



## **Our Responsible Travel Belief Statement**

Insider Journeys practices a thorough, realistic Responsible Travel Policy. We believe that travel should entail an exchange of knowledge and perspectives, a sharing of wealth, and a genuine appreciation of Asia's beautiful natural environments. This philosophy underpins the heart and soul of our style of travel. It drives all that we strive to deliver to our travellers, and shapes the contact we have with our supplier colleagues in Asia. We recognise that poorly planned itineraries or poorly informed tourists contribute less to cross-cultural understanding and less to the livelihoods of local people. We also recognise that we largely work in a developing part of the world. Political and social factors sometimes impede the short term implementation of our responsible travel initiatives, so we do not make blanket, unrealistic statements about the achievability of our goals - doing so would make us irresponsible. We aspire to short or medium- term implementation of our policies where this is realistic and to incremental change where there are constraints of a governmental or cultural nature.

## **Our Responsible Travel Policy**

As well as having offices in Australia, the United Kingdom and North America, Insider Journeys has offices in several cities in Indochina. Our direct presence in Asia means that we are much better able to control the content of our itineraries, the actions of our suppliers, and the style of our Small Group Journey and tailored travel arrangements. In short, our offices in Asia give us leverage in implementing our Responsible Travel Policy.

### **Our Insider Journeys staff**

Our Responsible Travel Policy begins with a mention of our staff, integral to our operations, and a key to the implementation of our Responsible Travel Policy. Insider Journeys is a significant employer of people in the areas in which we operate. Our growth is directly linked to the livelihoods of people who help us to provide ground services, and is indirectly linked to the livelihoods of many more people.

- We firmly believe that the most valuable assets in our organisation are our staff, so we endeavour to train, treat and remunerate staff in accordance with this belief. We staff our Asian offices with local people whenever possible and have a long-term aim of training them in internationally useful skills, moving them into management roles, and providing a base for meaningful and life-long careers.
- We provide staff in our Insider Journeys Asian offices with above industry-standard remuneration packages, often including insurance.
- We implement cross-cultural local staff exchange between our Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Australian offices.
- We employ foreign tour leaders as well as local guides. The foreign tour leaders live and work in Asia on a full-time basis, to ensure they learn about, understand, and

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embrace the countries in which we operate. We train our tour leaders and local guides to share their knowledge of cultural and other local issues in a balanced, informative way.

- Our Asian offices endeavour to increase the number of contracted female guides.

### **Our operations**

Our offices in Asia allow us to effectively implement our Responsible Travel Policy on the ground.

- Our Insider Journeys Asia offices operate legally and comply fully with local tax, labour, and tourism laws and regulations. This level of compliance with local laws can unfortunately be rare in the part of the world in which we work.
- Our bases in Asia make it more practical for us to demand that suppliers act in accordance with responsible travel principles. We have a history working with our suppliers to continually develop standards in the tourism industry.
- We do not knowingly work with suppliers who flagrantly breach local laws or regulations or who act unethically, and we hope that upholding these standards sets a benchmark in the industry.
- We endorse the 'Global Code of Ethics for Tourism' published by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, and visible at the [UNWTO website](#). In particular, we are strongly opposed to the exploitation of children and to sex tourism, and educate our staff and travellers accordingly.

### **Our style of travel**

The Insider Journeys philosophy is premised on a belief that Small Group Journey and tailored, guided private travel arrangements allow for more genuine experiences with local people and their environments, and allow us to avoid the offensive traits of mass tourism.

