

Wildlife tours India is firmly committed to preserving our fragile environment. All HIMALAYAN ADVENTURE tours follow a strict eco-code that involves everyone, starting from the office, to our clients, the adventure staff on field and the local community.

To that effect we are proud to present the following paper compiled by us, for you to read and pass on. The paper contains excerpts from the best eco tourism practices around the world.

WE PLEDGE TO

be a partner in conducting responsible and sustainable tourism with minimal impact on the physical, cultural and social environment of the area.

Moving towards the task outlined in the above pledge we have to conserve and protect our environment on all fronts. In the following pages we have endeavoured to extensively outline industry specific guidelines. These measures have to be adopted sooner or later by the tourism industry in a positive and pro active collaboration with the Indian Government.

Why conserve?

We all want to survive. To do that we all depend on the earth's resources for our basic needs. If resources are no longer available, then we are not only threatening our own existence but also that of future generations and the wildlife with which we share this planet. Unfortunately humans have not been looking after the earth's resources carefully enough; instead we have been using them without consideration for the environment or future needs. We are in danger of destroying the natural systems that are providing those significant resources. The time has come when we have got to look at changes in lifestyles because, not only are we gambling with our own survival, but also that of all the other' species on earth.

How can we conserve?

This can only be achieved by living sustainably. Sustainability is a key word for the 1990s and for many people this will mean a significant change in both attitude and actions. Everyone must understand the effects that their activities are having on other individuals, other communities, other nations, future generations and other species. The internationally recognised text, Caring for the Earth states that "sustainability is an ethic based on care for each other and the Earth." Development should not be at the expense of other communities or later generations, nor threaten the survival of other species. The benefits and costs of resource use and environmental conservation should be shared among people who are poor and those who are rich, and between our generation and those who will come after us.

TREAD SOFTLY

The Indian Outdoors are a fragile environment. They are also becoming increasingly popular with people who are learning to appreciate the natural values and the recreation opportunities available. The increasing numbers of visitors is having an effect on the areas natural and cultural heritage. Mushrooming construction, expanding campsites, bacteria in creeks and rivers, erosion, deterioration of walking tracks(some are even being turned in to motorable roads) and the destruction of local architecture, giving way to ugly, modern structures, have all become more common in recent years.

Fortunately some visitors and companies have adopted the ethic of minimal impact recreation. We can minimise the damage to the natural environment by learning to tread softly and this reduces the need to place restrictions on visitors. Without it we run the very real danger of "loving our natural areas to death". By learning to tread softly, we can minimise the damage to the natural environment. Reduce the need for track and campsite closures, or even worse have them turn into built up resorts, and tarred roads.

We have compiled a series of codes covering a range of adventure and recreation activities. The codes contain common sense information to protect the natural and cultural environment and encourage safety.

ECOTOURISM INDUSTRY AND MARKETPLACE

Did you know that...?

Ecotourism is the world's largest industry -- surpassing automobiles, petroleum, and weaponry? And that Ecotourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry? In a recent survey, more than 35 million Americans said they were likely to take an ecotour within the next three years.

TOURISM INFORMATION

Why is there such a growing interest in ecotourism?

The world community is more aware of the important interactions of ecosystems and the impact people have on the environment. A growing awareness of ecological concerns through local issues, news stories, and increased mobility are all contributing to more involvement and more personal concern.

....and....

Ecotourism is FUN !!!

Here are some points to help on our educational journey. Remember, as a responsible traveller, agent, operator, promoter or policy maker, we can have and provide fun while helping to conserve and protect our fragile ecosystems, endangered species, indigenous peoples and beautiful natural environment.

SOME BASIC FACTS

Examples of the length of time litter lasts:

Orange and banana peel	up to 2 years
Cigarette butts	1-5 years
Wool socks	1-5 years
Plastic-coated paper	15 years
Nylon fabric	30-40 years
Leather	up to 50 years
Tin cans	50 years
Aluminium cans and tabs	80-100 years
Plastic bags & Plastic film containers	80-100 years
Glass bottles	1 million years
Plastic bottles	indefinitely

Forest Fires

Forest fires, starting from visitor's campfires and carelessly tossed cigarette butts cause extensive damage. Some trees are killed by very hot fires, and replacement of mature trees may take hundreds of years.

- In many areas, firewood is often in short supply. Many small native animals live among fallen branches. In alpine areas where the growing season is short, such habitats are replaced very slowly.
- Always try to use a fuel stove when camping. Compared with campfires, fuel stoves are cleaner, a lot easier to use in wet weather, they cook faster and don't scar the landscape. Ensure that your party members have warm clothing and good tents so fires won't be needed for warmth.

If you feel you must light a fire:

- Please don't light a fire if you are in any doubt about the safety of lighting it.
- Do not light open fires during hot windy weather.
- Keep the fire small (under one metre square). Don't put rocks around it - these just create another visual scar. Use a safe existing fireplace rather than making new one.
- Use only dead fallen wood. Dead standing trees are a home for wildlife and are part of the scenery. Leave axes at home.
- Be absolutely sure the fire is out. Before you leave, feel the ground underneath the coals. If it is still warm, the fire is not out. Put it out with water, not soil.

