

ADVENTURE TRAVEL GUIDE STANDARD

FEBRUARY 2021



ADVENTURE TRAVEL
TRADE ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION

Adventure travel has grown rapidly in recent decades with an estimated four out of ten travelers from Europe and the Americas incorporating an adventure activity as the main activity of their last trip [1]. This rapid growth has led to an increase in demand for professional adventure travel guides and, in turn, the need for accessible, clear and universal adventure travel guide qualifications and performance standards.

Adventure travel guides are central to the delivery of professional, responsible and memorable adventure travel experiences. They manage safety and risk and ensure the overall quality of the participant experience. For many participants, guides are their primary point of contact while traveling in a destination. In such, guides represent the needs and interests of communities and ecosystems where adventure travel activities occur, and have a responsibility to ensure that potential negative impacts are minimized or avoided altogether. Adventure travel guides have a critical role to play in sharing unbiased educational content about local sustainability issues including wildlife conservation, cultural preservation, and the global climate emergency. Guides demonstrate best practices for participants and highlight the positive aspects of sustainable travel, such as increasing economic and conservation benefits to local communities.

The growing importance of adventure travel guiding as a profession, at both local and global levels, make standards and qualifications necessary to provide high-quality adventure travel guiding services. A comprehensive standard provides pathways for guides to improve and increase their skills and thereby elevate the quality and impact of their work and the services they provide.

There are a number of important guidelines, certifications and standards that are currently available to tourism guides, for example those developed by organizations such as the International Organization for Standardization, [2] The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics [3] and the National Association for Interpretation [4] Interpretive Guide certification program. In addition, a growing number of destinations, for example South Africa [5], Costa Rica [6] and Brazil [7], have developed standards and in some cases regulations that specify the competencies necessary to achieve certification as an adventure guide. In addition, guide associations exist in many destinations and may provide their own training and operating standards for specific activities. Finally, in many cases, informal adventure activity guidelines are established locally and are not subject to globally recognized standards or certification programs.

The Adventure Travel Guide Standard (ATGS) serves to complement and strengthen all such systems, however the revised guidelines and recommendations presented here, while drawing upon elements of existing systems, are focused specifically on the roles and responsibilities of *adventure travel guides*.

It is important to note that since 2008, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has carried out a related effort to issue specific standards for adventure travel and as of this writing there are four ISO standards related to adventure travel:

- ISO 21102 Adventure Travel - Leaders Personnel Competence
- ISO 21101 Adventure Travel - Safety Management Systems
- ISO 21103 Adventure Travel - Information for Participants
- ISO 20611 Adventure Travel - Good Practices in Sustainability

While the ATGS strives to be in alignment with ISO, the ATGS and ISO play separate roles in adventure travel. The ATGS is written to cover the much broader skill set required to become an adventure travel guide and is user friendly to novices and professionals alike. ISO is better applied in the development of protocols for governments and for companies to adhere to those protocols.

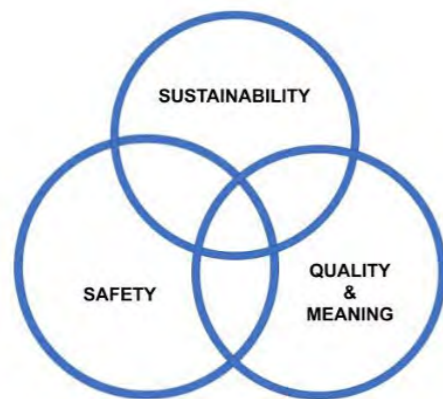
To increase the useability of this document, however, several references are made to specific applicable sections of ISO for governments and regulators, and readers are encouraged to refer to source documents for further guidance.

THE ROLE OF ADVENTURE TRAVEL GUIDES

Throughout history, humans have relied on guides to safely lead them from one place to another through unfamiliar territory. Today, adventure travel guides play many additional roles in the services they provide to people. Guides not only help participants reach a destination, they facilitate immersion in its natural and cultural history. They are responsible for addressing social, environmental, safety and sanitary issues in their services. At its core, a guide's role entails accompanying participants on physically and emotionally transformative journeys during which they may experience new activities and challenges.

To address these shifts and to acknowledge the multiple skills a professional adventure guide shall possess in order to carry out high-quality guiding services, the ATGS working group identified the **three core responsibilities** and **five core competencies** of adventure guides as summarized below and detailed in the following sections of the ATGS.

THE CORE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADVENTURE TRAVEL GUIDES



SUSTAINABILITY

Adventure travel depends upon vibrant, resilient communities, ecosystems and landscapes. Adventure travel participants expect to participate in adventure travel activities in places that are protected from negative social and environmental impacts and that their contributions to the local economy enhance that goal. As a result, adventure travel guides play a fundamental role in safeguarding the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the communities and ecosystems where guiding and related adventure activities take place.

SAFETY

There are inherent risks in adventure travel. Adventure travel guides must be trained to minimize risks and ensure safety to participants, local partners and communities. In addition, adventure travel guides must also be trained in appropriate First Aid and incident response protocol in accordance with employer, activity and destination requirements.

QUALITY & MEANING

Travel can impact destinations in both positive and negative ways. While tourism makes important contributions to local economies, the increasing threats and impacts of climate change have called into question the very act of traveling for recreation. We are moving into an era where to travel just for fun is viewed as insufficient and therefore traveling must seek a higher purpose. At the same time, participants' expectations of quality services and experiences have been elevated due in part to the availability of on-line information about potential adventure activities and participant review systems. These customer service considerations in adventure travel combined with the increased emphasis on sharing meaningful experiences have expanded the responsibilities of guides and their role in meeting the expectations of participants.

THE CORE COMPETENCIES OF ADVENTURE TRAVEL GUIDES

To fulfill these three core responsibilities, an adventure travel guide must possess specific skills and qualifications. Adventure travel is extremely diverse in terms of geography, cultural context and types of activities. The following five competencies have been identified by guides and adventure travel experts around the world as essential for adventure travel guides regardless of geography or activities:

1. **Sustainability**
2. **Technical Skills**
3. **Safety and Risk Management**
4. **Customer Service and Group Management**
5. **Natural and Cultural History Interpretation**

This document describes and provides examples to illustrate each of these five core competencies.

HOW TO APPLY AND USE THE ATGS

In an effort to bring together the diverse competencies of an adventure travel guide into one integrated document, in 2015 the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) convened the Adventure Travel Guide Standard working group to develop a comprehensive Adventure Travel Guide Standard (ATGS). The ATGS was first drafted between November 2014 and December 2015 by a group of adventure travel professionals from 16 countries, including guides, business owners and tour operators and is now governed by an all volunteer Governance Board (see Governance Board).

The first ATGS was released in February 2016 and according to the guidelines is to be reviewed and revised every 5 years, first by the ATGS Governance Board, and then through a public comment period. This is the second version, revised between August 2019 and October 2020 and released to the public in November 2021. This version expands upon the foundation of the first and includes updated information regarding biosecurity protocols and sustainability practices, among others.

