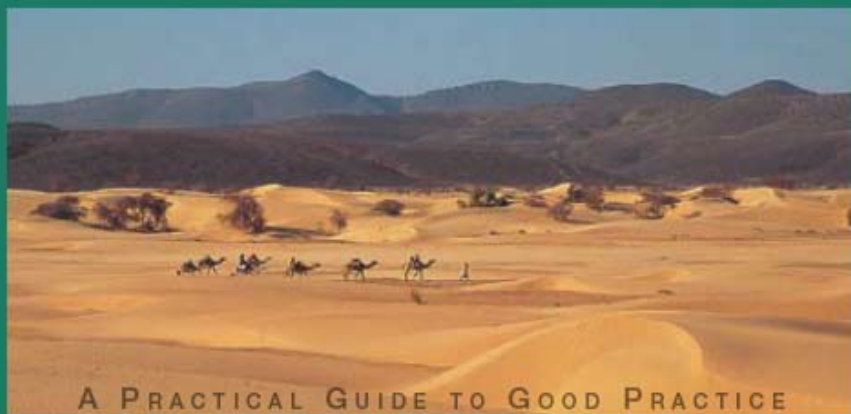




TOURISM AND DESERTS

A Practical Guide to Managing the Social and Environmental Impacts in the Desert Recreation Sector

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE

TOUR OPERATORS INITIATIVE
FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT





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FOREWORD

In the desert, quality of life for people who live there is closely linked with a deep respect and understanding for the natural environment. These regions urgently require attention by international organizations, private-sector partners, national and local authorities and associations to combat environmental degradation and improve the living conditions of desert communities, many of whom live in extreme poverty.

Each of the world's deserts is unique and has its own cultural diversity, traditions and potential to develop and host new activities, some of which, like tourism, have not always been suitably planned or implemented in a sustainable manner .

This Guide to Good Practice has grown out of the experiences of UNEP, the Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Development (TOI) and its partners. Recognizing the need to respect the desert environment and the importance of positive relations with local people, the guide seeks to promote desert tourism as a leading source of sustainable development, which is possible if tourism is planned by professionals who care about the impact of their activities.

Through careful planning, tour operators can help mitigate the seasonal nature of desert tourism by generating positive economic and social impacts that will offer year-round benefits for the communities living in desert destinations. At the same time, through positive interaction with tourists, these communities can become ambassadors for their own cultural and historical heritage.

The guide is aimed at tourism professionals, to encourage them to work jointly to develop sustainable desert tourism strategies with national and local authorities. In partnership with government authorities, tourism professionals can and should be a driving force in this process by designing tourism products that respect the human dignity and often fragile living conditions of the communities involved, while promoting social development and respect for the environment.

MONIQUE BARBUT

Director of the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE)
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PREFACE

“Day by day, though, bit by bit, the quiet of the desert steals into you, penetrating your thoughts as the harsh light sears your skin; and then you wish you could be a nomad like these men, who change countries but never change their homeland.”

- Guy de Maupassant

Deserts or desert regions are now being featured as new tourist destinations in packages offered by tour operators and travel agents, attracting customers who are eager for new discoveries and sensations. As a result, tourism is making a contribution to the socio-economic development of desert regions, not least through the creation of temporary jobs that have eased the poverty of desert inhabitants.

It is also true, however, that tourism in these regions can generate adverse impacts, resulting in harm to desert ecosystems.

From a sustainable development perspective, the growth of tourism needs to be economically viable, ecologically sustainable and ethically and socially equitable for local populations.

There is a need, then, to create and develop mechanisms to enable the different actors concerned (governments, communities, the public and private sectors, NGOs and local populations, among others) to work effectively together to find the balance required for the sustainable development of desert tourism.

These mechanisms can then be communicated on the ground through the work of tour guides and the contribution of the media, as a way to educate travellers and local people.

Moreover, the development of monitoring instruments for observing, following up and evaluating the effects of tourism could provide the means for identifying necessary adjustments in regulations and management systems.

H.E. MR. CHERIF RAHMANI

Minister for the Environment, Algeria

President of the World Deserts Foundation

Honorary Spokesperson for the UN International Year of Deserts and Desertification

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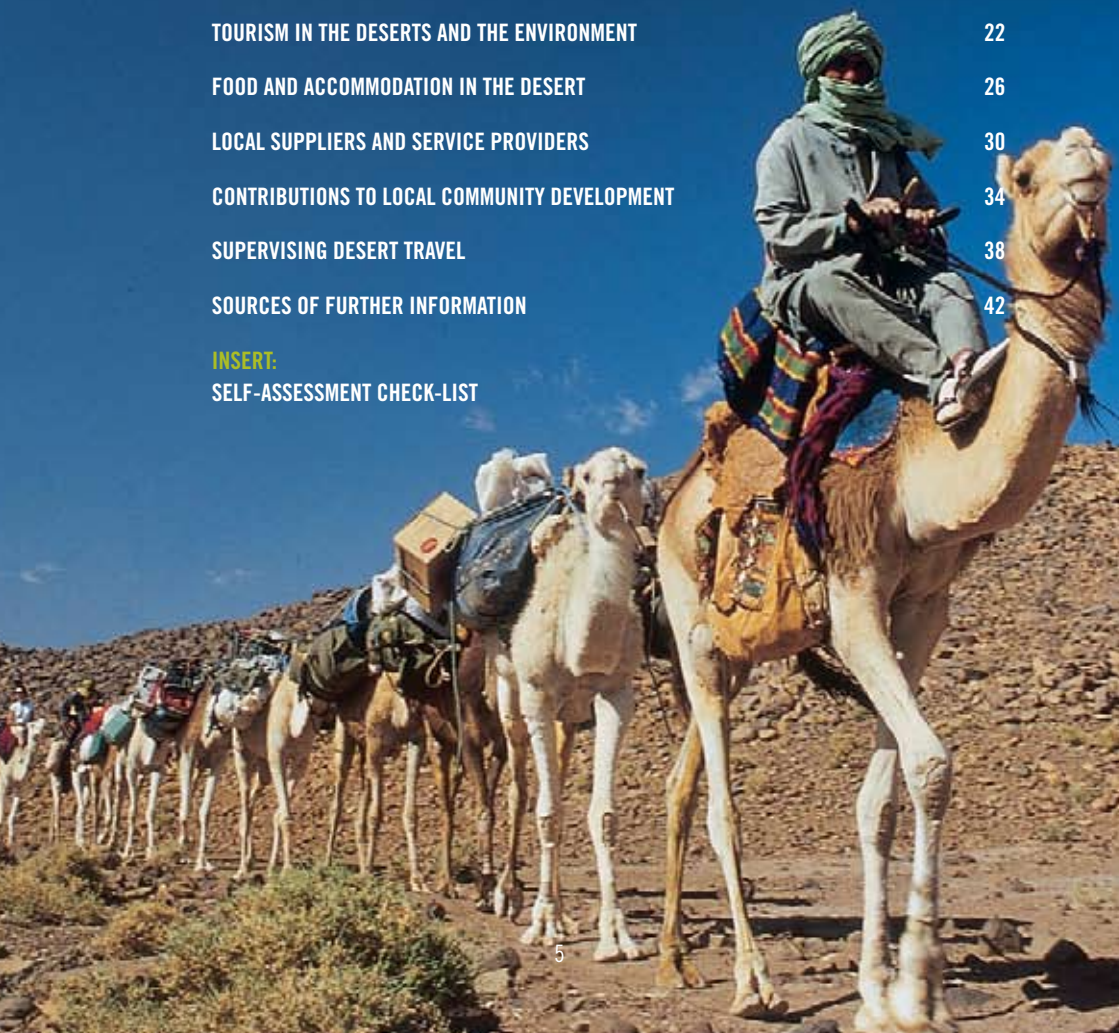
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INTRODUCTION

WHY WE CREATED THIS GUIDE

With the exception of Arctic and subarctic zones, deserts are defined as areas that are hyper-arid and arid (annual precipitation of less than 2.5 cm and 25 cm, respectively) or semi-arid (precipitation of up to 50 cm a year), but with an extremely high level of evapotranspiration (Encyclopedia of Biomes, Detroit, 2000).

