

Socio-cultural

Social responsibility is much more than a buzzword. Each of us must consider the widest range of impacts that our actions and operations may have on the people who live, work and play where we conduct our business. Reach out to local communities, seek their input, create meaningful opportunities for them-and you will add far more than you take away.

Quick Start



Articulate your company's commitment to making a positive impact on the communities and cultures affected by your business. This will help guide decisions and communicate priorities internally to employees and externally to community stakeholders and clients.

Case Study: Pacific Northwest Expeditions

[Pacific Northwest Expeditions](#) is a family-owned company working to bring about positive social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts. In keeping with this philosophy, the company has developed a statement to guide its business practices:

"We strive to be sensitive to local culture and the impacts our activities can have on the communities in which we operate. We continue to consult with local people within these communities to aid us in our planning and decision-making in the delivery of our sea-kayaking programs. Considerations are given to potential impacts, such as loss of privacy, invasion of culturally significant places or sacred sites."

Top 10 Ways to Create a Positive Socio-Cultural Impact

Many believe that the potentially negative social and cultural impacts of tourism are ultimately justified by the positive economic effect we have on the communities we visit. The reality is not so simple. Often, after taxes are applied, local communities retain only a tiny percentage of total tourism expenditures. But you can help build consumer awareness and demand for socially responsible tourism by working to raise industry standards.

1. **Deliver the real deal.** Work with local artists and performers and draw from small-scale, community-based programs. If you promise clients a genuine travel experience-meaningful interactions with the local population, plus exposure to customs and culture-that's what they will expect.
2. **Remember the locals.** Provide opportunities to learn and understand more about the culture and customs through qualified and experienced local guides.
3. **Connect guests with hosts.** Visitors often travel to learn about people from another area, so work with your local communities to create opportunities for guests to know their hosts.
4. **Tread lightly.** Apprise clients of your region's unique socio-cultural considerations, and offer advice on minimizing negative impacts on sensitive sites and cultural norms. Coach your clients in cultural sensitivity. Advise them to ask permission before photographing local people, dressing a certain way, observing cultural traditions or adopting local practices.
5. **Think hands-on.** Encouraging volunteers to become involved in local projects creates a much deeper connection with the people and culture of an area.
6. **Skip the tacky-tacky.** Try to find authentic souvenirs and crafts to share with your guests. Handmade items or products made from natural resources of an area generally provide "right livelihood" work.
7. Hire locally. Promote tourism training and development opportunities for area residents.

8. Remember that "cheap" is no bargain. Encourage visitors to adopt a "fair price policy" when purchasing local goods and souvenirs.
9. Make a real contribution. Support or get involved in neighbouring community-building events and initiatives. Speak with local community organizations about how best you can involve your clients in community projects and social activities.
10. Spread the love. Engage local businesses-tour operators, hotels, restaurants, guides and others-throughout your enterprise. Ensure that the economic benefits of tourism are shared in an equitable way.

The Responsible Traveller

In conjunction with [Sustainable Travel International](#), Modern Traveler magazine recently developed a great little guide called Cornerstones of Modern Travel. Share these insights with your clients.

	<p>Modes of transportation Consider walking or cycling during your trip, using public transportation, renting hybrid vehicles and choosing to travel by train rather than plane when possible.</p>
	<p>Offsets & environmental policy Calculate and offset the carbon dioxide emitted by your travel and buy your trip from companies with policies that consider environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts.</p>
	<p>Dollars spent locally Ensure that local people benefit from your trip by spending money in community or locally owned businesses and working with tour operators and lodges that employ local people.</p>
	<p>Environmental conservation Choose a trip that strengthens the conservation efforts for, and enhances the natural integrity of, the places you visit, including protected areas and wildlife habitats.</p>
	<p>Respect for local culture Immerse yourself in and accept the differences of other cultures, learning about their customs and social norms before you visit, and speaking their language when possible.</p>
	<p>Natural resource use Reduce, reuse and recycle, and consider the efficient use of water, energy and building materials as well as the method of waste disposal used by your tour operator or lodging.</p>