The ATGS is a tool and resource to be used by adventure travel guides, adventure travel operators and other entities concerned with the quality and sustainability of guiding services. Principally, this tool is designed for adventure travel guides to measure their own competencies and identify strengths and weaknesses, and it can also be useful for adventure travel operators to evaluate the skills of their guides and the need for guide training programs and professional development opportunities.

The ATGS is not enforced or regulated in any way by the ATGS Governance Board, the Adventure Travel Trade Association or any other organization. Governments, destination managers, and company owners may refer to the ATGS when evaluating the quality and performance of their own guides and determining appropriate training and professional development programs. Guide associations and governments may choose to create their own regulations based upon the ATGS; this document is not intended, nor should be used, to supersede local or national regulations.

Adventure travel is a sector of growing importance in a rapidly changing world where tourism is being called into question. The intersection of guides and participants engaged in adventure activities in a context of increasing risks from climate change, globalized health risks pandemics, and unpredictable social conditions require highly qualified adventure travel guides. This is the ultimate goal of this document.

1. SUSTAINABILITY

The rapid growth of global travel in recent decades has also contributed to an increase in impacts both positive and negative from travel. According to a study published in 2018, tourism accounts for 8% of global emissions, with air travel being a major component [1]. Development for tourism can also lead to urban sprawl and the destruction of critical wildlife habitats. Irresponsible destination management can have a devastating impact on local communities and residents.

Intricately interwoven, the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis are no longer disputable. Atmospheric carbon dioxide has increased 25% in the last 50 years, and species are being lost at 1000 times their natural rate. According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), we are witnessing the greatest mass extinction crisis since dinosaurs disappeared from our planet 65 million years ago [2].

However, sustainably carried out adventure travel can be a positive force as well. In many parts of the world, tourism offers the financial incentive that persuades communities and governments to halt destructive development, like mining, intensive agriculture or logging.



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Besides tourism having a role in securing environmental protection, the most responsible experiences recognise that local communities must be empowered, too. Operators should strive to not only equip local people with the skills and resources to deliver meaningful travel experiences, but to ensure that tourism revenue remains in the local economy.

Having less of an impact is no longer enough. To be truly sustainable, our travel experiences must contribute to solving environmental and societal problems.

Local and global sustainability is increasingly on the minds of both “on the ground” adventure travel providers and local communities. Participants are becoming more and more discerning about engaging with travel companies and experiences that exercise a “leave no trace” policy and are making a concerted effort to address the environmental, social and economic concerns. To see these issues in a broader context, please review the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals.[3]

Sustainability in adventure travel must be fundamental for all travel companies, and guides are on the front lines of enacting sustainable tourism. Guides help in the design, implementation and monitoring of sustainability practices throughout a company’s operations and activities, as well as monitoring service partners such as hotels and restaurants, porters, cooks and other guides.

The Future of Tourism Coalition [4] has produced some very useful guiding principles that all stakeholders can use as a reference in adopting sustainable practices. Whereby service partners are required to commit to sustainable activities, guides should be trained to understand and deliver sustainable experiences, and participants should be informed about the importance of sustainability and sustainable conduct.

For adventure travel guides addressing sustainability, this section of the ATGS seeks to support and further enhance sustainable adventure travel practices within their purview and provide a baseline set of sustainable practices that can be pursued and broadened.

SUSTAINABILITY DEFINITION

The meanings, understandings and expressions of sustainability vary greatly among participants, operators and agencies. The chosen definition of sustainability used in this document aligns with the International Organization for Standardization's ISO 20611:2018 Adventure Travel - Good Practices for Sustainability [5]

To paraphrase the ISO standard, sustainability refers to human actions and activities that seek to meet the needs of present-day populations and ecosystems without compromising the needs of future generations and that take into account environmental, social and economic practices and their impacts.

The ISO 20611 is a useful source of basic guidelines on how adventure travel guides and operators can design and implement sustainable adventure travel practices. The ATGS document enriches the guidance provided by the ISO standard with long-term, on-the-ground experiences of adventure travel guides and operators from around the world, who daily face a multitude of challenges and opportunities for pursuing the goals of sustainable tourism.

SUSTAINABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL COMPETENCIES

In adventure travel, five competencies are essential for adventure travel guides to follow in order to contribute to sustainability goals.

1. Adventure travel guides shall respect the human rights of all participants in adventure travel activities

Adventure travel can contribute to respect for human rights in many ways. Adventure travel guides come into contact with many communities, families and individuals while carrying out their responsibilities and can set an example to participants and hosts alike by modeling respect for the rights of all humans engaged in adventure experiences.

- a. Adventure travel guides shall abide by all local and international human rights guidelines.

Example: Indigenous Peoples and the Travel Industry: Global Good Practice Guidelines [6]

- b. Without placing themselves or guests in danger, adventure travel guides shall document and report to supervisors any illegal and unethical activity that breaches human rights in their areas of work including vendors and partners engaging in activities such as child labor, forced labor, human and sex trafficking and uncompensated or under-compensated labor.

Example: Child Welfare and the Travel Industry: Global Good Practice Guidelines[7]

2. Adventure travel guides shall minimize harmful impacts on biodiversity, ecosystems and the natural environment

Adventure travel often occurs in sensitive urban, rural and wilderness settings. Adventure travel guides share responsibility for ensuring that adventure activities minimize harm to the landscapes, biodiversity and ecosystems where activities take place.

Pollution from unmanaged waste, over-tourism, habitat encroachment and damage to ecosystems and infrastructure are just a few examples of how adventure travel activities can contribute to harmful impacts on the environment.

- a. Adventure travel guides shall be informed of and trained in locally or internationally recognized guidelines for minimizing harmful impacts on biodiversity, ecosystems and climate. Training must be geographically and culturally appropriate to the setting where adventure travel guiding and activities take place.

Example: The Leave No Trace Seven Principles from The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics [8] are international guiding principles for minimizing impacts in diverse rural and wilderness settings as well as in cultural heritage sites:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Ground
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Farm Animals & Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Others

© 1999 by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics: www.LNT.org.

Leave No Trace offers training programs for guides, operators and participants and manages an international network of trainers.

b. Adventure travel guides shall be informed about the local indicators of climate change and the impacts of changes on ecosystems and communities as well as any increased risks the changes might cause to the safe and sustainable execution of adventure travel activities.

Example: Links between local on the ground impacts and wider issues, (eg climate change [9]) should be understood and communicated to participants.

c. Adventure travel guides shall monitor participant and local host practices and provide positive recommendations when changes or improvements can be made.

Example: Research local destination and tourism board updates for the areas your tour will visit and be prepared to report issues and recommendations to authorities.

d. Adventure travel businesses and guides shall make every effort to eliminate single use plastic items from the experiences they deliver.