While deserts cover 34 percent of the world's land area, issues such as geopolitical considerations, tourism potential and accessibility mean that not all of them are affected by tourism.

Although there are no reliable figures on the progress of tourism in the deserts, the supply of desert tourism products has visibly increased and been offered to a wider market over the last decade or so. The appeal of deserts can largely be explained by the image of purity and serenity associated with them, and by travellers' quest for simplicity and well-being.

Deserts are living environments, and their use as a tourism resource calls for a strong, practical commitment on the part of tourists, tourism professionals and governments towards the maintenance of their natural and cultural balances.

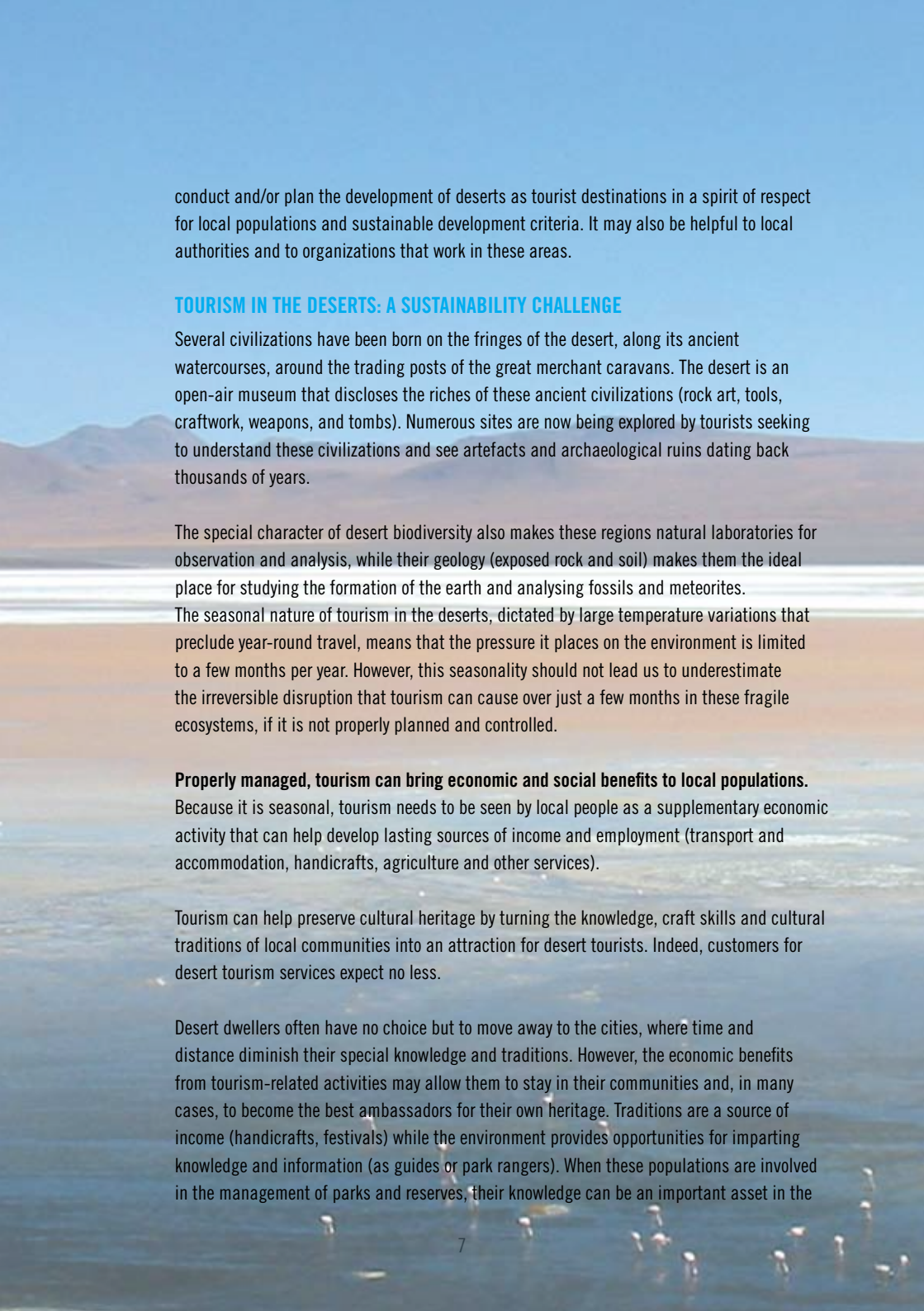
Respect for the balance of desert ecosystems, which are highly fragile and sensitive to human activity, is a vital part of the effort to halt desertification and preserve biodiversity and cultural heritage.

In this sense, this guide, published in 2006, which the United Nations has designated as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, is an integral part of the strategy and initiatives developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to promote sustainable tourism and environmental protection in desert areas.

Desert tourism can be a sustainable development solution if it is planned by professionals who are aware of and concerned about the impact of their activities. It can also help combat desertification, which is a major cause of rising poverty.

As intermediaries between tourists and local providers, tour operators have to realize that developing a kind of tourism that is ill-suited to the desert may ultimately lead to the disappearance of the very reasons for their own success.

The purpose of this Guide to Good Practice is to encourage and help all those who work in the tourism industry (tour operators, local service providers, hotels, car rental companies, etc.) to



conduct and/or plan the development of deserts as tourist destinations in a spirit of respect for local populations and sustainable development criteria. It may also be helpful to local authorities and to organizations that work in these areas.

TOURISM IN THE DESERTS: A SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE

Several civilizations have been born on the fringes of the desert, along its ancient watercourses, around the trading posts of the great merchant caravans. The desert is an open-air museum that discloses the riches of these ancient civilizations (rock art, tools, craftwork, weapons, and tombs). Numerous sites are now being explored by tourists seeking to understand these civilizations and see artefacts and archaeological ruins dating back thousands of years.

The special character of desert biodiversity also makes these regions natural laboratories for observation and analysis, while their geology (exposed rock and soil) makes them the ideal place for studying the formation of the earth and analysing fossils and meteorites.

The seasonal nature of tourism in the deserts, dictated by large temperature variations that preclude year-round travel, means that the pressure it places on the environment is limited to a few months per year. However, this seasonality should not lead us to underestimate the irreversible disruption that tourism can cause over just a few months in these fragile ecosystems, if it is not properly planned and controlled.

Properly managed, tourism can bring economic and social benefits to local populations.

Because it is seasonal, tourism needs to be seen by local people as a supplementary economic activity that can help develop lasting sources of income and employment (transport and accommodation, handicrafts, agriculture and other services).

Tourism can help preserve cultural heritage by turning the knowledge, craft skills and cultural traditions of local communities into an attraction for desert tourists. Indeed, customers for desert tourism services expect no less.

Desert dwellers often have no choice but to move away to the cities, where time and distance diminish their special knowledge and traditions. However, the economic benefits from tourism-related activities may allow them to stay in their communities and, in many cases, to become the best ambassadors for their own heritage. Traditions are a source of income (handicrafts, festivals) while the environment provides opportunities for imparting knowledge and information (as guides or park rangers). When these populations are involved in the management of parks and reserves, their knowledge can be an important asset in the

development of tourist infrastructure, the conservation of natural resources, the management of cultural sites and the reception of tourists.

Developing tourism in the desert can give rise to two types of employment:

- | Jobs that would be generated by any tourist activity, and for which the skills required are not desert-specific. These include permanent or seasonal jobs associated with the activities of inbound travel agencies (agency staff, mechanics, schedule and service coordinators) or with the reception of tourists (personnel in tourism offices, airports, accommodation facilities, restaurants). Qualifications are often the main selection criterion for employers. In some regions, skills transfer and training programmes need to be organized so that these jobs can be made more widely accessible to local communities; this often requires joint action by the public sector and commercial operators.
- | Jobs that are specific to the desert and to the kind of tourism conducted there, such as camel drivers, guides, cooks, and vehicle drivers. Local people's in-depth knowledge of the desert, their ease in that environment and their ability to impart their cultural heritage give them an indispensable role. Recruitment for these jobs should give precedence to the inhabitants of these territories.

