, unique experiences and knowledge about Ethiopia's history, nature and culture to thousands of travelers. If fulfilling travel dreams are our core business, our ethics ensure that this cannot be done in any way at the expense of the destinations' biodiversity, its people, and their cultural heritage.

SimienEcoTours believes the privilege of living and operating within a marvellous natural, historical and cultural heritage carries with it the responsibility of preserving it for generations to come and, ensuring our business is significantly beneficiary for the destinations and the communities living there and then the whole society at large. It is the responsibility of everyone to be painstaking about where they step and what impact this has on the world around them.

Acknowledging the power of tourism to change and improve lives, as well as the negative impacts it may generate, we place a strong emphasis on responsible tourism. Responsible Travel looks at minimizing negative impacts while maximizing the positive ones, always bearing in mind how our activities affect the places we are selling. Essentially, our idea of responsible tourism transcends conventional perceptions of travel, instead immersing clients in authentic experiences that mutually benefit locals and visitors.

Since its creation in 2013, SimienEcoTours has always been caring and willing to give back to the communities, increasing year after year our commitment. Starting from the foundation of SimienEcoTours we started working with social projects in Addis Ababa and in the Simien Mountains where our shareholders originate from contributing a share of our annual profits to the well-being of communities and nature. Since 2020 we are engaged with Travelife, a certification process to run more sustainable tours all over Ethiopia.

If our decision was initiated by a genuine ethical attitude with respect as a basic principle, respect towards our hosts, nature and Ethiopia's fantastic natural, historical and cultural heritages we marvel at every day, it also makes perfect business sense; these are our main assets and it is not only our duty but also our interest to nurture them. We truly believe responsible tourism is the future of travel, bringing people closer together and developing a style of travel that is conducive to make the world a better place.

As a destination management company catering for travelers and tourism businesses, we can influence the choice of consumers, practices of suppliers and the development of destinations. This unique position enables us to contribute to sustainable development and the protection of the environmental and cultural resources of our destinations.

We are fully aware our responsible approach is an on-going process that requires continuous commitment from our teams, as well as from our business partners. As such we wish to actively encourage you, our clients and suppliers to help us achieving the best through you own contributions and, your feedback on how we could increase together our positive impacts.

Sincerely yours



Marco Degasper,
General Manager of SimienEcoTours

SimienEcoTours Travel Values

SimienEcoTours has constituted in consultation with its team eight core values that are guiding our activities.

- **WE EXCEED EXPECTATIONS**

The customer experience is the most important part of everything we do and every decision made is based on getting that experience right making sure it is as perfect as can possibly be.

- **WE AIM TO BE RESPONSIBLE**

We are very concerned on sustainable development of destinations by minimising negative impacts and maximising positive ones for both the environments we operate in, and the people living in them.

- **WE AIM TO BE TRANSPARENT**

In any ways of communication flow from the start to end for any customers we believe that it has to be vital and transparent. Clear communication, transparency and efficient trip planning are definitely among our strengths.

- **WE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT TRAVEL**

We love to travel; we love our destinations and want to show the very best of our country to the world. We live and breathe our destinations and within SimienEcoTours the knowledge we have of our destinations is mind boggling. Sharing that knowledge with our staff, our clients and the rest of the world is core to SimienEcoTours' success.

- **WE AIM TO BE COMMITTED**

To be committed for preserving the tourism products in the country and create a comfortable environment for biodiversity is part of our main commitment.

- **WE AIM TO DELIVER QUALITY**

Be dedicated to deliver high quality services. "Quality over quantity is our motto"

Our preferred suppliers are all subject to regular and rigorous training programs to ensure that quality is always at a high standard.

- **WE AIM TO BE RESPECTFUL**

Respect ourselves, our company, our world. We do our best not waste time or resources and whenever possible try to actively improve the world we live in.

- **WE MOVE TO INNOVATE, AIM TO BE UNIQUE**

At SimienEcoTours, we value innovation and creativity in all areas of our work. We aim to find truly unique ways to travel and explore Ethiopia, daring to show the different, exciting, quirky attributes that we love and make our world so special.

Vision

SimienEcoTours is a destination management company working in Ethiopia. The company specializes in providing a deeper, cultural experience for tour operators, with clients wanting to understand a destination rather than just see it.

As strong believers in the ethos of responsible travel, SimienEcoTours is increasingly committed to developing, operating and marketing tourism with a sustainable approach. As a destination management company based in Ethiopia, we are in a privileged position to select the most valuable partners and services, while guiding others to work in a mindful manner.

As such, we strive to maximize the positive effects of travel while minimizing its negative impacts and ensure that the cultures and natural environments of our destinations continue to flourish. Throughout all levels of our business, we work in a number of ways to achieve this philosophy and want become a driving force for a better and sustainable tourism in Ethiopia.

„You can't escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.“ - Abraham Lincoln

Mission Statement

We as founders of SimienEcoTours are four Ethiopians and two Europeans, brought together by our social and ecological commitment in Ethiopia and our love for this country. With our background and experience in different fields and sectors we give to our clients from all over the world a deep insight into the rich Ethiopian culture and nature. Each of our destinations in Ethiopia consists of a firm idea, a pleasure to explore landscapes and cultures that we want to preserve and communities and economies that we want to support.