Example: For how hotels & accommodation providers can reduce single-use plastic without compromising the participant experience see Travel Without Plastic [10]

Example: Travelers Against Plastic [11] is an outreach initiative which aims to educate global participants about the harmful impacts of using disposable plastics and therefore encourage them to travel prepared.

3. Adventure travel guides shall protect animal welfare and report animal abuse

Animal welfare refers to the physical and mental state of an animal as regards its attempts to cope with its environment. Understanding the needs of animals and how tourism can impact on their welfare is key to identifying and managing the associated risk. [12]

Animals, from butterflies to baboons and great blue whales are a popular part of many adventure travel experiences and, when managed appropriately, can enhance the experience, improve education around biodiversity and aid conservation. However, studies have indicated that some activities can result in poor welfare of animals, threaten their survival and place people at risk. Furthermore, some cultural practices can pose severe animal welfare concerns, such as bullfighting and bull running and the trade and sale of dog and cat meat. [13]

The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) has produced the Animal Welfare Guidelines [14] that provide animal welfare guidance for the travel industry, including advice against certain “Unacceptable” practices, encouraging travel businesses to work with their suppliers to raise standards”. Similarly the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) has adopted wildlife interaction and animal welfare safeguards in the GSTC-Destinations Criteria. [15]

In addition to maintaining high standards in animal welfare, ANIMONDIAL, the animal welfare in tourism specialist, advises the following safeguards:

Wildlife viewing:

a. Adventure travel guides shall adopt recognised standards for wildlife viewing or accreditation.

Example: WCA's Global Guidelines for Responsible Whale Watching[16]

b. Adventure travel guides shall maintain an appropriate distance between the animals and participants, with no contact with, or feeding of free-roaming animals in the wild.

Example: not feeding wild primates to increase viewing opportunity or handling wild caiman during jungle treks.

c. Adventure travel guides shall ensure neither they nor the participants box-in, provoke, or chase wild animals. The use of animal call-back recordings should be used sparingly, if at all, and never with endangered species. [17]

d. Adventure travel guides shall monitor wildlife wellbeing and any signs of viewing-induced disturbance, reporting observed bad practice to the park ranger (or equivalent).

Example: encroaching on mother with offspring, splitting herd animals, heightened aggression, etc.

Captive and working animal protocol:

a. Adventure travel guides shall ensure any animal sanctuaries and rescue centres visited are not breeding, commercially trading or exploiting animals.

Example: Use in hands-on activity or 'selfies', swim-with activity, etc.

b. Adventure travel guides shall ensure they and their participants do not engage in activities where animals are provoked, required to perform unnatural behaviour, abused, or killed for entertainment purposes.

Example: Used in circus-style performance or shows, 'canned' hunting, bull-running, etc.

c. Adventure travel guides shall report any observed abusive activity to their employers and/or to relevant national authorities.

d. Adventure travel guides shall ensure that loads should be equivalent to the animal's size and ability and that riding behaviour is non-abusive, equipment is properly fit, and animals have regular rest periods.

Example: no more than one adult on an equine or camel.

Example: Donkey Sanctuary - Welfare Guidelines in Pictures [18]

4. Respect local and international accords on illegal wildlife and cultural artifact trade and report violations

Illegal trafficking of people, wildlife and cultural artifacts is not only undermining many of the heritage sites and economies that tourism relies on, but also causes permanent cultural and ecological damage. Artefacts such as traditional carvings, textiles, pottery and antiques make attractive gifts, however they may be stolen, illegally excavated or looted. The impact is irreversible with countries and local people being denied their heritage and cultural identities.

While the motives and results of reporting and stopping illegal trade are clear, the travel and tourism sector can do more to help stop such practices. For example, research and reporting demonstrate that tourism can facilitate the purchase and trade of illegal wildlife products [19]. Furthermore, when unregulated, trafficked wildlife may carry zoonotic disease and is often linked to global pandemics, including SARS, Covid-19 and others. [20]

Adventure travel guides are often exposed to such illicit activities in the communities where they work by both host communities and participants themselves and can be unwilling or unknowing participants in the same. As stewards of human rights and the environment, adventure travel guides share a responsibility to report illegal trade and ensure that participants do not engage in such practices, either knowingly or unknowingly. All observed wildlife violations should be reported to the CITES Management Authority in each national government [21] (or equivalent).

- a. Adventure travel guides shall be familiar with local and international legislation and penalties for trafficking protected artifacts and biodiversity, including foods that may contain illegal products.

Example: Guides use resources such as the WWF Illegal Plant and Wildlife Trade website [22], and familiarise themselves with endemic plant species, local souvenirs, foods and their origins and ethics.

- b. Adventure travel guides shall advise participants before buying or consuming something that is or may contribute to unsustainable exploitation and/or extinction or represents significant cultural loss.

Example: Live animals, coral and plants, taken from the wild, are often sold on to attractions, hotels, or even participants.

- c. Adventure travel guides shall instruct participants to avoid taking plants or seeds found on trails and visited sites and to avoid taking pottery, lithic elements and flakes from archaeological sites.

Example: Guidelines for behaviour at sensitive sites are made available to participants, tour operators and guides before and at the time of the visit.

- d. Adventure travel guides shall be familiar with the local and national authorities to whom illicit activities can be denounced.

Example: Attractions, accommodation providers or roadside stalls may trade in wildlife parts and products in souvenirs, decoration, clothing or jewellery etc

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) encourages all parties within the travel and tourism sector to sign up to the Buenos Aires (BA) Declaration on Illegal Wildlife Trade [23] and Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Zero Tolerance Policy. This will demonstrate a commitment to ending illegal wildlife trade and to protect biodiversity.

5. Adventure travel guides shall inform participants and partners on best practices for sustainable travel in adventure destinations

Adventure travel guides are participants' closest contact during adventure activities, and it is the guide's responsibility to adequately inform them of sustainability practices before, during and after their activities together. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of adventure travel guides to enforce such practices in the event that participants are not willing to do so, have forgotten or otherwise are not respecting the practices. Careful planning will provide a more enjoyable experience for sustainability conscious visitors without further compounding their impacts such as over-tourism and pollution.

- a. Adventure travel guides shall be informed of the standard for practicing sustainable travel in all destinations where they carry out adventure travel activities. In the McKinsey report [24], the World Travel and Tourism Council describe over tourism indicators as:

- Alienating local residents
- Overcrowded infrastructures
- Damage to nature / environment
- Degraded tourist experiences
- Threats to culture and heritage

- b. Adventure travel guides shall include standards for participating in sustainable adventure activities during briefings and during activity.

Example: Choose off-peak times for groups to visit; adjust schedules to avoid cruise ship calls; recommend under-visited locations to visit, eat and shop; engage participants through community led tours; minimise bucket-list natural attractions in itineraries.