By prioritizing the employment of local people in their planning, tour operators can not only improve local living conditions and gain the support of communities, but can also improve the image they project to customers and, in many cases, the quality of their products.



THE MOST VISITED DESERTS OF THE WORLD

North America

- Sonoran Desert**
 - | United States, Mexico
 - | 310 000 km²
- Mojave Desert**
 - | United States
 - | 65 000 km²
- Grand Basin Desert**
 - | United States, Mexico
 - | 490 000 km²
- Chihuahuahua Desert**
 - | United States, Mexico
 - | 518 000 km²

Europe

- Andalousian Desert**
 - | Spain
 - | 2 660 km²

Africa

- Sahara Desert**
 - | Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Libya, Egypt, Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan
 - | 5 660 000 km²
- Somalian Desert**
 - | Somalia
 - | 320 000 km²
- Danakil Desert**
 - | Eritrea, Ethiopia
 - | 490 000 km²
- Chalbi Desert**
 - | Kenya
 - | 180 000 km²

South America

- Atacama and Uyuni Deserts**
 - | Chile, Bolivia
 - | 212 000 km²
- Coastal Peruvian Desert**
 - | Peru
 - | 140 000 km²
- Patagonian Desert**
 - | Argentina
 - | 418 600 km²

Asia

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
|  Taklamakan Desert
 China
 323 750 km ² |  Thar Desert
 India, Pakistan
 214 000 km ² |  Gobi Desert
 Mongolia, China
 1 300 000 km ² |  Karakoum and Kyzylkoum Deserts
 Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan
 490 000 km ² |
|--|--|--|--|

Middle East

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Arabian Desert
 Saudi Arabia
 2 300 000 km ² |  Negev Desert
 Israel
 12 000 km ² |
|  Syrian Desert
 Syria
 518 000 km ² |  Sinai Desert
 Egypt
 61 000 km ² |

Oceania

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
|  Kalahari Desert
 Botswana, Namibia, South Africa
 260 000 km ² |  Great Sandy Desert
 Australia
 360 000 km ² |  Great Victoria Desert
 Australia
 423 751 km ² |
|  Namib Desert
 Namibia
 94 000 km ² |  Simpson Desert
 Australia
 300 000 km ² |  Gibson Desert
 Australia
 155 530 km ² |



TRAVELLING IN THE DESERT

There are many kinds of desert landscapes, and they do not all have the same tourism potential. The quality of the landscape, the wealth of natural and cultural heritage, and geographical accessibility are all crucial considerations in the creation of tourism products.

Furthermore, the particular fragility of desert ecosystems means there is a tolerance threshold above which tourist numbers can have a negative impact on the cultural and natural heritage.

Desert tourism is for travellers who are seeking solitude, authenticity, cultures and traditions, encounters with local people and unspoiled landscapes. The size of groups and the choice of travel method must be governed by rules that ensure a high quality of interaction, a good travel experience and customer satisfaction.

There are many ways of discovering the desert: independent excursions or organized tours, cultural or adventure travel, journeys where travellers can extend themselves physically, opportunities to relax and “be themselves”, or a chance to discover and learn, for just a day or for weeks at a time.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

In the vicinity of holiday resorts, travellers can go on bike or camel rides lasting a few hours or take low-level aeroplane, helicopter or hot air balloon flights. There is also trekking and sometimes rafting, or boat trips on lakes.

ONE-TO-THREE-DAY TOUR

These tours are frequently offered as an add-on to a residential stay, or as part of a country tour. They are meant for inexperienced customers, as a way to make their first acquaintance with the desert. Whether the starting point is a hotel in a seaside resort or oasis (e.g., Djerba, Aqaba, Ouarzazate, Alice Springs, Moab), a cruise boat (e.g., Nile, Red Sea) or a discovery tour (e.g., Sossussvlei in Namibia, Death Valley in the United States, the Atacama Desert in Chile), these tours make use of local accommodation or are included in the tour operator's package. They sometimes include quad, bike, horse or camel rides or short hikes on foot.

“Leave only footprints”

The norm for these tours is vehicle travel with local driver guides, sometimes coordinated by a courier. It is important for these staff to be properly trained to help tourists appreciate the local cultural heritage and environment.

INDIVIDUAL TOURS, MOTORISED TOURS

Travellers often undertake these tours independently, using their own vehicles or renting a vehicle without a driver and staying in pre-booked accommodation or at pre-arranged camping facilities. These customers are independent and often experienced travellers. These tours are easiest and most common in countries that have appropriate road infrastructure, legislation and insurance contracts, as in Namibia, the United States and Australia.

The tour operator, vehicle rental companies, tourism offices and the local authorities (in the case of tours in protected areas) can make a vital contribution to traveller awareness. Out of ignorance and/or because of a lack of supervision, tourists may unwittingly cause serious harm by failing to respect local communities, using too much wood and water, collecting rare species, damaging Neolithic sites, discharging vehicle oil and other waste products, driving inconsiderately off-piste, leaving rubbish, polluting wells or ignoring the regulations of national parks and protected areas.

GUIDED DESERT TOURS

The main aim of these tours is to allow visitors to discover the cultural and natural aspects of the desert. They are usually organized and staffed by specialist tour operators relying on local partners. They are rarely based on hotels, guest houses, etc., and travellers move around on foot, in vehicles or by riding. Customers are often travellers who wish to get off the beaten track and are concerned about the impact of their passage. The journeys on offer, consisting of dromedary rides, excursions on foot or horseback and 4X4 expeditions, generally last from four days to three weeks.

Travel of this kind makes considerable use of local personnel, whose knowledge of the desert is particularly valuable in these circumstances. A very large share of the economic benefits usually goes straight to the local communities supplying the guide teams.



THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF TRAVEL

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

Regardless of tour length or type of customer involved, the design of tours will largely determine whether the impact of tourists on the desert is positive or negative. In the past, desert travellers were enthusiasts who were well-informed and prepared for the travelling conditions they would encounter. Their impact on the environment was slight and the benefits for local populations took the form of higher remuneration, but with less employment than now.

Over the last decade or so, the image of the desert as a tourism destination has changed, not least because of desert car rallies, which have sometimes created a false image of travel conditions. At the same time, new forms of tourist behaviour have developed as people have sought out natural destinations and taken to travelling in small groups in the hope of attaining a better understanding of the areas they visit and encountering the people who live there.

In response to this growth in demand for desert travel and changing consumption patterns (reduced journey durations, shorter and more frequent holidays), supply has shifted towards shorter, cheaper tours further afield, to the detriment of diversity and sometimes of quality. The increased availability of charter flights has also improved access to certain desert regions that were not accessible for short tours in the past years.

Desert tourism is growing fast, but the tolerance threshold for visitor numbers in these ecosystems is not high. Success in controlling the development of this kind of tourism (transport methods, group sizes, relationship between quality and fair pricing, etc.) will determine its appeal to travellers. If the growth of desert tourism is to be sustained, the design of tours, whatever their duration, must include:

- travel and logistical arrangements that have the least possible impact on the environment
- forms of access that harmonize with the landscapes visited
- group size and flow management
- controls on distances travelled and time spent at sites
- measures to ensure direct and indirect benefits for local communities
- content quality criteria: thematic travel, understanding of landscapes and people.

It is also essential to survey the area of operation before developing tours.