- We firmly believe that our emphasis on Small Group Journey and tailored travel with a focus on local experiences allows for opportunities for cultural exchange and the dissemination of information between travellers and local people.
- We keep our Small Group Journeys to a maximum size of 16 people, and the vast majority operate with less than this number. We also do not plan tours to destinations which cannot cope with the presence of our travellers.
- We intentionally avoid the trappings of mass tourism such as organised shopping stops, dining exclusively at hotel restaurants, and sightseeing from large buses only.
- We schedule environmentally friendly samlor, cyclo, and rickshaw tours in Hanoi, Hue, Phnom Penh, Delhi, Chiang Mai and Beijing. We use electric tuk tuks in Luang Prabang, Laos. Drivers tend to be from a low socio-economic demographic, and so this measure also helps tourist dollars reach members of the community who might not otherwise have access to this income.
- We visit the Green Valley Reforestation programme on our Myanmar Revealed Small Group Journey
- We visit Plan Bee on some of our Myanmar tours - a bee-keeping project that empowers and improves the livelihoods, nutrition and food security for thousands of vulnerable people, with particular focus on vulnerable women and landless households in Myanmar
- We visit Inle Heritage for lunch on some of our Myanmar tours. It is in a beautiful setting over the lake and gives an insight into the many programmes operated by Inle

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Heritage from traditional arts/crafts preservation projects, to vocational training, to environmental and sustainable farming programmes.

- All of our Laos Small Group Journeys visit the COPE (Co-operative Orthopedic Prosthetic Enterprise) Visitor's Centre in Vientiane, dedicated to providing rehabilitation services to Lao nationals affected by UXO and other accidents. Travellers often choose to sponsor the purchase price of a prosthetic limb as a donation to COPE.
- All but one of our India Small Group Journeys visits a national park/ Project Tiger reserve, ensuring support for several of the country's critical nature reserves and the communities around them for which the parks are now a major source of employment and income.
- All travellers in Cambodia receive a ChildSafe flyer with tips on how to respect the rights of and encourage protection of children while travelling. These flyers are prepared by the ChildSafe Centre, run by the internationally recognized NGO Friends-International, an organisation dedicated to protecting and improving the livelihoods of at risk children
- Our Vietnam Small Group Journeys include a hands-on activity at the Healing the Wounded Hearts Workshop run by the SPIRAL Foundation in Hue, a centre which employs and empowers disabled artisans to create and sell handicrafts made from recycled materials.
- Our suppliers in China largely employ local guides from regional ethnic minority groups, especially on the Small Group Journeys along the Silk Road.
- Our tour leaders, local guides, and informational city guides advise on appropriate dress code and behaviour in culturally important places.
- Small Group Journey clients in Hoi An, Vietnam enjoy a local market tour conducted by students at Streets Restaurant, a hospitality vocational training program for disadvantaged youth. This tour is not only a fantastic way for our clients to learn about the exotic product on offer, but it also gives the students a chance to practice their English with Western travellers to their country.
- Vietnam Small Group Journey travellers receive a reusable cloth shopping bag, to cut down on the use of plastic bags while shopping.
- Insider Journeys supports 'responsible' tourism involving Asian elephants. We define 'responsible Asian elephant tourism' as an activity through which tourists can observe or interact with Asian elephants in a safe environment, and which promotes elephant physical and cognitive health, as well as social and reproductive opportunities. Our full policy in regards to Asian elephants can be found on our website.
- A number of our itineraries include home stay experiences, tea visits & meals with local minority families, and a 'Baci' blessing ceremony in a family home (Laos) allowing for opportunities for social interaction.
- In other destinations, we have included overnight stays at eco-lodges and community-run tourism projects such as:
  - Kamu Lodge, a tented eco-lodge upstream from Luang Prabang, which generates revenue and employment for local Kamu peoples in the adjacent village, and is powered entirely by solar energy.
  - Topas Eco-lodge in Sapa, Vietnam, an eco-friendly resort staffed by indigenous people from the nearby ethnic minority villages.
  - Manvar Desert Camp in Rajasthan, India which intensively employs local people and which returns tourist revenues to local people during local event
  - Coconut Lagoon and Spice Village, eco-resorts in Southern India which produce zero waste, and which have on-site recycling facilities.