- c. Adventure travel guides shall report unsustainable practices to supervisors and other guides and collaborate to identify opportunities for implementing more sustainable practices.

Example: Knowledge of local or national DMOs and Tourism Boards where unsustainable practices can be reported.

2. TECHNICAL SKILLS & FIRST AID

Adventure travel guides shall possess multiple competencies in both activity specific and universal technical skills related to leading adventure activities in diverse environments. The specific competencies and skills a guide should obtain will vary depending on the activities and the conditions a guide guides in. A number of training and certification standards and protocols exist for some adventure activities, however, not all activities or universal technical skills have defined protocol or certifications. It is ultimately up to the guide to be aware of what protocols exist and in their absence, or when they are not applicable to local conditions, to develop and document protocols.

This section of the Adventure Travel Guide Standard provides guidance on both the activity specific and universal technical competencies that adventure travel guides should possess as well as references on where to pursue some of the competency certification, when required and/or available to guides. Because of the wide range of activities adventure travel guides take part in, it is impossible to be inclusive of all technical aspects a guide will need competency in. It is the responsibility of adventure travel guides to recognize the limitations of their technical skills and the activities that they lead and refrain from guiding outside of their abilities.

Technical Competency and First Aid Definitions

a. Activity specific technical skills refers to abilities that adventure travel guides shall possess in order to safely and professionally carry out a specific adventure activity with participants, fellow guides, staff and local community members.

Example: specific training for white water rafting, skiing, diving or rock climbing.

b. Universal technical skills refers to competencies that all adventure travel guides shall possess, regardless of the location and the activity they are leading. The common reference for companies and governments is ISO 21102 [1] which is also useful for guides. The ATGS was created specifically for adventure travel guides.



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c. First Aid is the first and immediate assistance given to any person suffering from either a minor or serious illness or injury, with care provided to preserve life, prevent the condition from worsening, or to promote recovery. The type of First Aid provided for participants varies greatly among adventure activities and the availability of advanced medical care. Guides should be up-to-date and, when required, appropriately certified in First Aid and/or Wilderness Medicine protocols based upon the activities and locations they guide in.

Technical Skills and First Aid Competencies: Activity Specific

1. Adventure travel guides shall possess adequate and current activity-specific technical skills for the adventure activities they lead.

a. Adventure travel guides shall possess activity-specific technical skills, in order to carry out adventure activities with participants.

b. Adventure travel guides shall undertake local, current, activity-specific certifications where available.

c. Due to the risks associated with adventure activities, it is important for the safety of participants, operators, and destinations that guides possess technical competency. In cases where the activity is regulated by a local, national or global governing body, guides shall ensure competency through activity-specific certification.

Example: British Canoeing certifications are required throughout the UK for canoe and kayak guides.[2]

Example: the International Rafting Federation provides certification for white water rafting in different craft.[3]

d. In cases where technical competency certification does not exist or is not required, competency measures and protocols must be formally determined, documented, updated, incorporated and demonstrated by guides and communicated to participants.

Example: Guide managers develop in-house, site-specific technical training for guides

Example: Snowshoe hiking guide reviews and incorporates avalanche response protocols as conditions and/or protocols require.

2. Adventure travel guides shall possess understanding of and ability to explain, follow and enforce safety protocols (see also Section 3 - Safety and Risk Management)

Ensuring the safety of all participants during adventure activities is a key responsibility of adventure travel guides. Each adventure activity has its own risks and associated safety protocols and guides greatly reduce the chances of accidents by knowing and following safety protocols and making sure participants are informed about these protocols as well.

a. Adventure travel guides shall observe safety protocols specific to the location, company and activities. These procedures and reports can include but are not limited to:

- Risk Inventory, Analysis and Treatment (RIAT)
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)
- Emergency Action Plan (EAP)
- Local protocols and required certifications

b. Adventure travel guides shall be prepared physically and emotionally to lead adventure activity.

Example: On a bicycle touring trip, guides shall be physically able to cover a given daily distance and at the same time attend to other aspects of guiding such as weather conditions, technical challenges, equipment use and repair and participants' needs and expectations.

c. Adventure travel guides shall be informed and aware of the risks in the environments and activities they lead, prepared to assume leadership and respond to stress and hazards.

Example: In trekking areas with volcanic activity, guides shall be familiar with this natural phenomenon and possess knowledge of its dynamics as well as having access to information and updates from local authorities.

d. Adventure travel guides shall possess and execute sound and fair judgment when considering program changes, need for assistance or cancellation of activities.

Example: For highly weather dependent activities, such as sea kayak expeditions, guides shall assess if the group is experienced enough to continue paddling on the open sea, if they should get closer to the coastline, if they should get off the water, or even if rescue services should be activated.

e. Adventure travel guides shall know and follow the protocols that ensure the greatest protection of themselves, participants and local communities, as dictated by law, adventure activity certification or local practices.

Example: An adventure travel company may have a maximum group size procedure that is greater than regulations or local customs for the location. The smaller group size dictated by the local regulation supersedes the company protocol.

3. Adventure travel guides shall possess the authority and ability to use and/or operate activity-related equipment and vehicles during adventure activities.

Using technical and safety equipment and motorized vehicles is part of an adventure travel guides' responsibilities. Many adventure activities use specific equipment and can also require travel to remote areas where knowledge of vehicle operation and repair is essential. Competence in the use and maintenance of equipment and vehicles instills confidence in participants, decreases risks and potential damage to the environment and to the equipment and vehicles themselves.

a. Adventure travel guides shall possess current training and licenses (if applicable) specific to the operation of equipment and vehicles. Certifications and licenses may be determined by local laws, standards or company protocol.

Example: where operating vehicles is a part of guiding duties, it should be ensured that local driving rules recognize the guide's professional driving license.

b. Adventure travel guides shall possess the skills for maintaining equipment for safe use and reporting evidence of defects and arranging for repairs and replacements.

Example: Guides shall ensure that all inputs (gasoline, oil, cleaning substances) are used in a manner consistent with avoiding environmental contamination and/or harming participants and local communities.

Technical Skills and First Aid Competencies: Universal Skills

Universal Technical skills are those that apply in all adventure travel guiding regardless of location or the activity.

1. Adventure travel guides shall possess appropriate First Aid and Wilderness Medicine training and certification based upon international protocol

The often-remote nature of adventure travel trips combined with the presence of various degrees of physical activity makes it important that adventure travel guides are trained in First Aid and Wilderness Medicine competencies.

- a. Recognizing that training and certification requirements will vary by region, adventure activity and local laws and customs, adventure travel guides shall possess a First Aid certification based on a recognized protocol.

Example: Training and certification includes CPR and scenario-based training in outdoor settings where adventure activities take place. Certification programs include but are not limited to Standard First Aid and CPR, Wilderness First Aid, Wilderness First Responder, and Wilderness EMT.