Walking and riding on camels, donkeys or horses are the travel modes that best meet all these criteria. However, these modes may not match customers' expectations or physical



capabilities. Furthermore, geographical constraints (landscape quality) and logistical needs (lodging, comfort, duration) mean that motor vehicles have to be used, sometimes exclusively. This mode of travel opens up the desert to a wider public that is sometimes less well prepared and more impatient for sensations, particularly where short tours are concerned. These tours often set out from major tourist areas, and if they are too short then their design and duration may prevent visitors from realizing that the desert is a fragile place, with life everywhere that has to be preserved. Setting limits on the amount of daily travel, keeping vehicle speeds down or using other forms of transport may help reduce air pollution locally, preserve the quality of the destination and provide customers with a more pleasant experience.

“You have the time,
we have time.”

- Nomad proverb.



MOTORISED TRAVEL IN THE DESERTS

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- When too many vehicle tracks are left on dunes and in the sand as a result of excessive off-road driving, landscape quality and the tourist image of a pristine desert environment are impaired.
- Touring in vehicles whose drivers (driver guides or tourists) are unaware of the impact of off-road driving may result in the unintentional destruction of the Neolithic and natural heritage.
- Employing driver guides who do not know the area visited and are inexperienced in off-road driving exposes tourists to major risks, especially from accidents and delays.
- Rising supply, strong price competition and growth in tourist numbers could place local service providers under unsustainable economic pressure and cause them to compromise quality and safety. Lower prices for local services, higher vehicle passenger loads, reduced maintenance and cumulative driver fatigue would then pose risks to the safety of travellers and the quality of the product.
- Complying with traffic regulations means that vehicle offences and the ensuing legal proceedings are avoided and the risk of accidents reduced.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Modify the design of my motorised tours to include walking or riding excursions, even if these are short.
- Reduce the distances planned in the programme in consultation with my local partner, and allot more time to each stop and visit.
- Use vehicles to get from one site of interest to another (Neolithic sites, lines of dunes, landscapes) and then explore them on foot to keep their original beauty intact.
- When designing tours, include themes that educate customers about all forms of life in the desert: people, fauna, flora, the presence of water.
- Ensure that my customers understand the environmental impact of inappropriate vehicle use.
- Dissuade customers from encouraging guides to behave like rally drivers.
- When vehicles are rented without drivers (e.g., “flights and car included” packages), encourage my customers to use the “meet and greet” service (if available) at the airport when they arrive and, when they take delivery of the car, to undergo elementary training in more environment-friendly off-road driving techniques and the safety rules to be followed in the event of a breakdown.
- Give my guides responsibility for monitoring driving behaviour.

- | Check the loading of vehicles and reduce the maximum number of passengers per vehicle.
- | Provide training in desert driving, in particular the impact of driving on safety, the environment and the local heritage.
- | Draw up precise specifications in consultation with my local partner, including checks on the distances covered by each vehicle, fuel consumption, driver working time, accurate records of vehicle maintenance, an accident and breakdown report, and an inventory of vehicle parts replaced.
- | Suggest to representatives of the public authorities and other local groups that regulations be brought in to control motor vehicle access to protected areas and sites.

GOOD PRACTICE IN ACTION

Savannah Guides is an association of professional tour guides in the Northern Australia region. One of its main activities is training guides in desert driving, with an emphasis on safety and respect for the environment.

Understanding that sustainable vehicle use by tourists is in everyone's interest and helps preserve the environment, the local government of Australia's Northern Territory has proposed a network of tourist routes to limit and monitor the impact of tourism in the country's desert regions.





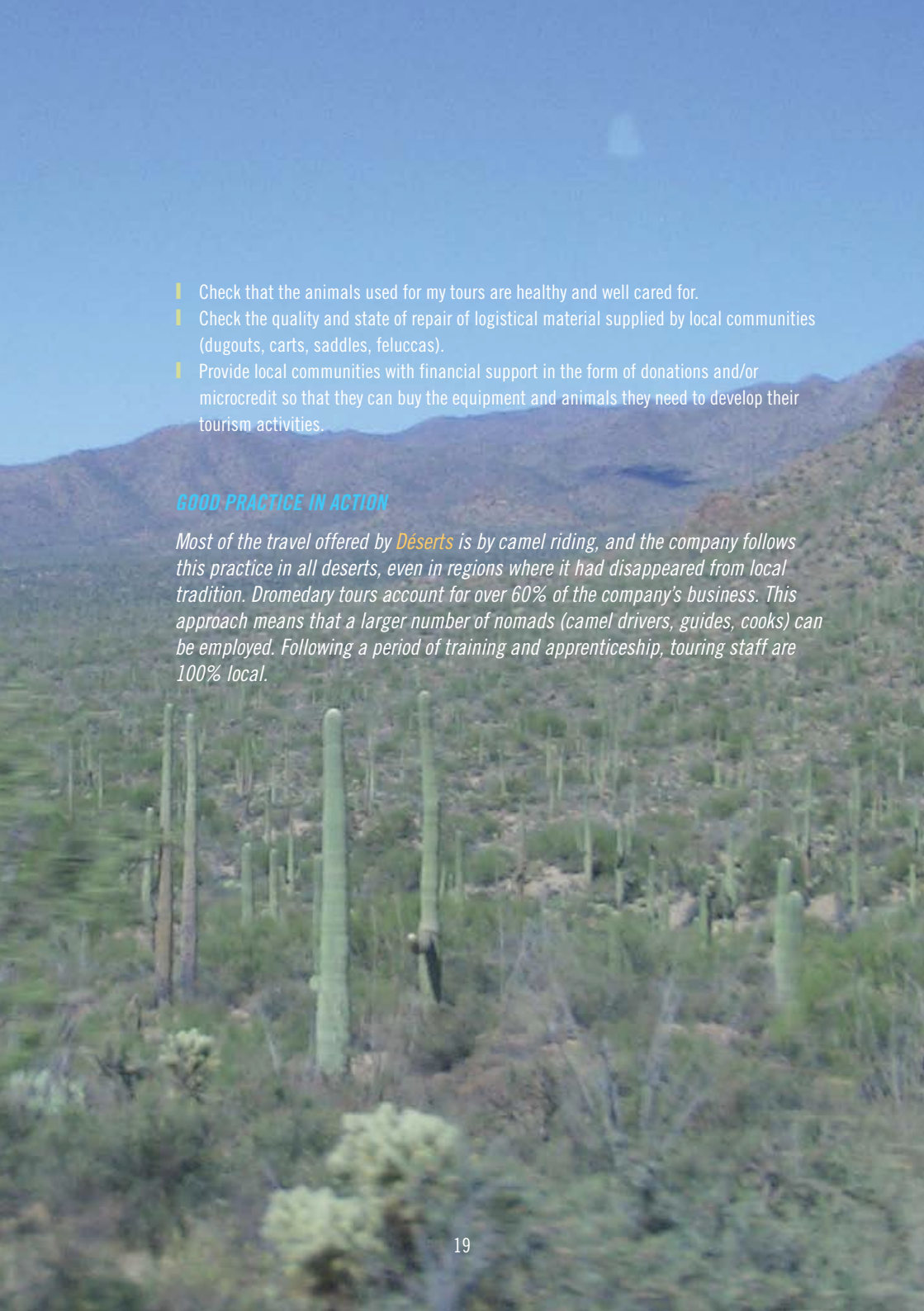
NON-MOTORISED TRAVEL IN THE DESERTS

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- Using some forms of local transport (camels, horses, dugouts, feluccas) can often help preserve traditions, while at the same time providing the local communities with an additional source of livelihood.
- Organizing adventure travel (hiking, dromedary and horse rides) without competent local supervision by personnel from the area exposes my customers to serious risks.
- Taking advantage of the inexperience of local communities and the seasonal nature of tourist activity to pay unreasonably low prices for the services purchased occasionally (animal hire, local guides by the day, lodging with local residents) may cause local people to turn against tourism of all kinds.
- Making local communities compete against each other to provide tourist services may lead to conflict and is not conducive to better service quality.
- Organizing a journey without first surveying the area makes it harder to develop the tools needed to educate customers and local partners.
- Failure to check the health of animals and the reliability of logistical arrangements made by local communities exposes my customers to risks and may give the impression that animals are being ill-treated.
- Returning too frequently to one area without giving the ecosystem time to recover makes that destination seem too well-travelled and thus less special. The traces of human activity are always highly visible for a very long time in desert environments.
- Tour designs relying exclusively on natural resources that are needed by local communities may cause overgrazing and deforestation and thus amplify the effects of desertification.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Make sustainable arrangements with local communities for the purchase of tourism services, without forcing them to compete systematically.
- Check each year on the availability of grazing and the state of water sources in the areas my tours pass through, or set out fully provisioned.
- Survey the area before introducing any new products or opening up an “unspoiled” region to tourism.
- Participate in clean-ups at the sites visited, to maintain tour quality and enhance the image of my products.
- Approach archaeological, historical and cultural sites on foot whenever possible, parking vehicles some distance away.

