
**Adventure tourism — Good practices
for sustainability — Requirements
and recommendations**

*Tourisme d'aventure — Bonnes pratiques de durabilité — Exigences
et recommandations*

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 228, *Tourism and related services*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

The provision of adventurous activities is one of the fastest growing segments within the tourism industry. Due to its characteristics, the direct interaction with the environment and the consequent intrinsic dependency on natural resources represent essential elements in the adventure tourism sector. Along with the environment, social and economic factors should be taken into consideration in the routines of adventure tourism providers so their activities can be developed in a sustainable manner.

This document intends to serve as a source of good sustainability practices related to adventure tourism in order to provide guidance to adventure tourism activity providers that wish to develop their activities in a sustainable way. The goal is to help adventure tourism activity providers to minimize or mitigate the negative environmental, economic or social impacts and enhance the positive ones in their operational routines.

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Adventure tourism — Good practices for sustainability — Requirements and recommendations

1 Scope

This document provides requirements and recommendations for adventure tourism activity providers on good practices for sustainability (environmental, social and economic aspects) for adventure tourism activities.

This document can be used by all types and sizes of adventure tourism activity providers, operating in different geographic, cultural and social environments.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

adventure tourism activity

adventure activity for tourism purposes that involves a degree of instruction or leadership and a deliberate accepted element of risk

Note 1 to entry: Accepted element of risk means that the participant has a minimum understanding about the risk involved.

Note 2 to entry: Adventure tourism activity usually includes physical activity, cultural exchange and interaction with the environment.

[SOURCE: ISO 21101:2014, 3.35, modified — Note 2 to entry added.]

3.2

adventure tourism activity provider

individual or organization having overall responsibility for all aspects of the provision of *adventure tourism activities* (3.1)

Note 1 to entry: *Adventure tourism activities* (3.1) can be provided free of charge or in return for payment.

[SOURCE: ISO 21101:2014, 3.36]

3.3

carrying capacity

maximum number of people that can visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic and social-cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitor satisfaction

**3.4
disability**

physical, sensory, psychic or mental deficiency, total or partial, permanent or temporary, that affects a person in their daily development and in their relationship with the physical and social environment, resulting in a limitation on the activity and restriction on participation

**3.5
interested party**

person or organization that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision or activity

[SOURCE: ISO 21101:2014, 3.2]

**3.6
participant**

person taking part in an *adventure tourism activity* (3.1) but not a member of the leadership team

Note 1 to entry: A participant might also be referred to as 'client', 'customer' or similar.

Note 2 to entry: Leadership team comprise of several leaders.

[SOURCE: ISO 21101:2014, 3.37]

**3.7
sustainability**

state of the global system, including environmental, social and economic aspects, in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Note 1 to entry: The environmental, social and economic aspects interact, are interdependent and are often referred to as the three dimensions of sustainability.

Note 2 to entry: Sustainability is the goal of *sustainable development* (3.8).

[SOURCE: ISO Guide 82:2014, 3.1]

**3.8
sustainable development**

development that meets the environmental, social and economic needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Note 1 to entry: Derived from the Brundtland Report.

[SOURCE: ISO Guide 82:2014, 3.2]

4 Understanding sustainability in the context of organization

4.1 General

Sustainability is a term used to define human actions or activities that aim to address the current human needs without compromising the needs of future generations. That includes three pillars: environmental, social and economic aspects.

NOTE Social aspects include cultural aspects.

4.2 Sustainability within adventure tourism

4.2.1 In order to promote the conservation of the environment and maintenance of the planet's natural resources, and also in the best quality of life for all the people involved and the population living in the locations where the activities take place, the adventure tourism activity provider should apply and promote good practices for these environmental, social and economic aspects.

4.2.2 Sustainability within adventure tourism involves:

- a) informing people in a responsible, transparent and honest way, including providing participants with relevant information about the adventure tourism activities before, during and after they take place;
NOTE For additional information, see ISO 21103.
- b) respecting the environment, natural and cultural heritage;
- c) respecting the cultures of local communities;
- d) encouraging the development of quality tourism for an authentic experience of the host region;
- e) ensuring that economic benefits are distributed fairly between the adventure tourism activity provider and the local community in order to contribute to sustainable development in the host region;
- f) respecting diversity and the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

5 Sustainability practices in adventure tourism**5.1 General**

5.1.1 The adventure tourism activity provider shall have an active role in the adoption of good practices for sustainability.

5.1.2 The adventure tourism activities shall be planned and implemented to provide sustainable practices that:

- a) reduce the environmental impact of activities, including minimization of the negative impacts on ecosystems (e.g. fauna, flora, geological formations, soil and water resources), and also contribute to the conservation of natural environments and their characteristics;
- b) encourage a world which is just, equitable and inclusive, promoting social sustainability and thereby benefitting all interested parties regardless of culture, ethnicity, origin, migratory status, religion, economic status or disabilities;
- c) develop economic activities to provide the means to achieve the multiple aspirations of sustainable development for today and secure the assets of future generations;
- d) contribute to the host region from an environmental, social and economic point of view.