- b. Protocols: To date, the accepted protocol is that of the Wilderness Medical Society (WMS) [4] and the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation (ILCOR) [5]. Other standards exist but must align with these protocols.

- For remote care refer to WMS protocols
- For 'Standard' first aid refers to ILCOR standards for your region.

2. Adventure travel guides shall possess orienteering and navigation skills according to activity

An adventure travel guide shall possess skills to understand and interpret the natural and geographic characteristics of the locations where adventure activities take place. Furthermore, guides shall be skilled at using navigation tools and technologies.

- a. Adventure travel guides shall possess and apply skills in route finding and navigation.

Example: Guides can orient maps and charts, understand scale, legends, grid references and/or latitude and longitude. Guides can identify features, read contour lines, take and follow a compass bearing, estimate distance traveled and identify a safe, practical route.

- b. Adventure travel guides shall be able to use maps, charts and other materials with participants to provide interpretation of the natural and cultural landscapes where adventure activities take place.

Example: Conducting briefings with participants using a topographical map to show them what kind of terrain and difficulties to be expected, places for water refill, lunch spots and to address participants' concerns and questions.

3. Adventure travel guides shall possess knowledge of and ability to monitor weather and climate conditions

Adventure travel guides shall possess the skills for monitoring and interpreting weather conditions. Knowledge, such as common weather patterns and the ability for modifying adventure activities in accordance with weather conditions is essential to the role of providing safe and satisfying adventure activities.

- a. Adventure travel guides shall demonstrate knowledge of sources of information about weather conditions (internet, radio, locals, observations) and have ability to predict likely weather conditions.

Example: High mountain climbing and trekking guides demonstrate competency by checking local and regional weather prior and during climbing activities and monitoring wind and cloud conditions.

- b. Adventure travel guides shall be aware of changing weather patterns due to climate change and how these changes will impact adventure activities.

Example: Mountaineering seasons are changing in certain locations due to shrinking glaciers.

- c. Adventure travel guides shall demonstrate knowledge of weather-related emergency response protocols.

Example: Guides are aware of alternative routes and local or operator emergency response contact information.

- d. Adventure travel guides shall demonstrate knowledge of the history of natural phenomena in the area, and use it to showcase local content.

Example: Be prepared to state when the last eruption of a volcano occurred and point out the landscape features produced during this event.

3. SAFETY & RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk is a central component of adventure travel. Not only are adventure travel activities often of higher risk due to the settings and skills requirement, but also participants in adventure travel deliberately seek out risk as a part of their experience. This places adventure travel guides in a unique position as they purposefully engage in risky activities.

While adventure activities vary greatly in risk level, adventure travel companies and guides share the responsibility to ensure safe operation of adventure activities. Guides are ultimately those who must directly monitor and respond to program execution and are responsible for managing safety in the field.

Safety and risk management in adventure travel requires a multi-tiered strategy involving outfitters, the environment, the local community, the activity, the guides and the activity participants.

ISO 21101 Adventure Travel - Safety Management Systems - Requirements [1] is an important reference for adventure travel guides seeking to strengthen approaches to the implementation and maintenance of safety management systems. This document outlines the global consensus on Safety and Risk Management for Adventure Travel.

Safety and Risk Management Definition

Safety and risk management in adventure travel refers to the process of identifying and preparing for safety and risks in adventure activities and cultural and physical environments and applying appropriate preventative measures and response procedures in the event of injury, illness or fatality.



Safety and Risk Management Competencies

1. Adventure travel guides shall be aware of best practice to ensure the safety of all participants during adventure activities.

- a. Adventure travel guides shall be trained in best practice for the activity they are leading and should be involved, and participate, in relevant professional member associations related to the activity they guide to stay abreast of procedural updates.

Examples: IRF for rafting, IFMGA for mountaineering and attending Safety and Risk Management Conferences or courses.

b. Adventure travel guides shall keep updated information about the equipment they are using as well as the location they are taking their participants. Adventure activity safety procedures and equipment evolve constantly, and guides should engage and remain current on the updates from the technical communities that govern protocol.

Examples: Adhering to a protocol for bicycle maintenance.

2. Adventure travel guides shall be prepared for predictable and unpredictable risk as well as objective and subjective risks

a. Leading participants on adventure travel activities requires dynamic risk management practices for both predictable factors, such as those associated with equipment and logistics as well as unpredictable factors, such as the expertise of participants and the weather conditions.

b. Risks can be objective, such as environmental hazards, or subjective, such as participant perception of risks. Often, the risk of an activity is more complicated than participants are prepared for or external conditions change unexpectedly.

c. Guides should be prepared to support participants who are hesitant to proceed and help them reconsider their perception of risk to more accurately reflect the actual risk.

Example: A participant is hesitant to embark upon a canoe trip because of fear of drowning. The guide can explain the proper use and function of the safety equipment, such as a PFD, as well as safety procedures to reinsure the participant.

d. As Adventure Travel frequently takes place in natural or remote areas, guides should have a clear channel of communication with emergency response as well as a trusted source to check updates on the local conditions and any restrictions that may arise.

3. Adventure travel guides shall be trained in and follow a safety and risk management system.

a. Local conditions and the risks of adventure activities will greatly inform safety and risk management protocols used by guides and their participants. ISO 21101 provides guidance on the use of a Safety Management System (SMS).

b. In cases where an adventure travel operator uses an SMS, guides shall be trained accordingly. It is very important for all people involved in the activity to use the same shared protocols for operation and action plan in case of an accident.

c. In case the guide works on their own or the operator does not operate a Safety Management System, the guide shall refer to the best practices described in the ISO 21101 and apply this to their independent guiding competencies.

4. Adventure travel guides shall use the 3-step Risk Assessment methodology called RIAT (Risk Inventory, Analysis and Treatment):

Step 1: Risk inventory - Identify and list risks associated with the adventure activity

Step 2: - Risk analysis - Analyze both the likelihood and the consequences of each risk in the inventory. Determine which risks are acceptable versus those that are not. This level of acceptance may vary from activity, destination, season or company.

Step 3: Risk treatment - Risks that are not acceptable have to be treated. This treatment happens through providing training for guides, safety briefings to participants, adequate gear and communication throughout the activity. This treatment reduces the initial risk analysis to an acceptable level.

5. Adventure travel guides shall be knowledgeable about company specific protocol

a. Be familiar with and understand the risks of the adventure travel activities and itineraries they lead and be prepared for hazardous conditions,

b. Be aware of and trained in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of the company where they work and if the outfitter does not use one, be an active force to create one.

c. Be aware of and trained in the use of an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) or Emergency Response Plan (ERP).

d. Submit a trip report (TRP) after each trip and identify any nonconformity with procedures in an Incident & Accident Report (IAR).

e. These IAR's may result in changes to SOP and/or EAP protocols. Guides shall ensure they are up to date with any changes.