- 
- Check that the animals used for my tours are healthy and well cared for.
 - Check the quality and state of repair of logistical material supplied by local communities (dugouts, carts, saddles, feluccas).
 - Provide local communities with financial support in the form of donations and/or microcredit so that they can buy the equipment and animals they need to develop their tourism activities.

GOOD PRACTICE IN ACTION

Most of the travel offered by Déserts is by camel riding, and the company follows this practice in all deserts, even in regions where it had disappeared from local tradition. Dromedary tours account for over 60% of the company's business. This approach means that a larger number of nomads (camel drivers, guides, cooks) can be employed. Following a period of training and apprenticeship, touring staff are 100% local.



SPECIAL-INTEREST AND THEMATIC TRAVEL

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- Providing a wealth of special-interest and thematic features in a tour is a way of making visitors aware that, contrary to perception, deserts are not empty places.
- In nature-based tours, it must be remembered that the presence of humans, the collection of samples and the use of vehicles and other observation equipment may disrupt highly sensitive ecosystems.
- Planning an itinerary through an area rich in Neolithic sites may result in damage to these sites, unless the trip is planned carefully and there is a specialist guide who understands how to protect them.
- The enthusiasm of customers on specialist tours may lead them to collect or buy historical artefacts or animal or plant species, posing a threat to local heritage and ecosystems.
- To prevent culture shocks and ensure a memorable experience for visitors, special-interest and thematic travel arrangements should respect the traditions of the region and be made only after consultation with local communities.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Employ qualified guides for my specialist tours, drawing on their traditional knowledge of local communities.
- Ensure that travellers respect and value the natural and cultural heritage.
- Provide travellers with detailed information about laws governing the exportation of natural and cultural heritage items.
- Forbid flash photography and any physical contact with rock art.
- Create special programmes, itineraries and codes of conduct for this type of travel.
- Include comprehensive explanatory listings of local fauna and flora among the travel documents, including information on the local pharmacopoeia and local names.
- Support measures by national parks and local authorities to preserve natural areas and to combat trafficking in protected species and the looting of historical sites.
- Introduce training plans for guides specializing in special-interest or thematic travel.

GOOD PRACTICE IN ACTION

Anangu Tours (Uluru, Australia) is owned and operated by Anangu, the traditional Aboriginal owners of Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park. The activities offered include interpretation of Aboriginal art, presentation of medicinal plants and training in gathering techniques, bush cookery and explanations of Aboriginal traditions and culture, which are among the world's oldest.

Moki Treks (Montana, United States) specializes in indigenous cultural travel and works with American Indians to jointly develop itineraries with a spirit of authenticity. Moki Treks signs agreements with its partners to buy food locally, provide financial support to the tribes receiving groups of tourists, and help Indians protect their natural resources and safeguard their endangered traditions.





TOURISM IN THE DESERTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

The sense of freedom and the boundless horizons that travellers encounter in the desert can make them feel that anything can be done there, without consequences for the environment. However, the sparseness of the plant cover, the scarcity of natural resources, the lack of humidity (an accelerator of biodegradability) and the “starkness” of deserts in actuality make these environments highly sensitive to human passage.

Excessive human traffic, the abusive exploitation of natural resources, rivers and lakes, vehicle pollution, discarded waste products and the chemicals they contain, and negligent behaviour in general all affect the desert ecosystem and its biodiversity to differing degrees.

While developed countries devote resources to protecting these ecosystems, by creating and enforcing national or local regulations, in other countries, a lack of resources and the vastness of the territories involved may mean that this level of vigilance is not possible.

Tourism professionals who make use of these areas have a professional responsibility – based on their commercial interest in maintaining the resources on which their business depends – to preserve biodiversity and prevent the pollution (often very visible) of desert sites. Accepting this responsibility is the best way to ensure that tourists will still want to come to the deserts. It is also essential to the sustainable future of local populations.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- Respecting the living environment of local communities, including the water they drink, the cleanliness of their surroundings and their primary resources, will safeguard their well-being and foster a sustainable relationship.
- Excessive water use in the desert is not compatible with the scarcity of this resource.
- Polluting water, either directly or through seepage, may render it unfit for human and animal consumption.
- Inappropriate use of wood for fuel may intensify the problem of desertification and deforestation.
- Travellers visiting the desert in quest of the purity it symbolizes will be offended by the environmental damage and visual pollution that can result from logistical arrangements unsuited to this fragile environment.



The beauty of the desert, said the Little Prince,
is that there is always a well about somewhere.

- Antoine de Saint Exupéry

- | The impact caused by tourists who dispose of waste carelessly often has to be remedied by costly clean-up or replanting campaigns. The taxes levied on visitors to finance these campaigns are often high and may increase the cost of access to sites, and thus the price of journeys.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- | Raise awareness among customers, either directly or via the team accompanying them, about the consequences of their actions for the desert environment.

NATURAL RESOURCES (WATER AND WOOD)

- | Prevent contamination of water (pools, rivers and lakes) with soap or any other chemicals.
- | Encourage use of purified water rather than mineral water in plastic bottles.
- | Set out with enough water for the whole journey, if obtaining it en route would jeopardize local people's supplies or the environment.
- | Encourage the use of gas rather than firewood for cooking.
- | Light fires only when essential, and then only with deadwood.

WASTE

- | Set up a system of dry toilets and/or burn toilet paper with a lighter, unless there is a risk of bush fires.
- | Encourage customers to take toxic waste back to their home countries with them: used batteries, ointment tubes, aerosols, photographic film packaging.
- | Reduce waste and encourage customers to leave unnecessary food and equipment packaging at home before travelling.
- | Explain waste management techniques to customers and provide them with what they need for this purpose: advice, sorting, bin bags.
- | Create and enforce vehicle-free and no-camping zones as a good way of protecting the natural heritage and preserving the quality of the tourism product.
- | In the event of a vehicle breakdown or accident, bring back and sort any replaced parts and any oil and other chemical products from the vehicle.
- | Use biodegradable detergents to clean vehicles (assuming there is enough water available).

GOOD PRACTICE IN ACTION

Desert Knowledge Australia ensures that its desert projects serve the interests of local populations and the protection of their heritage by planning and implementing measures to support dependable economic projects that create jobs for desert populations.

La Ruta de Sonora Ecotourism Association (USA/Mexico) is the result of a shared commitment between the United States and Mexico to protect the cultural and natural heritage of the Sonora desert while encouraging tourism as an indispensable income source for protection of the area's heritage and the local economy.

Hotelplan is financing the construction of traditional water access systems and five wells in Rajasthan, India, providing drinking water for 5,000 people and 25,000 head of cattle.

HIDDEN AND VISIBLE WATER

- An oasis is a place where water either comes naturally or is brought artificially to the surface. The durability of oases depends on the underground water level, the method used to raise the water, the presence of cultivatable land, and plant cover (palm groves) that protects it from wind and heat. Homes, gardens, wells and nomadic and permanent grazing will be found close by.
- Wells are essential to nomadic lifestyles. Their use by tourists must not lead to excessive water depletion.
- Some deserts are traversed by permanent watercourses, springs and settlements (e.g., the Nile, the Niger, the Tigris and the Euphrates). Tourists using these resources must follow good practice when it comes to recycling used water, to avoid adding to existing pollution.

