

Introduction

Responsible Travel is at the cornerstone of Bespoke Brazil's philosophy and its precepts are integrated into every itinerary that we prepare.

Travel can bring many benefits to the traveller as well as to the countries visited. Over the last years, Brazil has become an increasingly popular tourism destination. Growth, however, must be sustainable to be beneficial. Fortunately a lot of initiatives are taking place in the field of responsible travel and sustainable tourism. Different kinds of accommodations are implementing sustainable practices and several community projects and conservation projects are initiated.

Bespoke Brazil tries to accompany the developments in the field of sustainable tourism as carefully as possible, although it is almost impossible to check everything personally. Consequently, we have to rely on organizations that are specialized in assessing, for instance, the sustainable practices of hotels, lodges and other suppliers; practices that should minimize possible negative effects of tourism, while unlocking and increasing possible benefits at the same time.

Core to our business is the belief that holidays can and should be enjoyable but at the same time that they should be conducted in a socially, environmentally and economically responsible manner which brings benefit to local communities.

This is implemented through a variety of measures which are outlined here.

Conducting Business Locally

Local Partners

All of our itineraries are conducted in conjunction with carefully selected local partners that have been rigorously vetted to ensure that they operate in a responsible manner. The companies we work with similarly share our belief in responsible tourism. Many of our suppliers are members of ABETA, a Brazilian organisation whose aim it is to promote sustainability within the tourism sector and to encourage more people to adhere to such beliefs.

Our primary partner in Brazil is the only Brazil based operator with the Travelife certificate of sustainable tourism. From the various initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism, we have selected Travelife for offering tour operators a helpful set of tools which enable them to reduce the negative impact of their activities on the environment. In line with Travelife requirements our local partner has developed an action plan and has implemented measures that resulted in a reduction of the use of paper, water, electricity, and provide efficient waste-management in the office. Efforts extend to suppliers: local agents, hotels, lodges and others who have received information on sustainable practices and who have been invited to provide us with any information on sustainable activities and projects of their own that have already been put into practice.

We feel that this not only helps to ensure that tourism wealth is retained within each country, but also that this enables us to create better itineraries.

Where possible we also ensure that local partners are owned by local people rather than by foreigners. In the small number of cases where this has not been possible the foreign owner permanently resides in the country concerned and therefore we feel that the tourism wealth is still primarily being retained.

Local Guides

The vast majority of our tailor-made itineraries utilise tourist guides to take our clients around important sites. These guides are always local, without exception. Our experience is that our clients greatly enjoy the insight into the local culture and way of life that can be provided by a local guide.

Hotels

When selecting hotels we generally look for smaller establishments that are locally owned, rather than large international chain hotels. This not only ensures that money stays within the local community but also usually provides a better experience for our clients. Smaller establishments often provide a level of service that is not often replicated in larger properties. In addition the staff and suppliers for smaller locally owned hotels are almost always from within the country concerned which retains tourist wealth. We also prefer to recommend hotels which do not negatively impact on their environment. Brazil, despite its flourishing economy, is still very much a developing country in terms of tourism, however there are a number of hotels at the forefront of sustainability projects creating environmentally low impact properties which mould into their surroundings.

Travelling Responsibly

Pre-Trip Notes

Prior to travel we send all clients a trip dossier which is a detailed set of trip notes which not only include an in depth overview of their holiday but which also give responsible travel guidelines.

On Trip Advice

Whilst on tour our local guides are on hand to provide relevant advice on how to behave in an appropriate and responsible manner including recycling practices.

Social and Environmental Projects

Our primary focus is on social rather than environmental projects as these are more prevalent in Brazil and elsewhere in South America such as the Morrinho favela project which we encourage clients to visit when on holiday in Rio de Janeiro.

Responsible Behaviour whilst in the UK

Environmental Behaviour

Our office is run in an extremely environmentally responsible manner.

Our office is located in a 'green building'. A few examples of this are that the lights automatically switch off when the office is vacated, all water is recycled where possible and the toilets are flushed by rainwater. We operate an almost exclusively paper free office, the only exceptions being areas beyond our control such as paper bank statements, registration documents etc.

This paper free philosophy also extends to our promotional material which is almost exclusively online. We produce a small brochure exclusively for distribution at travel shows.

Economic Behaviour

A cornerstone of our operating procedure is that we pay all suppliers in a timely manner. This is enormously important to the types of suppliers that we use as they are generally small. In addition we find that this means that our clients are particularly well looked after as the suppliers enjoy their relationship with us.

Sustainability Policy

Sustainability implies a long-term commitment to our customers, suppliers, collaborators, employees and the community through practices that respect the environment and support the development of the communities that constitute our activities and services. We believe to be able to contribute to sustainable development by generating client-satisfaction, offering fair trade to our suppliers, and leaving a positive legacy in economic, social and environmental terms. To do so we aim to minimize any negative impact of our activities and organize our services through clear and measurable processes.

Sustainable Management

On a social level, by

- offering a safe, healthy and stimulating workplace environment for our employees which promotes training, knowledge and participation.

On an environmental level, by

- informing and encouraging employees and suppliers to adopt sustainable practices.
- careful selection of suppliers who share our views caring about their destination and the communities and people within them.
- offering up-to-date and accurate product information as well as honest and open communication on sustainable accommodation, excursions and transport options on offer.
- providing information on and efforts to minimize any negative impact of our activities in ecological and sensitive areas, their biodiversity and local community and the responsible use of natural resource.

Conclusion

In summary we hope that this policy reflects our commitment to operate all aspects of our business in an ethical manner and to ensure that holidays are conducted responsibly by both ourselves and those travelling with us.