6. Adventure travel guides shall have the leadership and the authority to respond to safety risks and emergency response

- a. Guides shall be physically and emotionally prepared to carry out emergency response when needed in accordance with governing protocols.
- b. Guides shall use informed and effective decision-making in a manner that results in the desired outcome and inspires confidence in others.
- c. Guides should have the judgment and initiative to know when to cancel activities, change the program, or seek for assistance.
- d. Guides shall know how to avoid, evaluate and care for medical problems in adventure travel settings. (see Technical Skills & First Aid competency)

7. Adventure travel guides shall be informed of, trained in and able to communicate and enforce health and sanitary protocols

As with all risks associated with travel, the risk of disease and illness can be managed and minimized through developing and following appropriate protocol.

- a. Guides shall follow a dynamic risk assessment approach, possibly needing to redesign the experience to help protect participants, staff and the general community when dealing with a disease outbreak.

Example: The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic required companies to quickly develop health and sanitary protocol to minimize risk of exposure by participants.

- b. Guides shall follow any required screening protocol to prevent the spread of communicable diseases or illnesses. Protocol should apply to all participants, staff and guides.

Example: Prior to embarking on a tour, participants are given a survey to make sure they do not have symptoms of a virus that is being screened for.

- c. In the event a participant is showing symptoms of a communicable disease or illness, guides shall be prepared to follow company protocol or government requirements for removing the participant from the tour.



4. CUSTOMER SERVICE & GROUP MANAGEMENT

Customer service is the act of taking care of a participant's needs by delivering professional, helpful, high quality service and assistance before, during, and after the experience. Adventure travel guides are a part of the tourism service sector and provide services that often go beyond those provided by educators or facilitators of adventure activities. A guide's empathy, patience, flexibility, creativity and resourcefulness will help participants connect with places and people, improving their travel experience and contributing to the positive impacts on all stakeholders.

Customer service in an adventure guiding situation differs from a classic hospitality service situation, such as a restaurant or hotel. Customer service for an adventure travel guide is complicated due to the frequent objective of adventure trips to push participants outside of their comfort zone - mentally, physically or culturally. Furthermore, the adventure travel guide must seek equilibrium between the crucial and seemingly competing aspects of providing great customer service while also keeping our participants, communities and environment safe.

A guide thus has to balance safety, sustainability, and both individual and group needs, including varying physical abilities and skill levels, within the service philosophy that "the customer is always right." While we want our participants to feel that their needs are being met and that they are being well taken care of, in actuality, if the "customer is always right", our participants might return with injuries or frustrated by not having been able to perform well during the adventure.

High-quality and detail-oriented customer service and group management are key functions of adventure travel companies and adventure travel guides. Adventure participants are as diverse as the adventures they seek and guides are required to navigate a wide range of needs, expectations and ability levels while adhering to and modeling sustainable best practices, taking into account safety and risk management protocols and providing interpretation of natural and cultural landscapes.



The challenge with this competency is, unlike other competencies such as Technical Skills & First Aid, there are very few formal customer service protocols for adventure travel, and no universal certification program for adventure travel guides. Each company and guide must develop training that takes into account the concepts outlined in this competency as well as specific needs for the unique settings where guides provide service.

Competent adventure travel guides must prepare for and respond to a wide range of customer service requirements before, during and after adventure activities. It is of primary importance that participants feel safe, included, comfortable with expressing both fears and joy and that their experience has been fulfilling and worth the investment of time and money. Providing excellence in customer service and group management translates into satisfied participants, positive reviews and feedback for guides and companies.

Customer Service and Group Management Definitions

Customer service is a multi-faceted aspect of a participant's adventure travel experience. It involves sensory, emotional, and cognitive reactions created by participants prior to, during and after their experience. When all aspects of the participants' experience are positive, these reactions can elevate engagement, motivation, loyalty and the improved reputation of the tour operator.

Colin Shaw (2007) stresses the importance of emotions in customer experience.

"A customer experience is about a number of things. It is about a physical customer experience..... Critically it is also about emotions - how a customer feels. Our research shows that 50% of a customer experience is about emotions" [1]

Group management refers to managing relationships among and between participants and local communities and landscapes such that the spirit and actions of adventure activity participants and providers is positive and affirming and avoids negative interactions and impacts on people and the environment.

"In the case of nature-based tourists, the attributes that affect visitor satisfaction..... include communication, interpretation, knowledge, minimal impact messages, a sense of authenticity, quality customer service, emphasis on learning, interacting with the group, interesting commentary, organisation, group management, activity skills and assistance of visitors" [2]

Customer Service and Group Management Competencies

1. Adventure travel guides shall be skilled verbal and non-verbal communicators

a. Adventure travel guides are responsible for communicating safety, sustainability and logistics information to participants. This information is usually provided during an introductory briefing, however this communication is not limited to formal settings. Information will need to be reinforced during adventure activities using techniques that acknowledge cultural and linguistic diversity, such as props and other visual materials.

Example: Conduct daily briefings on the tour that include logistics information, such as the itinerary, and required gear, sustainability protocol, and highlights of the day.

b. It is important for all participants to fully understand the concepts presented and aligned with your company's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and its Safety Management System, outlined in greater detail under the Safety and Risk Management Competency.

c. Non-verbal communication is also a key skill. Being able to "read" participants' facial and body language is essential when preparing for and undertaking adventure activities and for diagnosing health concerns.

Example: Before returning to camp at the end of a difficult hike, gather the group in a circle so everyone can hear you and inform the group that the majority of accidents happen in the late afternoon when hikers are tired and hungry and less focused on safety.

d. Finally, communication techniques are also essential for conveying content and concepts as outlined in the Natural and Cultural History Competency. For many adventure participants, the stories about the place where adventure activities take place are as important as the activity itself and guides should strive to learn and share them with participants in an engaging, participatory manner.

2. Adventure travel guides shall strive to learn the interests, expectations and varying abilities of their participants and personalize their tours to meet those interests

a. Guides shall listen to participants in order to understand their expectations of the experience, both at the start and throughout the adventure activity. Guides shall strive to exceed participants' expectations and shall consider what is important to each participant within a group experience.

Example: During the Welcome briefing, ask each participant to introduce themselves and briefly describe their expectations as well as previous adventure travel experience.

Example: After learning that a participant is a geologist, incorporate the geological history of the destination during the tour.

3. Adventure travel guides shall employ management techniques that maximize quality and consistency of service and experience for all participants

a. Adventure travel guides often work with groups of participants who do not know each other before joining the adventure activities. How individuals are treated in a one-on-one setting is not the same as how they are treated in a group setting, where needs for the whole group might conflict with those of individuals. The art of group management is to make these decisions without having to overtly deny a group member in favor of other members.

Example: one member of your group may have signed up for your trip hoping for a more strenuous hike. However, if the group as a whole is not prepared for that activity level, or by doing a longer hike would require taking out another activity on the itinerary, you may have to make a decision that benefits the larger group, but conflicts with one of the members of the group.