WASTE IN THE DESERT

The term “biodegradable” is almost meaningless in desert settings, since organic matter takes an extremely long time to decompose.

By way of illustration, here are the average times needed for certain “standard” types of waste to disappear in most geographical areas:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| • Sheet of paper | 2 to 4 weeks |
| • Banana skin | 3 to 5 weeks |
| • Photographic film container | 20 to 30 years |
| • Shoe sole | 50 to 100 years |
| • Tin can | 80 to 100 years |
| • Aluminium can | 200 to 400 years |
| • Plastic stopper | 450 years |

In the desert, however, these time periods have to be multiplied by anything from 10 to 1,000 times.





EATING AND LODGING IN THE DESERT

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

Accommodation facilities in inhabited areas (at oases, in gateway cities or along surfaced roads) are often the starting point for desert tours and excursions. The more significant a country is as a tourist destination (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Australia, Chile and the United States), the larger and more sophisticated the supply of accommodation services in and around the desert will be. For such facilities, the recommendations of A Practical Guide to Good Practice: Managing Environmental and Social Issues in the Accommodations Sector will be particularly useful (www.toinitiative.org).

In the heart of the desert, the choice of lodging and catering arrangements must strike the right balance between the number of visitors and inhabitants, the natural resources available (especially water), the fragility of the environment and the potential activities available within a close radius.

Desert travel is often carried out in nomad fashion, with sleeping equipment (e.g., tents, mattresses) and catering materials carried by animals (e.g., camels, dromedaries, yaks, mules and horses) or vehicles. As this tourism market has spread to less “adventurous” customers seeking greater comfort, small permanent camps in the middle-to-high price range have been or are now being developed in some regions.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- | The environment and landscape quality may suffer if accommodation is ill-suited to the natural resources and infrastructure available locally.
- | Failure to follow elementary food hygiene rules may impair the quality of the service, pose a threat of illness to the customers, and damage the reputation of the tour operator and destination.
- | Repeated use of the same camping sites has a negative impact on natural resources, including water, wood and grazing (if pack and riding animals are used).
- | If goods are produced and available locally, bringing them in from outside is not helpful to the local economy.

- 
- | During a tour, an inappropriate policy of buying (e.g., fresh meat, market garden products) may unbalance the small local economy if production is not sufficient.
 - | Waste generated by tourist groups as they travel will create pollution that impairs the quality of the route, unless prior arrangements are made for dealing with the waste.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- | Provide customers who are staying at hotels with informational materials explaining the specific travel conditions encountered in deserts.
- | Train catering staff in food hygiene rules.
- | Encourage my customers to use water sparingly and not to bathe in water sources (wells, natural pools, community dams) or wash near them.
- | Favour types of accommodation whose systems of operation have the least possible impact on the environment.
- | Use semi-permanent camps that are integrated into the desert to provide a high-quality service without disrupting the environment.
- | Select accommodation that engages local communities and underpins projects designed to improve living conditions, such as access to water, health care or education.
- | Encourage the use of chemical or “dry” toilets in residential camps and of catholes in itinerant camps; toilet paper can be burnt with a lighter, unless there is a risk of bush fires.
- | Purchase locally produced foodstuffs when the logistics of the journey allow this, and always keep non-biodegradable packaging and disposable plates and cutlery to a minimum.
- | Whenever possible, purchase some fresh produce from local communities during the journey, at a fair price and in reasonable quantities.
- | Arrange for cooking to be done by gas, keeping wood for when traditional dishes are to be prepared.
- | Avoid carrying bottled mineral water and purify well water instead whenever possible.
- | Train logistics staff on itinerant tours to sort waste as follows:
 - waste that can be consumed by domestic animals
 - waste for burning (if there is no waste recycling system in the town where the tour ends): paper, cardboard, sanitary towels and non-toxic plastic packaging
 - indestructible and toxic waste: take tins and unused medicine back to the country of departure.

GOOD PRACTICE IN ACTION

The Ksour Route, a project run by the United Nations Development Programme, the government of Algeria and UNESCO, seeks to promote sustainable tourism in the Southern region of Algeria. The project follows the old Sahara trade roads through the sites of Taghit, Beni Abbès, Timimoun, Aghlad, Tinerkouk, Charouine, Guentour, Témachine, Malika and Metlili. The objectives of the project are to build the capacity of the local population and authorities through awareness-raising actions and training courses, to rehabilitate traditional architectural heritage, and to conserve the environment through a participatory approach with local stakeholders.

Kel 12, an Italian tour operator, has developed a special waste management programme for desert excursions. The aim of this programme is to increase customer knowledge of waste management, sorting and removal. One initiative seeks to limit the use of plastics and non-recyclable products, for example by filling water bottles from jerry cans.

Arburd Sands Ger Camp in Mongolia is a semi-permanent that can be completely dismantled. With a capacity of 20 people, the camp remains within an appropriate tolerance threshold and fits into its environment. The toilets are of the long-drop type, allowing natural decomposition, and showers are installed away from any water source to avoid pollution.





LOCAL SUPPLIERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

The social and environmental impacts of desert travel are a matter of concern for the entire tourism chain, including customers, tour operators, local suppliers and service providers (hotels, transport providers, car rental agencies, guides, couriers, logistics teams, etc.) as well as local communities and organizations.

Alerting travellers to the need for more responsible tourism is essential, as it is they who choose their holiday organizer and method of travel. **Tour operators**, meanwhile, play an enabling role that can make an important difference if they adopt a policy of creating environmentally sound journeys that foster sustainable development. Yet, despite the important role that both travellers and tour operators play in ensuring the sustainability of tourism in the deserts, these plans and intentions may not be fully effective without the participation and cooperation of local partners and suppliers.

The local partner representing the tour operator presides over all services on the ground, and its commitment is the cornerstone of sustainable tourism in desert zones. It has an essential role to play in ensuring the fair distribution of the economic and social benefits of tourism. These partners need to be persuaded of the need for a sustainable and equitable approach to tourism and the economic advantages such an approach can bring, rather than coerced into action. In addition, the partner's **local representatives and suppliers** also have to act according to the measures adopted to conserve the natural environment visited and protect historical and cultural sites.

Strong economic and contractual ties among all the actors in the tourism supply chain are vital if tourism in the deserts is to become truly equitable and sustainable.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- The large role played by tourism in the economies of some desert destinations may run counter to sustainable development principles if economic relations between the actors are not equitable.
- Choosing providers solely based on the lowest price may have negative consequences for the environment (exceeding the tolerance threshold) and for the long-term quality of products.



- Unless tourism actors are trained and educated about the fragility of desert ecosystems, they may fail to understand the need for conservation or the advantages of such protection, for example on product quality and sustainability.
- Designing standardized tourist products that repeat the same itineraries time and again can make the work tedious for staff, overload tourist routes and harm product quality.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Engage other tour operators, even including my competitors, in jointly developing ethical initiatives to ensure that contracts are distributed fairly among service providers.
- Keep staff and service fees equitable despite the pressure of competition, and explain this approach to my customers.
- Select only providers that meet all the legal conditions required to conduct their business.
- If possible, choose local providers who are natives or long-term residents of the country and/or region and who reinvest their profits in the country.
- If possible, use independent local providers whose service quality/price ratio allows them to provide permanent or seasonal employees with a fair wage and decent working conditions.
- Help my providers establish a training programme to educate their suppliers and staff about the importance of conserving the natural, cultural and historical heritage.
- Help my providers create logistical arrangements that are as non-polluting as possible: modern and well-maintained vehicles, cooking with gas rather than firewood, proper waste management.
- Create economic incentives for my service providers based on their level of environmental and/or social improvements and performance.
- Engage with my providers, and my customers whenever possible, in projects to protect the environment and improve the living conditions of the communities visited.



THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF A DESERT TOURISM PRODUCT, AND THEIR SUPPLIERS	
Components of a desert tourism product	Providers and suppliers
<i>Transport</i> Outbound and return	- Scheduled or charter airlines - Cruise ships - Transport providers (private- or public-sector companies)
<i>Accommodation</i> - Accommodation at beginning and end of tours - Semi-permanent camps - Logistics of itinerant camps	- Tour operators - Hotels and owners of accommodation - Service providers - Local families owning camps - Logistics teams
<i>Catering</i> Food and drink	- Restaurants and bars, wholesale grocers, farm producers, fishermen, local markets, bakers, butchers, local communities, etc. - Cooks, waiters, kitchen hands
<i>Land transport</i>	- Rental companies with or without drivers, petrol stations - Local providers owning their own vehicles - Drivers, guides
<i>Land-based services</i>	Representatives of the service provider and local suppliers: - Owners of camels, horses and other natural means of transport - Nomads supervising activities (hiking, observation of fauna and flora, etc.) - Local guides and couriers
<i>Cultural and leisure events</i>	- Various providers: hot air ballooning, bike excursions, feluccas, mountain biking, etc. - Local people involved in cultural performances
<i>Environmental, cultural and traditional resources</i>	- Public authorities - Administrators of protected areas and parks - Local and international associations and NGOs



GOOD PRACTICE IN ACTION

Wilderness Safaris has protected the areas surrounding its camps by buying up the hunting quotas for them from the authorities.

Atalante, jointly with its service provider Mauritanien Trab Chinguetti and a French company, Serpol, have set up a waste collection, sorting and removal system for the community of Chinguetti (a UNESCO World Heritage site).

Allibert - Montagnes et Déserts and the *Désert pur* association jointly run refuse collection operations in the towns of Terjit, Ouadane and Chinguetti in the Adrar.

Kel 12 has developed professional training programmes for local guides. Local guides and the tour operator's couriers learn from one another and contribute to each other's understanding of the different environmental, social, cultural and economic aspects of the destination.



CONTRIBUTING TO LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

Tourism is a major source of economic development, both regionally and nationally, in many desert destinations. It creates demand for accommodation, food, transport, labour and handicrafts, and an appreciation of the cultural and natural heritage that represent opportunities for improving local living conditions. It also generates demand for the development of infrastructure, from which it is important that local communities benefit.

A Touareg nomad from Aïr in Niger does not have the same economic resources as an Australian farmer in the Simpson desert, or a Mongol nomad in the Gobi desert. The impact of tourism on these ecosystems and populations will be different as well.

In developed countries, desert populations are generally sedentary and socially integrated, but certain indigenous communities (Amerindians in North America, Aborigines in Australia) are often confronted with poverty and unemployment.

In least-developed and developing countries, difficult living conditions, associated with the climate changes of recent years and desertification, have hastened the movement of desert populations towards urban areas and their alienation from their traditional cultures. The seasonal nature of desert tourism, a growing appreciation for ancestral knowledge and the expansion of traditional market gardening may allow these populations to carry on living as they traditionally have, while deriving some economic benefit from the industry. Tourism can be a tool for both development and environmental conservation by helping to combat poverty and rural migration to urban areas and enhancing the value of the natural and cultural heritage, while promoting conditions for peace.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- Excessive vehicle use can destroy grazing, which extends over large areas in the desert, thus aggravating the problem of rural depopulation.
- The consumption levels of tourists are much higher than those of local communities, and this may lead to the depletion of certain natural resources, such as wood, food and water, that local communities need to survive.

- 
- Purchasing Neolithic relics (tools and fossils) and samples of the natural heritage (living species) encourages the looting of sites and the destruction of biodiversity.
 - Importing examples of non-native craftwork undermines the distinctive character of local skills.
 - Disrespectful behaviour by travellers (styles of dress, photography, inappropriate gestures) may contribute to the breakdown of family and clan structures.
 - Giving inappropriate “gifts” (sweets, pens, money, T-shirts and caps), particularly to children, encourages begging and puts subsequent tourists in an uncomfortable position.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Design my tours in a way that encourages travel in small groups (15 to 20 people at most).
- Train my drivers to drive considerably and at a moderate pace, using existing tracks and slowing down as they near villages and camp sites.
- Modify my vehicle tours to include a few hours riding camels, donkeys or horses rented from local communities living away from the main tourist routes.
- When recruiting, give preference to staff from local communities if they have the same skills as other candidates.
- Encourage my customers to turn their “gifts” into donations to local associations working for cultural and environmental conservation and development, schools and community clinics, to help them implement projects.
- Encourage my customers to buy locally produced handicrafts.
- Inform my customers of the consequences of purchasing samples of the Neolithic and natural heritage and warn them of the legal risks they run (local, national and international legislation).
- In my tour design, include traditional cultural events that help preserve the local heritage.
- Raise awareness among my customers about the need to respect the natural and cultural heritage of local communities: photos, dress and behaviour.
- Give local populations advice on how to treat tourists: intercultural understanding (tourist expectations), hygiene, appropriate food.
- Include respect for host cultures and populations and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage as subject areas in my staff training programme.

GOOD PRACTICE IN ACTION

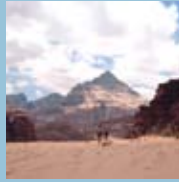
Wilderness Safaris' Damaraland camp in Namibia buys fresh food that is produced locally. The camp's laundry service is provided by the inhabitants of neighbouring villages, who are also responsible for road maintenance and park security. The majority of their staff consists of people from nearby communities who are employed at the camp without any prior experience and trained by the Wilderness Safaris training department. In addition, Wilderness Safaris puts 10 percent of lodge income straight back into these communities.

Kwandwe Private Game Reserve South Africa in South Africa has restored 50,000 acres along the Great Fish River, by removing fences and turning farms into accommodation. The reserve offers animal safaris with qualified local guides, visits to a nearby local community and a historical and archaeological tour of the region.

Voyages (Australia) has provided the land and infrastructure needed to open Nangatjatjara College, the first independent traditional Aboriginal college in Australia. The company has also founded the Mutitjulu Foundation (Australia), which aims to relieve poverty, improve health standards, improve education and provide vocational training that will lead to employment.

The Amitié Franco Touareg association was established to encourage friendship, solidarity and cultural links between French speakers and Saharan nomads. Created by travellers, it monitors, supports and oversees the implementation of development projects financed by 6 percent of revenues from journeys arranged through Croq'Nature, in partnership with local associations.





SUPERVISING DESERT TRAVEL

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

Customer education is essential if desert tourism practices are to become more sustainable. Real improvements can only be achieved if education and awareness-raising are integrated into the logistical and staffing arrangements for journeys. As mediators between customers and the realities on the ground, tour staffers need to adapt to the expectations of tourists, to the human and environmental context, and to logistical and climatic constraints.

Deserts are a particularly difficult environment to discover without the help of a guide team from local communities. Unassisted, travellers can easily go astray and fail to find the resources they need for survival. The unique traditional knowledge of desert inhabitants is essential to the quality of the relationships forged with tourists.

It can be difficult to employ local people, however, if they are unqualified and inexperienced in the techniques of tourist supervision, do not speak the visitors' language or do not understand their expectations.

As such, it is essential to provide guide teams with training, for several reasons. Training enables guides to provide customers with timely, accurate information on the desert environment, ensure that they follow good practice, and turn traditional knowledge into a lasting career.

The representative of the tour operator must be a mediator between the local team, the environment and customers. He or she can identify skills, ensure that knowledge is communicated and perform a training role.

Tourism professionals have every reason to invest in this training process if they wish to increase their commitment to sustainable tourism and the quality of their products.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- If there are no guides from local communities with knowledge of their local environment, journey quality and safety may be compromised. In the desert, a guide from the region is essential.
- A tour operator's reputation may be harmed if it is unaware of the working conditions of local teams and if customers perceive these conditions as unfair.
- If local guides do not possess adequate skill levels, particularly in their ability to deal with



tourists and speak their language and in their knowledge of the local environment, it may be necessary for the tour operator to pay for a courier from the visitors' own country, which makes the journey more expensive to organise.