5.2 Environmental aspects**5.2.1 General**

The adventure tourism activity provider should consider sustainable practices to protect the environment and minimize the impact of the activities, with special reference to natural resources that are used, pollution that can be produced, energy consumed and the necessity of protecting biodiversity and natural habitats.

5.2.2 Natural resource use

5.2.2.1 The adventure tourism activity provider shall:

- a) be aware of the regulations and special concerns of the area to be visited (e.g. fire, permits, waste disposal);

- b) understand and adhere to the carrying capacity of the specific environment;
- c) include in the briefing to participants instructions on eco-friendly interaction with the environment (e.g. regarding pollution, energy, protection of biodiversity);

NOTE For additional information, see ISO 21103.

- d) have some knowledge of local traditions, trails and landscape characteristics, history, ethnography and other cultural resources.

5.2.2.2 The adventure tourism activity provider should:

- a) adapt the size of the groups to the carrying capacity of the specific environment;
- b) take measures to reduce negative impact considering the fragility and sensitivity of the environment (e.g. surface and terrains used);
- c) complement the offer of outdoor activities by promoting other services related to the use of natural resources and culture including gastronomy or ethnography.

5.2.3 Pollution of land, water and air

5.2.3.1 The adventure tourism activity provider shall:

- a) reduce and reuse waste produced during the activities (e.g. promote the minimization of food packaging waste);
- b) educate its participants about ethical practice of human waste to protect the environment (e.g. planning bathroom breaks, proper disposal of toilet paper and using of biodegradable hygiene products);
- c) bring back, for appropriate disposal, any waste produced in the natural environment;
- d) minimize light and sound pollution during adventure activities.

5.2.3.2 The adventure tourism activity provider should consider:

- a) procuring from local suppliers with the aim of reducing carbon emission;
- b) ensuring that any interaction with a body of water minimizes the impact to the water (e.g. avoid using sunblock or insect repellent);
- c) disposing of soiled water (e.g. soap/dishwashing water) in order to reduce the negative impact to the environment;
- d) minimizing the carbon footprint considering all stages of the adventure tourism service, implementing actions to compensate it;
- e) recycling waste produced during the activities.

5.2.4 Energy use

The adventure tourism activity provider shall:

- a) implement actions to reduce energy consumption and/or compensate for greenhouse gases produced by energy consumption;

EXAMPLE The use of efficient electrical devices.

- b) prioritize the use of renewable energy sources.

5.2.5 Protection of biodiversity and natural habitats

5.2.5.1 In order to avoid disturbing natural habitats, the adventure tourism activity provider shall:

- a) take measures to limit interaction with wildlife (e.g. observe from a distance, do not touch, follow or approach, do not feed, avoid direct contact, avoid interfering during sensitive times such as mating, nesting, raising young or in winter);
- b) avoid removing or displacing any biological or geological samples (e.g. flora, fauna and objects) which naturally occur in the host region;
- c) avoid introducing non-native and invasive species to the host region.

5.2.5.2 The adventure tourism activity provider should consider using green technology and environmentally friendly structures and practices.

5.2.6 Proactive approach

The adventure tourism activity provider should contribute positively to the conservation of the areas of operation, directly or indirectly, by:

- a) supporting any organization or any initiative that promotes sustainability (preferably in the region);
- b) encouraging participants and local communities to act proactively to ensure the sustainability of their actions;
- c) raising awareness about safeguarding and protection of natural resources when in natural areas, informing the authorities with responsibility for environmental preservation or conservation of any anomalies detected in these areas;
- d) alerting the relevant authorities of any flora-and-fauna-related issues such as wounded wildlife, poaching, illegal logging or physical removal of species.

5.3 Social aspects/matters

5.3.1 General

5.3.1.1 The adventure tourism activity provider should:

- a) contribute to programs and initiatives that recognize, promote and respect regional cultural heritage and traditions and cultural values, and contribute to the social and economic development of workers and communities involved in the production chain;
- b) consider the mutual social impact that communities have on adventure tourism and that participants of adventure tourism activities have on the local community;
- c) recognize the benefits that the development and promotion of adventure tourism activities bring to local communities, including to persons with disabilities, senior citizens, families, as well as the mitigation of the negative impact of visitors on local communities.

5.3.1.2 The education of local communities and visitors, information sharing and cooperation between interested parties will generate a cohesive program and a more sustainable and marketable destination.

5.3.2 Social awareness/respect (equity)

5.3.2.1 Awareness creation for staff and the local community

5.3.2.1.1 The adventure tourism activity provider shall:

- a) interact with the staff and local community to create communication channels and keep track of communications, including complaints, suggestions and related action;
- b) ensure that its staff and the local community are informed about the negative consequences that local and zoonotic diseases will have on the adventure tourism business and activities within their area;
- c) create awareness about risk management (identification, classification, treatment, documentation) and preparedness for extreme weather hazards and emergencies. ISO 21101 can be used as a reference;
- d) create awareness about the role that communities can play in emergency response and rescue procedures and how to conduct the activities in a safe and prudent manner, including equipment and site selection and safety briefings;

5.3.2.1.2 The adventure tourism activity provider should:

- a) make members of the local community aware of the positive role that adventure tourism can play in their region;
- b) inform the local community about participants' profiles, expectations and requirements;
- c) advise the local community to care about the safety and security of the adventure participants and to be aware of the negative impact that human exploitation, theft, robbery and fraud can have on the local adventure tourism operations and the host region;
- d) raise awareness of the value of the area and its potential for sports, tourism and recreational purposes.