For some years now our network is extending in all directions of Ethiopia and beyond. People from various cultures and different social environments are involved, such as cooks, cleaners, porters, drivers, cultural guides, muleteers, coordinators, assistants, mountain guides, and each one of you who joins us on a tour.

For us it is an important concern to treat all persons, who are involved in this teamwork with their professional and hard endeavor, with respect and fair payment, because only then we all can be part and not just consumers of this network.

Our Commitments

1 WE COMMIT TO OUR VALUED EMPLOYEES

SimienEcoTours believes that its employees are the most values assets and commits to the following:

- ✓ Implement a social policy and ensure human rights for all workers;
- ✓ Develop and expand training and educational materials.

In order to transform this commitment into concrete actions integrated into our management frame, the management binds to:

- Ensure equal opportunities for all our co-workers and to not discriminate them, either directly or indirectly, in any labour practice;
- Pay fair wages to provide for the needs of our co-workers and their families;
- Respect the labour law and the right of our co-workers to participate to trade unions discussions regulations or collective labour agreements;
- Develop, implement and maintain strong safety and health standards (through medical insurance, maternity leaves and disability risks for our employees);
- Ensure good working conditions at least in compliance with local, national or international regulations. To do so, our company binds formal contracts in writing, paid overtime, yearly paid holiday and documentation about disciplinary procedures;
- Refuse child labour and all forms of forced and compulsory labour from outsourced contracted companies for office maintenance or any work done for the company;
- Provide regular training and awareness campaigns to our staff;
- Provide internships to students;
- Ensure our employees free expression and satisfaction in the company. Therefore, we commit to demonstrate that there is an effective complaints procedure, to measure employee satisfaction and to assure that they are represented to senior management.

2 WE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

By this policy statement SimienEcoTours commit to:

- ✓ Work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

In order to transform this commitment into concrete actions, the management in the country is committed to:

- Implement and maintain SimienEcoTours anti-corruption policy;
- Communicate the policy to all stakeholders and especially to raise our staff awareness on this issue;
- Take disciplinary measures in cases where corruption is acknowledged.

3 WE RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS

By this policy statement we commit overall and across our activities and partnerships to:

- ✓ Act to protect children against sexual and labour exploitation in our destinations;
- ✓ Make sure that we are not directly or indirectly complicit in any human rights abuse.

The Management will ensure that we strive to:

- Respect all individual civil and political rights.
- Facilitate access and, when is it possible, provide support and facilities for education and lifelong learning for community members;
- Regularly assess the impact of our policies and activities.

Child protection is a strong commitment for SimienEcoTours. Consequently we have adopted a policy to cease all school and orphanage visits (where children are under 10 years old) considered as detrimental to child emotional and human development. Instead we offer more meaningful activities, which are contributing efficiently to the sound and safe human and educational development of children.

4 WE CARE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

By this policy statement we commit to:

- ✓ Support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;
- ✓ Assess the environmental impact prior to the execution of a major action;
- ✓ Undertake initiatives to reduce our environmental impacts;
- ✓ Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility;
- ✓ Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies;
- ✓ Continuously monitor and improve our environmental management.

In order to transform this commitment into concrete actions integrated in daily tasks, the Management in each country will ensure that we reduce the environmental impact of our operations by:

- Developing and implementing awareness-raising activities, training and information among staff about the climate change, responsible tourism and sustainable development;
- Conducting energy and water reduction active policies. We commit to do so by measuring, monitoring and reducing our consumption. Regarding energy reduction, we strive to use sustainable energy whenever possible and to reinforce our light and office equipment “switch-off” policy;
- Developing and implementing pollution and mobility reduction policies. We ensure to do so by minimizing noise, light, ozone pollution and erosion, and by minimizing and substituting the use of harmful substances. Regarding the mobility policy, we commit to measure business travel carbon emissions with the aim to reduce and compensate. We also consider and give preference to sustainable local transport alternatives and we commit to reduce the use of harmful substances by inciting drivers to switch off engines when stopped. Finally we are currently identifying carbon offset programs, to offer our clients the opportunity to compensate their CO2 emissions;
- Setting up a solid waste management program to reduce, reuse and recycle waste produced; Therefore we commit to measure our recyclable and non recyclable, reduce the amount of packaging materials and plastic water bottles and finally to recycle batteries and toner/ink;

- Reducing paper consumption. To do so, we commit to adopt a sustainable printing policy, to optimize daily printing efficiency and to use sustainable office paper. Otherwise, we ensure to use recycled paper for corporate communication materials and to manage in a more efficient way our brochure uses;
- Implementing sustainable procurement in our purchasing decisions whenever possible. To do so, we commit to buy certified tea & coffee for our staff, to purchase in bulks and to buy sustainable give a ways and cleaning materials whenever it is possible;
- Gradually replacing equipment by environmentally sound technologies and practices. For example, when buying new printers, we will give preference to more energy and resources efficient ones;
- Reducing our carbon emission directly and set up a carbon offset program;
- Not promoting souvenirs which contain threatened flora and fauna species as indicated in the CITES treaty and the IUCN 'Red List';
- All our actions to protect the environment comply with the national legislation and are undertook with due respect for communities.

