

What is ABTA's role in promoting Responsible Tourism?

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TAB 1

QUESTION - What is ABTA and what is its involvement in sustainable tourism?

INFORMATION

ABTA – The Travel Foundation is the largest travel trade association in the UK. ABTA represents the views of the travel industry to government and other bodies. It also serves to protect the interests of its members, who are travel agents, tour operators and other travel organisations. ABTA has around 750 tour operator members and nearly 5,000 travel agency members.

INFORMATION

ABTA – Consumer Zone

The main function of the Consumer Zone of the ABTA website is to provide members of the public with information relating to travel advice and the financial protection of holiday bookings. It also provides information relating to making complaints about travel agents and tour operators which are members of ABTA.

As well as the above, the Consumer Zone also provides a range of information of interest to travellers. This includes ABTA's role in promoting sustainable tourism.

ABTA's role in sustainable tourism

The pages below set out ABTA's position in relation to sustainable tourism.

Sustainability

Working to ensure a sustainable future for our holidays

Holidays are now seen by many as an essential part of life. Amongst other things they provide the chance to, spend time with loved ones, experience new things, recharge your batteries and take time out from the pace of daily life. The memories of holidays often last a lifetime.

At ABTA, we believe that holidays are special and we're working with our members to help keep holidays special for years to come. ABTA and its members recognise that holidays can have positive effects on both people and the environment that go far beyond the personal enjoyment factor that we take from our time on holiday. We believe that through adopting a sustainable approach to our industry, we can help minimise any potential for negative effects and maximise the positive impacts that tourism has.

What is sustainable tourism?

Put simply it's about creating better places to live and visit

Nowadays, there so much information around about sustainability it can be hard to make sense of it all. Rather than add to the confusion, we wanted to talk about sustainable tourism and what it means in plain English. That's why we've coined the concept Better Places. Sustainable Tourism doesn't have to be complicated, it's simply about tourism that helps to create Better Places to live and visit.

To do this, it means tourism should:

- Minimise its impacts on the environment
- Ensure that local communities benefit from tourism
- Ensure local economies are enhanced through tourism
- Respect local culture and traditions.

Our approach

Leading the UK travel and tourism sector to achieve Better Places, Better Holidays and Better Business

ABTA works to help create Better Places across three main areas.

1. Initiatives with ABTA members.
2. Partnerships with destination governments.
3. Solutions for global tourism.

Initiatives with ABTA Members

We recognise that there is no one-size fits all approach to achieving Better Places. In keeping with this and the fact that the ABTA membership is so diverse, we work by gathering together like minded Members who agree common programmes of work to help achieve Better Places and in doing so, offer Better Holidays and build Better Businesses.

These programmes of work aim to help ensure that our holidays are not just rewarding on a personal level, but that they contribute to creating Better Places to live and visit.

Partnerships and solutions

Partnerships with destination governments

ABTA is the first point of call for many destination governments when it comes to UK tourism interests in these countries. Over the years ABTA has built up strong relationships with governments, both in the UK and overseas. ABTA uses its voice with these governments to encourage them to ensure tourism contributes to protecting or enhancing local environments, creates opportunities for local communities and helps develop national economies.

ABTA recognises that in doing this, the tourist experience can be enhanced and Better Holidays can be enjoyed.

Solutions for global tourism

Outside of travel agents, tour operators and hotels, the tourism industry is made up of a huge number of different businesses that all play a part in helping to make holidays happen. All of these businesses have a role to play in helping to create Better Places to live and visit.

As such, we have developed a range of initiatives and tools which are designed to help these businesses and ABTA members to start their journey to Better Places today.

We will be releasing more information about these initiatives in the future, please check our Sustainability pages over the coming months.

Better holidays

We're convinced that sustainable tourism doesn't only help keep holidays special for years to come; it helps make them even more special now.

Whether it's enjoying pristine and cared for environments, embracing local culture, meeting new people, trying a new local dish that you can add to your own recipe repertoire or finding that must-have local souvenir that reminds you of your holiday long after you're back home, sustainable tourism enhances our holidays for the better.

Top tips for having a Better Holiday

- Research your destination

Researching your destination is a great way to help ensure you have a Better Holiday. You'll likely find out interesting things about the local climate and culture, about great things to see and do in the destination and maybe even pick up a few words of the local language (this is normally really appreciated by locals).

- Chose a hotel that has a Travelife award

The Travelife Sustainability System is a scheme that works around the world to help hotels to best manage the impacts they have on the environment and on culture. The top performing hotels receive an award level of Gold, Silver or Bronze depending on how well they perform and then are indicated with the logos below in tour operators' brochures and websites. Travelife hotels are doing great things to help ensure you have a Better Holiday.

- Explore your surroundings

When you're in the destination make sure you get out and explore your surroundings. Speak to you tour operator, travel agent or the hotel staff to find out about the must-see sites and great things to do and see how you can work them into your holiday plans. Will it be a morning on the beach followed by an afternoon market visit where you pick up the perfect gifts or treat yourself? Or maybe a day of pampering and then a delicious dinner at a local restaurant where you excite your taste buds after relaxing your senses.

- Play your part

Many of us are now doing things in our daily lives which help to ensure we have a lower impact on the world around us – whether that's recycling at home for example, or sharing a lift to work. On holiday, there are a range of simple things that we can all do to help play our part whilst on holiday too such as:

- Saving water: in many holiday destinations water is a scarcer resource than it is in the UK so try to remember this and perhaps try taking shorter showers

- Turn electrical items off when not in use just as you would do at home
- Leave packaging at home – that way, if there is no recycling availability within the destination you'll make sure you can recycle packaging and will also be carrying less weight in your luggage
- Use local public transport in the destination – this is usually a great way to see more of the destination. Speak to your tour operator or hotel for tips on how to get around.