5.3.2.2 Awareness creation for participants, staff and the local community

5.3.2.2.1 The adventure tourism activity provider should:

- a) inform staff and participants about the customs and lifestyle of the host region to ensure appropriate behaviour and communication that contribute to the preservation of local culture (i.e. beliefs, habits, rituals, religions, sensitivities and traditions);
- b) educate staff and participants on being sensitive to the privacy of members of the local community and their access to culturally significant places;
- c) educate staff and participants to treat cultural heritage with dignity and respect (i.e. avoiding the invasion of sacred sites or the demeaning of cultural ceremonies);
- d) ensure that staff and participants do not damage or remove religious or cultural artefacts;
- e) prepare the staff and participants in relation to the inclusion of persons with disabilities as part of addressing their accessibility needs;
- f) make the local community aware of the contribution of adventure tourism to the development of the host region.

5.3.2.2.2 The adventure tourism activity provider should educate the local community in:

- a) skills that enhance the adventure tourism industry (e.g. being adventure-tourism-centric, entrepreneurial skills, customer service, hospitality, guiding, horticulture, food production);

- b) the planning and development of needs assessments, itineraries, trip/expedition/program plans, assessments, maintenance and risk assessment;
- c) the logistics involved in adventure tourism operations.
- d) national and international tourism legislation and standards and how to comply with this;
- e) risk management (identification, classification, treatment, documentation).

NOTE 1 For additional information on safety and risk management, see ISO 21101.

NOTE 2 For additional information on education, see ISO/TR 21102.

5.3.3 Involvement

5.3.3.1 General

The adventure tourism activity provider should contribute positively to the preservation of the local culture, identity and quality of life.

5.3.3.2 Community involvement

5.3.3.2.1 The adventure tourism activity provider shall:

- a) treat members of the local community as partners and equals in local adventure tourism business operations;
- b) ensure that training is provided for local communities;
- c) create an environment in which the local community can be proud of their local culture as part of the adventure tourism experience (e.g. through showcasing their cultural customs, beliefs, rituals, music and food);
- d) ask whether it is appropriate for tourists to visit people's homes.

5.3.3.2.2 The adventure tourism activity provider should:

- a) encourage members of the local community to provide various products and services needed for the operation(s) (e.g. guiding, food production, hospitality, transport, activities);
- b) give preference to having local ownership in the adventure business;
- c) ensure that the local community receive fair compensation (salaries) and have social protection;
- d) ensure that working conditions are fair;
- e) agree with the local communities the notice period required for tourist visits, what activities are acceptable and what group sizes are suitable;
- f) create opportunities for local communities to benefit from adventure tourism participants (e.g. donations, sales);
- g) motivate the local community to avoid discrimination;
- h) encourage the exchange of experiences between participants and local communities;
- i) prepare the local community to deal with accessibility for participants with disabilities.

5.3.3.3 Participant involvement

5.3.3.3.1 The adventure tourism activity provider shall inform participants how to interact with the local community and respect local culture and customs.

5.3.3.3.2 The adventure tourism activity provider should:

- a) inform its participants on issues regarding tips;
- b) ensure that the routines and daily activities of local communities are not adversely affected;
- c) engage participants in the conservation of the environment and local culture;
- d) create opportunities where participants can take part in local ceremonies, activities, music and festivals;
- e) encourage participants to buy crafts that are made locally and to bargain responsibly;
- f) involve the participants in alerting relevant authorities of any anomalies (e.g. disrespect for the life of local communities);
- g) motivate the participants to engage with the local communities (e.g. disabled persons organizations, senior citizens, youths and families with small children);
- h) motivate the participants to identify gaps in tourism service provision in order to improve the quality of service and make a positive contribution to the sustainability of the local community.

5.4 Economic aspect

5.4.1 General

Adventure tourism activity providers should consider sustainable practices to develop local economies, with particular reference to fair business practices, financial risk management and employment.

5.4.2 Fair business practices

The adventure tourism activity provider should consider:

- a) developing procedures to identify potential issues regarding fraudulent, deceptive or dishonest commercial business or consumer practices;
- b) implementing actions to address identified issues regarding fraudulent, deceptive or dishonest commercial business or consumer practices identified under practice;
- c) reporting on key parameters, assessments or metrics used to quantify the effect of developed actions under practice;
- d) maintaining a sustainable economic relationship with the local communities (e.g. defining contracts);
- e) committing to local development (e.g. allocating funds to local projects), empowering local businesses;
- f) making the payment of the service in the country of destination to support the local economy and prevent the exit of capital (e.g. avoiding tax havens);
- g) encouraging the local community to innovate (e.g. providing internet facilities).