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- Ban Na Thon Chan near Sukhothai - a community-run tourism project, including homestays, an elephant sanctuary and textile exporting

### **Insider Journeys and traveller direct involvement in the community**

We have a record of financially supporting a number of not-for-profit organisations working in Asia, and of responding generously to humanitarian crises. A selection of the organisations we currently support or have supported in the recent past includes:

- Angkor Hospital for Children, Siem Reap, Cambodia, which provides health care services to poor Cambodians. Insider Journeys has sponsored the salary of a Cambodian nurse, who has progressed from a Junior Nurse to one of their senior nursing staff (and now training new junior nurses) over the years of our funding.
- The Purkal Youth Development Society, Dehra Dun, India, which develops life building and academic skills among disadvantaged Indian children and women. Most recently, Insider Journeys has supported a music and theatre program for Purkal students.
- Big Brother Mouse, Laos, which is dedicated to increasing literacy rates among Lao youth. Insider Journeys has sponsored the publication of three educational Lao language books.
- The Loreto Vietnam-Australia Program, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam which cares for and educates disabled and disadvantaged children. Insider Journeys has paid for the salaries of music, art and sports teachers at these schools, as well as teacher trainers to travel from Australia to Vietnam for training workshops and sponsored rural students school fees
- COPE (Co-operative Orthopaedic Prosthetic Enterprise), which is dedicated to assisting Lao nationals tragically affected by ordinance left over from the Indochina conflict. In coordination with Big Brother Mouse and COPE, Insider Journeys published a book in Lao warning of the dangers of UXO accidents in Laos.
- ChildSafe, a program under the Friends-International NGO, which works to protect the lives of children living and working on the streets by helping to rehabilitate them, giving them educational opportunities and vocational training skills, and reuniting them with their families.
- AFESIP in Laos, a non-governmental, non-partisan and non-religious organisation with a main goal of combatting the causes and consequences of trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls in Laos. In addition to providing holistic care and recovery for those rescued, AFESIP offers vocational training and supports sustainable community reintegration through micro-enterprise development or job placement. Insider Journeys sponsors reintegration kits for trainees and provides funding for follow up monitoring.
- Puen Mit organisation in Laos – which works to address the needs of marginalized youth and which operates (among other projects) Makphet and Khaiphaen vocational training restaurants

We encourage our travellers to patronise or financially assist numerous not-for-profit organisations. These include causes which Insider Journeys financially supports (immediately above) as well as a number retail organisations and social businesses throughout Asia. Our tour leaders and local guides are a wealth of knowledge about these organisations; a small sample of particularly popular ones is mentioned below:

- Various social business restaurants, the majority of which operate as hospitality vocational training programs for disadvantaged or at-risk youth:

- Koto, Hanoi, Vietnam, a vocational training centre and restaurant staffed by disadvantaged young people
- Friends The Restaurant (Phnom Penh), Romdeng (Phnom Penh), Marum (Siem Reap, Makphet (Vientiane), Khaiphaen (Luang Prabang) – all restaurants run by Friends-International which train and are staffed by at-risk and marginalized youth
- Streets Restaurant in Hoi An, Vietnam which provides vocational training opportunities to disadvantaged youth
- Cabbages and Condoms in Bangkok and Chiang Rai, which help fund family planning projects in Thailand
- Doi Tung Coffee & Lifestyle outlets (various locations throughout Thailand), part of a Thai royal project supporting cash crop alternatives to hilltribe minorities in Northern Thailand
- Saffron Café in Luang Prabang, a social business which supports sustainable, organic coffee-growing practices amongst poorer ethnic minority groups in northern Laos
- Seeing Hands massage (a shiatsu massage service run by blind Cambodians), providing income generating opportunities to those whose disabilities might otherwise preclude them from employment

## **Environmental**

Insider Journeys is committed to reducing the environmental impact its own offices, and to working with suppliers on a long term basis in the implementation of environmentally responsible initiatives.

- Insider Journeys works with Cleaner Climate carbon consultants to fully offset emissions from our Australia and UK offices. The funds from the offsets support clean energy projects in Asia
- The offset of carbon emissions generated by travellers on our top 12 best-selling Small Group Journeys are included in the purchase price. Insider Journeys works with Cleaner Climate to make quarterly offset payments according to the number of travellers on these journeys, with funds supporting clean energy projects in Asia.
- All offices practise double-sided printing; recycling of printer cartridges; turning off of lights, computers, and air-conditioning units when offices are not staffed; and recycling of waste whenever possible.