Example: one of the activities involves a wine tasting and one of the participants has a sulphite allergy and can't participate. The guide arranges a parallel activity where the participant is able to taste each grape variety, using fresh clusters, thus being able to experience grape variety differences.

4. Adventure travel guides shall proactively identify issues and conflicts and respond to complaints through mediation, solutions or changes to programs and by providing aftercare and opportunities for feedback.

a. Adventure travel guides strive to solicit and respond to recommendations, special requests and complaints in a constructive, balanced and complete manner, through listening, analysis, discussion and solution identification and implementation. Conditions involving complaints or conflict should be resolved and monitored in the moment and throughout the activity by addressing the participant's concerns directly. If an issue cannot be resolved immediately, inform the participant how and when you will be able to address the issue for them.

Example: Some of the group members have an invasive attitude when taking photographs of the local community and consider there is no problem with this even if the guide explained respectful behaviour. The guide facilitates (and translates if needed) a conversation between the group and the local community so they can explain what they think about being photographed, and maybe all can take photos of each other.

5. Adventure travel guides shall manage the compounding needs of participants as outlined in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - Basic, Safety, Psychological and Self Actualization needs

a. Truly transformational and life changing travel results in self actualization and is the peak of self transcendence. You cannot reach the highest levels without first obtaining the lower levels. Participants will not leave transformed and inspired to help others if they were hungry and cold, or if they did not feel welcomed by the group. Guides often confuse "problem" or "challenging" participants with those who just haven't had their lower level needs met.

Example: Carry extra water, snacks and warm clothing and offer them to participants to avoid them being irritable and grumpy.

Example: Keep watch to see if any group members seem isolated or not joining in with the group, or to see if any of the group members seem unhappy with any aspects but not able to verbalise this - i.e. shy or under confident.

6. Additional customer service considerations exist in adventure travel settings, and must be incorporated into guide practices

a. During adventure activities, guides have the added responsibility to monitor the physical health and overall well-being of all participants, including hydration and appetite, body temperature and overall comfort, mood and spirit.

Example: Check prior to each activity that the participants are wearing/carrying the appropriate clothing, right amount of water and other items listed on the gear list for the activity (where not provided by the outfitter). Check in with them during the activity to remind them to hydrate, snack and ask how they are feeling.

b. A guide is often expected to establish and manage contacts and interactions with external parties such as local tour guides, drivers, and other suppliers. These relationships require customer service as well, and must be balanced with the priority of the participant.

Example: Ensure regular communication with drivers and local suppliers, keeping them updated of any changes to the schedule, feedback from the participants (both critical or positive) and show them that their part in the participants' tour experience is important.

5. NATURAL & CULTURAL HISTORY INTERPRETATION

Adventure travel guides are expected to be knowledgeable about the natural and cultural history of the destinations where they work. Participants are interested in learning about the people, wildlife and landscapes where they engage in adventure activities and guides must be able to share relevant content with them. The ability to connect a participant to the destination through engaging content provides an opportunity for inspiration and transformational growth.

Knowledge of natural and cultural history varies greatly among adventure travel guides, as do the interests of their participants. Depending on their background, training and personal interests, some guides will be more knowledgeable about birds, for example, while others will be knowledgeable about geology. Whatever their expertise, guides should be prepared to share their knowledge of the physical environment, the history of human activity, past and contemporary politics, environmental issues, economics, art, culture, folklore, cuisine and whatever is relevant to the story of the destination.

Knowing names, dates and species is not enough. Adventure travel guides must also possess the ability to communicate their knowledge in a way that engages and educates participants. Meaningful content delivery techniques can be used in both formal settings, such as a daily briefing or at an attraction, as well as in informal communications such as during meals and casual conversation. Guides are most effective sharing content in a manner that is approachable and digestible for participants. A key to success is relating the content to the lives and realities of the participants.



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"Interpretation is not so much experience explained, as explanation experienced"[1]

Adventure travel guides have a responsibility and crucial role in the long term sustainability of the cultures, communities and environments where they guide. Because adventure travel guides are often the primary contact for participants, they fill a role as "advocate" for the environment and the local community.

Therefore, interpretive content and delivery should aim to:

1. Enhance participants' understanding and valuing of sites, communities, cultures and environments;
2. Influence and monitor participants' behaviors, en route, on site and at destinations;
3. Foster participants post-visit, pro-environmental and pro-heritage conservation attitudes and behaviours. [2]

Natural and Cultural History Interpretation Definitions

Natural and cultural history refers to the diverse sets of knowledge about the biological, ecological and cultural characteristics of a particular place; past, present, and future. Examples of natural history include the distribution of forest types across a landscape and the diversity of fish species in a particular water body. Examples of cultural history include artistic styles and materials unique to a place and the evolution of a musical genre in a certain city or country.

Sam Ham (2013) describes interpretation as the following:

"Interpretation is a mission-based approach to communication aimed at provoking in audiences the discovery of personal meaning and the forging of personal connections with things, places, people and concepts."[3]

Natural and Cultural History Interpretation Competencies

1. Adventure travel guides shall possess knowledge about local natural and cultural history and contemporary society in the destinations where they guide.

- a. Content should be relevant to the destination, season and interest of the participant(s) on the trip.

Example: A guide should have knowledge of native flora and fauna that is likely to be observed on a trip.

Example: A guide working in an area where a political issue has been in the news, should have enough knowledge to answer basic questions about this issue from participants.

2. Adventure travel guides shall employ content delivery techniques to share knowledge and respond to participant questions in an engaging manner.

- a. Content delivery techniques should balance the sharing of information while also providing an enjoyable and engaging experience and supplemental materials such as props and special guests.

Example: Use stories and anecdotal tales to share content and concepts.

Example: Thematic interpretation [3] is a methodology many guides employ because of its ability to focus content in an organized and enjoyable manner.

- b. A guide's content should be at the appropriate level for participants to comprehend and deliver in such a way that all participants can hear, understand and participate in the exchange.

Example: Have the group form a circle so all participants can see and hear you

3. Adventure travel guides' interpretation should be provocative, inspiring, and engaging.

- a. Guides shall incorporate participatory activities to help participants connect intellectually and emotionally to the content, rather than only listen and learn facts.

Example: After describing the two important trees found in the forest, give participants free time to try to find one and describe to the group what they found.

- b. Guides should strive to inspire participants to want to learn more about the subject and be able to apply it back home.

Example: Encourage participants to continue the adventure when they return home by learning their local natural and cultural history.

- c. Interpretation is an artform as well as a technique, guides should always aspire to improve their craft.

Example: Take a class on wildflowers found in your area.

4. Adventure travel guides shall inform participants of relevant local practices and current events prior to contact with individuals and communities.

- a. Guides should use intercultural communication skills, such as the use of culturally appropriate language when referring to local communities and facilitating interactions with participants.