- Buy local

Treat yourself to something – go on, you've earned it! But make sure it's something locally made. This way, not only will you have the perfect item, but you'll have a feel good factor too, knowing that your purchase has helped make a difference to someone in the destination. Bargaining's a big part of purchasing in many cultures so have fun with it but make sure that you pay a price that fair for both you and the seller. And don't be shy of asking questions of where the item was made and what materials it's made from. Try to steer clear of products made from animal parts or plants.

- Ask you tour operator what they are doing?

Whether it's during the booking process, before you go, whilst there or when you get back, ask your travel provider what they're doing to help ensure we can have Better Holidays for many years to come. Many in the travel and tourism industry are taking action, not only because it's the right thing to do but because it helps make holidays even better. Find out about what the company does by asking questions and allow this to inform your decision.

- "I had a Better Holiday" – spread the word

So you're back and you tried some or all of the above and you had a better holiday. Well share your experiences with friends and families and help them to have a better holiday next time they travel.

TAB 2

QUESTION - What is Travelife?

INFORMATION

'Travelife is an international certification scheme which has been developed by the travel industry for the travel industry. Travelife has been designed as an affordable and fair system that helps hotels and accommodations to improve the way they manage their social and environmental issues, by complying with the requirements of its 99 robust sustainability criteria. And if a property meets the criteria requirements, they will receive a Travelife Bronze, Silver or Gold award, allowing them to proudly display their award status on their websites, stationery and in their properties.'

The Travelife scheme is aimed mainly at accommodation providers, suggesting a range of measures that can be adopted to support sustainable tourism.

Details of the scheme can be found at the link below:

http://www.travelife.org/Tourism_Business_New/documents/English_Travelife_Leaflet.pdf

The Travelife scheme includes a number of components including:

- The Travelife Collection – a scheme through which the public can book accommodation that has made a commitment to sustainable tourism practices and has been awarded Travelife awards
- Getting started in sustainability – a collection of short videos aimed mainly at accommodation providers to demonstrate what can be done to increase sustainability
- Case Studies – examples of three accommodation providers which have adopted the Travelife scheme to make their business more sustainable

- The Travelife sustainability handbook – detailed information about sustainability issues and the policies which can be developed to address these issues

Travelife Collection

‘The Travelife Collection is the directory of hotels and accommodations that have made strong commitments to protecting their local environment and improving the lives of their employees and their surrounding community. All the hotels featured in the Travelife Collection have been through a comprehensive environmental and social audit where they have demonstrated that they have put in place working practices to meet the robust requirements of Travelife criteria.’

INFORMATION

Getting Started in Sustainability

This section of the Travelife scheme provides a wide range of information relating to how a business can develop sustainable practices and work towards the Travelife Awards. Information is available at the link below:

<http://lifeline.abta.netxttra.net/index.php?id=26>

The information is divided into seven sections:

- Water
- Energy
- Waste
- Monitoring
- Buying local
- Fair employment
- Communications

TAB 3

QUESTION - What is the Travel Foundation?

INFORMATION

'Founded in 2003, the Travel Foundation is the travel industry's own charity, set up to respond to concerns over the sustainability of travel and tourism.'

We are an independent UK charity which helps the travel industry understand, manage and take effective action on sustainable tourism.

We exist to protect and enhance the environment and improve the well-being of destination communities, as well as the holiday experience for visitors'.

The statement above clearly explains the role of the Travel Foundation.

<http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk>

The Travel Foundation is involved in a range of projects and initiatives to support and promote sustainable tourism. Amongst these are:

- A range of video clips and DVD presentations
- Tools for tourism businesses
- Projects in a range of destinations

Video Clips and DVD Presentations

New social media such as You Tube is being used increasingly by organisations such as the Travel Foundation to communicate their ideas to other interested parties.

http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/media/film_clips

INFORMATION

Projects

The Travel Foundation is involved in a range of projects to promote sustainable tourism in destinations throughout the world. These projects are divided by themes which relate to:

- Environment
- People and Livelihoods
- Industry practice

Information about the projects can be found at:

<http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/projects>

TAB 4

QUESTION - What is 'Make Holidays Greener'?

INFORMATION

Make holidays Greener is a section of the Travel Foundation's website aimed at consumers rather than the travel industry.

'Greener holidays aren't just about eco-trips or camping in the wilderness...they're about the simple things that everyone can do whilst away, whatever type of holiday you go on!'

Greener holidays mean that holidaymakers have a great experience, local communities can earn a living from tourism, and that wildlife and the natural environment is protected'.

<http://www.makeholidaysgreener.org.uk>

The site provides a range of information about what travellers can do to support sustainable tourism practices, even when travelling to popular 'mass tourism' destinations. This site also contains educational resources aimed at younger travellers.

In particular, the site contains sections on:

- 'Top Tips' – advice on sustainable tourism from famous travellers
- Guides and posters which can be downloaded
- Great holiday experiences

Top Tips

This section of the website contains ideas from famous people about how to put sustainable tourism into practice.

<http://www.makeholidaysgreener.org.uk/top-tips>

INFORMATION

Make Travel Greener

ABTA has developed a range of free online training tools with a number of key partners that provide its members and their staff with key information so that they can ensure their customers are well treated and well informed.

This includes an online training package which is called 'Make Travel Greener' which has been developed by ABTA in association with the Travel Foundation.

TAB 4 – Credits

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