5 WE INVOLVE OUR SUPPLY CHAIN

By this policy statement we commit to:

- ✓ Assess and evaluate the level of sustainability of all our key suppliers (accommodations, excursions, tour leaders, local representatives and guides) to then highlight the responsible ones to our clients;
- ✓ Refuse to work with suppliers who are not complying with our fundamental responsible requirements;
- ✓ Communicate our sustainable process to our suppliers and encourage them to do the same;
- ✓ Discourage our suppliers to promote souvenirs which contain threatened flora and fauna species as indicated in the CITES treaty and the IUCN 'Red List' as well as historic and archaeological artefact.

In order to convert this commitment into concrete actions, the management in each country will ensure that:

A. Our accommodation suppliers:

- Are aware of our sustainability objectives and minimum requirements;

- Are encouraged to adopt responsible practices. For example: basic/standard sustainability clause(s) are included in contracts with key accommodation providers (covering at least 70% of the business, best practices standards and guidance are distributed to the best-selling accommodations, they are also stimulated to participate in local or international sustainability training and education, ...;

Compulsorily commit to:

- Respect basic Human Rights: compulsory/forced labour;
- Fight against child labour and sexual exploitation of children.

Commit also to:

- Actively implement and promote greater environmental, cultural and social responsible conducts;
- Support local communities and wildlife protection. This means that local community resources and biodiversity are respected, local sourcing is preferred and the use of endangered species is banished.

B. Our excursion suppliers:

- Are aware of our sustainability objectives and minimum requirements;
- Are encouraged to commit to a responsible approach. This include well documented excursions offers and skilled guides;
- Receive our sustainable excursion policy, codes of conduct / guidelines for sensitive excursions or activities (which are specified in the contract conditions when ever existing);
- Level of sustainability is surveyed;

Compulsorily commit to:

- Respect basic Human Rights (no compulsory or forced labour);
- Fight against child labour and sexual exploitation of children.
- Commit also to support local communities, environment, biodiversity and wildlife protection; for example when featuring wildlife ensuring interactions are soft and none disturbing or by preventing harvesting of any wild fauna or flora.

C. Our tour leaders, local representatives and guides:

- Are aware of our sustainability objectives and minimum requirements;
- Are encouraged and assisted by qualification and training:
 - to adopt responsible /sustainable practices;
 - to acquire and increase their destination knowledge.
- Are invited to follow specific training to identify and fight against exploitation of children;
- Communicate to travelers to inform them on relevant sustainability matters in the destination;

Compulsorily commit to:

- fight against exploitation of children;
- promote greater environmental, cultural and social responsible conducts.

SimienEcoTours has a social and training policy towards freelance guides we work with: preference is given to local guides, fair employment and labour conditions are guaranteed.

6 WE SUPPORT COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

By this policy statement we commit to:

- ✓ Support the human, economic and cultural development of the community.

In order to transform this engagement into concrete actions, the SimienEcoTours Foundation with the support of the country offices directly:

- Fund local projects supporting education and vocational training/ fighting against human trafficking and child abuse / health care & sanitation, community development / local economic development / environmental conservation / humanitarian aid & culture and arts;
- Raise awareness within our community on sustainability development principles;
- Consider sustainable aspects when it selects a destination;

- SimienEcoTours encourages and supports its staff complete freedom to celebrate and respect their local culture and practice their spirituality.

7 WE CARE ABOUT OUR CUSTOMERS

By this policy statement we commit to:

- ✓ Optimize safety, availability and quality of our services including most accurate travel information;
- ✓ Ensure travelers' privacy, health and safety and insurance according to our overseas customers requirements;
- ✓ Raise awareness about responsible tourism principles.

In order to transform this engagement into tangible actions, our management will ensure that we:

- Provide to our clients relevant information and interpretation about the destination and trips (including safety, health & security);
- Communicate to our clients about sustainable offers (sustainable accommodations and excursions);
- Distribute the SimienEcoTours Sustainable Travel Tips booklet which provides tips to traveler on best practices while travelling (codes of conduct / guidelines for sensitive excursions or activities);
- Communicate to clients about sustainable issues in the destination. To do it, we commit to give them recommendations about illegal souvenirs, sustainable transport, sexual exploitation, protection and respect of children, detrimental effects of orphanage and school visits, preference for local services and goods, respect of traditional culture and customs, environmental issues and animal welfare;
- Clearly inform our customers about our sustainable commitments (values, CSR program, Travelife participation, SimienEcoTour Foundation...);
- Promote the SimienEcoTour Foundation to our clients who want to donate, advising them on the most efficient way to support local social, human and economic development;
- Have an efficient and reactive Customer Relation Management System which protect customer privacy;
- Provide customers with a 24h reachable contact and guidelines in case of emergency situations;

- Take into account clients' satisfaction and complaints.