- Routine use of guides or driver guides who are not from the local area may cause local communities to reject tourists and result in customer dissatisfaction.
- If guides are not trained to manage natural resources and to respect the environment and local heritage, inconsistencies may arise between the stance taken by the tour operator on these issues and the actual product supplied. This may also jeopardize the preservation of the actual attraction of the journey: the unique desert environment.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Use the presence of staff from my company on the ground (couriers travelling with groups, annual negotiations, route surveys, etc.) as an opportunity to ensure that guide teams understand the elements of natural resource management and respect for the local heritage.
- Arrange for local guides to come to my country so that they have the opportunity to observe and appreciate cultural differences.
- Train guides in mediation techniques to make customers more willing to follow their recommendations.
- In consultation with my service provider, create guide teams with complementary languages so that the language spoken by tourists is not an obstacle to recruiting local staff.
- Pay for language courses for local guides, so that guides do not have to be sent in from elsewhere, and so that their pay can be improved.
- Where tradition allows, try to employ women in guide teams (e.g., women work as cooks on camel tours in Mauritania).
- Try to employ qualified guides, if suitable training courses exist in the host country.
- In recruitment, give preference to local people (from the area concerned) over other candidates with the same required skill levels.
- Contribute my expertise and that of my staff to tourism development projects in protected areas, covering topics such as reception and supervision of a group of travellers, tourist expectations, itinerary management, etc.
- Support tourism-related training projects in host countries.
- Develop a training plan for the guide team, including at least the subjects in the table found on page 40.

Subject	Content	Recipient
Personal and food hygiene rules	- Washing hands before meals, feminine hygiene, etc. - Ability to broach these sometimes delicate subjects - Sparing and non-polluting use of water sources	Tour guide and driver guide
Natural resource management	- Water and wood management - Water treatment - Use of gas for cooking, when available	Cook
Respect for the environment	- Sorting of waste - Customer compliance	Tour guide and cook
Cultural and natural heritage	- Knowledge of and compliance with rules and laws - Customer compliance - Considerate driving	Tour guide Driver guide
Dealings with local populations	- Dress code - Photographing or filming - Present giving - Buying handicrafts	Tour guide and driver guide
Understanding tourist expectations	- Intercultural understanding - Ability to say no	Tour guide

GOOD PRACTICE IN ACTION

Dynamic Tours (Morocco) has developed a code of conduct for mountain and desert guides. The code is designed to inform guides of their responsibility for environmental issues, the economic impact caused by the arrival of a group in a region, the social development that this can bring, and the financing of projects to protect natural species and the local heritage.

The Algerian Ministry of Tourism, for the safety and supervision of independent travellers, has made it compulsory for all tourist travel to be arranged through an Algerian tourism agency, which will make a courier available. This initiative has proved particularly effective at combating looting at Neolithic sites.

A number of educational documents are distributed by French tour operators: "Respect du désert" provides customers travelling in the Sahara and the deserts of the Middle East with a number of rules of behaviour in relation to local populations, the environment and the local heritage. This document is a supplement to a longer document, "La Charte Ethique du Voyageur", which is distributed by Lonely Planet, Trek magazine and Atalante, among others.



OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

ORGANISATIONS

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD)

<http://www.unccd.int>

The objective of the Convention to Combat Desertification is the implementation of actions to combat desertification and promote sustainable development internationally.

The financial instrument of the Convention is the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification: <http://www.gm-unccd.org/english/about/index.htm>

A dedicated Convention web site has been created as part of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (2006): <http://www.iydd.org/>.

THE SONORAN INSTITUTE – THE SONORAN DESERT PROGRAM

<http://www.sonoran.org/>

This organization works with local populations to conserve and restore important natural landscapes such as the Sonora Desert, which is the subject of a partnership between the United States and Mexico.

THE DESERT KNOWLEDGE COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE (DK-CRC)

<http://www.desertknowledge.com.au>

This national research network in Australia aims to link local and indigenous knowledge with science and education to improve living conditions in deserts.

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP) – DRYLAND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

<http://www.undp.org/drylands/>

Located in Nairobi, this thematic centre specializes in helping countries that are trying to combat poverty in drought-affected regions of the world.

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY – GUIDELINES ON BIODIVERSITY AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

www.biodiv.org/programmes/socio-eco/tourism/

These international guidelines concern activities relating to the development of sustainable tourism on land, at sea and along vulnerable coasts, and in the habitats of greatest importance for biological diversity, including fragile river and mountain ecosystems.

THE SAHARA AND SAHEL OBSERVATORY

<http://www.unesco.org/oss/index.html>

This observatory, which brings together States and regional and international organizations, provides an international platform for combating desertification and poverty in Africa.

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT –
SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA CLUB

<http://www.oecd.org/>

The purpose of this informal discussion and reflection forum is to forge links between the OECD countries and those of West Africa, and between the private and public sectors of these countries, with the ultimate aim of improving development aid.

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About the Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development

The Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development (TOI) is a network of more than 20 tour operators that have committed to incorporate sustainability principles into their business operations and work together to promote and disseminate practices compatible with sustainable development. The Initiative was developed with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO/OMT).

Members of the Tour Operators' Initiative :

- > Accor Tours (France)
- > Atlas Voyages (Morocco)
- > Aurinkomatkat-Suntours (Finland)
- > Discovery Initiatives (UK)
- > Dynamic Tours (Morocco)
- > Exodus (UK)
- > First Choice (UK and Ireland)
- > FreeWay Adventures (Brazil)
- > Hotelplan (Switzerland)
- > KEL 12 (Italy)
- > LTU-Touristik (Germany)
- > Premier Tours (USA)
- > Sahara Tours International (Maroc)
- > Settemari (Italy)
- > Studiosus (Germany)
- > Thomas Cook (France)
- > Travel Walji's PVT (Pakistan)
- > TUI Group (Germany)
- > VASCO Travel (Turkey)
- > Ventaglio (Italy)

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The Tour Operators' Initiative is supported by:



For more information
see **www.toinitiative.org**

About the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics

The UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) helps governments, local authorities and decision-makers in business and industry to develop and implement policies and practices focusing on sustainable development.

The Division works to promote:

- > sustainable consumption and production,
- > the efficient use of renewable energy,
- > adequate management of chemicals,
- > the integration of environmental costs in development policies.

The Office of the Director, located in Paris, coordinates activities through:

- > **The International Environmental Technology Centre** - IETC (Osaka, Shiga), which implements integrated waste, water and disaster management programmes, focusing in particular on Asia.
- > **Production and Consumption** (Paris), which promotes sustainable consumption and production patterns as a contribution to human development through global markets.
- > **Chemicals** (Geneva), which catalyzes global actions to bring about the sound management of chemicals and the improvement of chemical safety worldwide.
- > **Energy** (Paris), which fosters energy and transport policies for sustainable development and encourages investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- > **OzonAction** (Paris), which supports the phase-out of ozone depleting substances in developing countries and countries with economies in transition to ensure implementation of the Montreal Protocol.
- > **Economics and Trade** (Geneva), which helps countries to integrate environmental considerations into economic and trade policies, and works with the finance sector to incorporate sustainable development policies.

UNEP DTIE activities focus on raising awareness, improving the transfer of knowledge and information, fostering technological cooperation and partnerships, and implementing international conventions and agreements.

For more information,
see **www.unep.fr**

This Practical Guide to Good Practice has grown out of the experiences of UNEP, the Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Development (TOI) and its partners.

Recognizing the need to respect the desert environment and the importance of positive relations with local people, the guide seeks to promote desert tourism as a leading source of sustainable development, which is possible if tourism is planned by professionals who care about the impact of their activities.

In 8 main sections, the Guide clearly lays out the key issues for desert tourism, the problems associated with it and specific recommendations for reducing its impact.

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