Example: Communicate with those you would like participants to meet and arrange a time for your group to visit and engage with them. Prepare them for the content of the interaction and if appropriate offer to compensate them for their time spent with participants

Example: Prepare group participants for the context of individuals they will be meeting and the culture in which they exist. Remind participants that it is our privilege to visit and not our purpose to change or modify these communities.

5. Adventure travel guides should deliver authentic, balanced and unbiased content.

a. To provide participants the opportunity to truly get to know the destination, it is important to share more challenging content that accurately and authentically reflects the diverse perspectives and realities of local people as well as the facts relevant to an issue.

Example: In addition to presenting scientific research or proven facts, also incorporate multiple local viewpoints and perspectives when discussing controversial subject matter from a place, e.g., dams or forestry operations

b. As a representative of a place, it is likely that participants will want to know the guide's opinion on a subject. Guides can use their viewpoint as an example of a distinct viewpoint to stoke discussion, but not as an attempt to convince people of their position.

Example: Park managers are planning to release an extirpated predator back into a National Park. Local ranchers are opposing this due to the potential impact on their livestock. The guide believes releasing this predator will improve the overall ecosystem and shares this perspective while also pointing out reasons for the ranchers' position.

6. Adventure travel guides should deliver personalised interpretation that increases the potential for transformative experiences [4].

a. Guides shall learn the interests of participants and match content to these interests to increase relevance for the participant.

Example: During the van ride to the first day's activities, the guide asks participants what was the favorite trip they've taken, and why was it their favorite.

b. Guides shall connect the travel experience to personal aspirations that participants have in their life.

Example: Guides can build in time and space for debriefing challenging parts of a trip and connect the experience to how it applies to future personal or professional growth.



6. GOVERNANCE

1. The Adventure Travel Guide Standard (“ATGS”) is governed by a volunteer group of guides and adventure travel professionals (Governance Board). Its purpose is to ensure and oversee the ongoing maintenance of the ATGS as well as to disseminate the ATGS to relevant parties. The responsibilities of the governance board include the following:

- a. Conducting outreach throughout the world to inform and educate businesses, trade groups and governments about the ATGS
- b. Assisting in efforts to implement the ATGS
 - i. Through consulting with businesses and governments
 - ii. Through certifications and licenses administered by other organizations and governments
- c. Considering feedback and suggestions regarding the ATGS
- d. Periodically updating the ATGS
 - i. Annually, basic changes in formatting, language, and updating can be performed
 - ii. Every term a published update will be agreed upon
 1. Each term shall be 5 years or as determined by the board
 2. Board Meetings

Governance Board Structure

1. In an effort to incorporate both geographic and sector diversity to the governing board, the following structure, positions and terms have been decided upon:

- a. Board Composition
 - i. The board is made up of representatives from the adventure travel community.
 - ii. There should be at least one professional guide for each large geographic sector (as detailed below). Outbound tour operators that operate in a specific part of the world, even if they are not based in that location, can be accepted.



iii. Board membership is open to all industry participants. Members may nominate themselves or be nominated by another person and are accepted to the group by a simple majority of current board members and on a rolling basis until each position is filled.

iv. Once all the positions for a region are filled, new applicants will be considered on an annual basis.

v. A nominating committee will be convened to lead recruitment efforts, manage nominations, and submit a slate of potential board members for the full board to vote on annually

b. Term

- i. Each representative agrees to serve a term of five years
- ii. After the term has expired the board member can request to serve an additional term.
 1. A simple majority of current board members is required to approve an extension request.

Leadership and Voting

1. The board will, at a minimum, have the following officers: President and Secretary. The board can choose to also elect a Treasurer and Vice President.

- a. The President must have served on the board actively for a minimum of 2 years and will serve as president for five years
 - i. The President's duties are to lead the board to fulfil its vision and mission and long-term goal setting
 - ii. Unless a treasurer is elected, the President will also oversee finances along with the Secretary (when / if there are any)
 - iii. The President will lead the executive committee (see below)
- b. The Secretary must have served on the board actively for a minimum of 1 year and will serve as secretary for five years
 - i. The Secretary's duties are to maintain and keep notes from board and executive committee meetings and to keep track of periodical edits made to the ATGS

2. The board will convene an Executive Committee to facilitate regular operations of the organization and to make routine decisions not requiring the oversight of the full board.

- a. Members of the Executive Committee will include all elected officers, the immediate past President and up to five other members of the board assigned to serve specific roles
- b. Non officer executive committee members will serve one-year terms (up to five consecutive terms) and are responsible for making operational decisions for the organization
 - i. Existing executive committee members will nominate and vote on successors to the committee
 1. Vacancies will be filled to continue out the term

3. The executive committee will make all decisions except for the following which will be voted on by the full board:

- a. Organizational leadership
 - i. President, Secretary and other officers
 - ii. Updates to the ATGS
 - iii. Members of the board
 1. After the nominating committee has done outreach to seek nominations for vacant board seats, and makes a recommendation of a proposed slate, the full board will vote to approve new members
- b. Each member has one vote, all votes are equal
 - i. Simple majority (50% +1 vote) for all votes wins except updating the ATGS
 - ii. Super majority (75% +1 vote) for updating ATGS wins
- c. Voting can take place during in-person or online meetings, or via approved polling methods (determined by executive committee)
 - i. A quorum of 35% of approved board members must be obtained in order for a decision to become valid

Geographic Membership Goals

1. In order to have broad geographic representation from the global adventure travel industry, governance board member seats will be filled using the following regional proportions:

- a. North and Central America: Minimum 1 position / Maximum 3 positions per region
 - i. Canada and United States
 - ii. Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean
- b. Africa: Minimum 1 position / Maximum 2 positions per region
 - i. Northern Africa (Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Mali, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt)
 - ii. West and Central Africa (Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo, DR Congo, Central African Republic, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe).
 - iii. East Africa (Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Rwanda, Burundi)
 - iv. Southern Africa (South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, Angola, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros)
- c. South America: Minimum 1 position / Maximum 3 positions per region
 - i. Northern and Eastern South America (Brazil, Columbia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana)
 - ii. Western and Southern South America (Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay)
- d. Europe: Minimum 1 position / Maximum 3 positions per region
 - i. UK and Ireland
 - ii. Scandinavia and the Baltic (Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Greenland, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)
 - iii. Western Europe (Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Andorra)
 - iv. Eastern Europe (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Balkans, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Hungary, Turkey, Moldavia, Belarus, Ukraine)
- e. Asia: Minimum 1 position / Maximum 3 positions per region
 - i. Middle East (Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Kurdistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, UAE)
 - ii. Northern Asia (Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan)
 - iii. Central and Southern Asia (Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka)
 - iv. East Asia (North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, China)
 - v. Southeast Asia (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia)
- f. Oceania: Minimum 1 position / Maximum 2 positions per region
 - i. Australia and Papua New Guinea
 - ii. New Zealand, Antarctica and Polynesia

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