Washing

- Don't wash in streams and lakes. Detergents, toothpaste and soap (even biodegradable types) harm fish and water life.
- Wash at a respectable distance away from streams and lakes and scatter the wash water here so that it filters through the soil before returning to the stream. Use gritty sand and a scourer instead of soap to clean dishes.
- Don't throw food scraps into streams, rivers and lakes.

How to avoid 'Gastro'

We think the increasing cases of gastro-enteritis (diarrhoea and vomiting) in some high-use areas are caused by exposed human faecal waste. Giardia, a human bacterial parasite is also of concern.

Giardia lives in mountains streams contaminated by faecal waste, and causes chronic diarrhoea and an array of other nasties. It has been found in the USA , New Zealand and Australia and is abundant in India. Avoid 'gastro' and help ensure that Giardia does not spread to new areas by observing these guidelines.

- Where there is a toilet, please use it. In areas without toilets, bury your faecal waste. Choose a spot at least 100 metres away from campsites and watercourses.
- Dig a hole 15 cm (six inches) deep (take a "Khurpi" or any stick/stone at hand for this purpose).
- Bury all faecal waste and paper, mixing it with soil to help decomposition and discourage animals. (Uphold the Indian Tradition of "The Lotta System" avoid toilet paper) Carry out sanitary pads, tampons and condoms.
- In the long run we should formulate a policy of carrying out human wastes to a suitable sewage system. In high use areas and river valleys.
- Flies and small animals are attracted to faecal waste and food. Cover all food. Avoid putting it on camp tables, furniture and other places used by flies and anims.
- Boil water for at least five and preferable ten minutes before drinking in high- use areas or areas with low water flow.

GENERAL MINIMUM IMPACT PRACTICES FOR TRAVEL AGENCIES AND TOUR OPERATORS

- Strengthen the conservation effort for, and enhance the natural integrity of the places visited.
- Respect the sensitivities of other cultures.
- Support organisations, associations, companies, hotels and suppliers who are “**GREEN**” and practise eco-friendly methods of operation.
- Be efficient in the use of natural resources (water, energy).
- Ensure waste disposal has minimal environmental and aesthetic impact.
- Develop a recycling program.
- Support principals (ie hotels, carriers etc.) who have a conservation ethic.
- Support ecotourism education/training for guides and managers.
- Employ tour guides well versed and respectful of local cultures and environments.
- Give clients appropriate verbal and written education and guidance with respect to the natural and cultural history of the areas visited.
- Use locally produced goods that benefit the local community, but do not buy goods made from threatened or endangered species.
- Never intentionally disturb or encourage the disturbance of wildlife or wildlife habitats.
- Keep vehicles to designated roads and tracks.
- Abide by the rules and regulations of natural areas.
- Commit to the principle of best practice.
- Ensure truth in advertising.
- Maximise the quality of experience for hosts and guests.

Based upon the above guidelines we can go a step further by formulating industry and consumer specific guidelines.

MINIMUM IMPACT GUIDELINES FOR ECOTOURISTS

Before you go on your holiday read about the places you are about to visit and choose your ecotour operator AFTER asking the following questions:

- Does the operator comply with the accepted norms for ecotourism and conservation.
- Is there economic benefit going back to, or staying in, the local community?
- Does the operator use local tour guides, services and supplies where possible?

While you are on tour minimise the negative social, environmental and economical impacts of your visit.

- Remember ... you are a guest.
- Be culturally sensitive and respect local customs.
- Allow enough time in each place to appreciate it.
- Travel by your own muscle power where possible.
- Be careful not to introduce exotic plants or animals.
- Stay on the track (trail).
- Leave an area cleaner than when you found it.
- Don't exploit an area when food gathering.
- Don't disturb wildlife or wildlife habitats.
- Familiarise yourself with local regulations.
- Don't use soap or detergents in natural water bodies.
- When travelling, spend money on local enterprises.
- Consider the implications of buying plant and animal products. Find out if they're rare or endangered, taken from the wild, and if the trade is approved of by local authorities.
- Don't encourage illegal trade by buying products made from endangered species.
- While staying in hotels and camps, take that extra step to conserve energy and natural resources like electricity and water.

1. Switch off TV and lights when not needed.

2. Turn off the tap while shaving, brushing teeth, applying soap or scrubbing.

Are you an Ecotourist? Do you travel responsibly?

Where do you fit in?

The importance of the traveller in the eco-tourism industry cannot be underestimated. You, the traveller, have an enormous effect on the travel industry through the choices you make. Here are some tips to provide you with information that will help you to become a more responsible traveller. Acting responsibly increases your enjoyment and aids in the protection of the host country's natural and cultural environments.

Before you travel...

Educating yourself about your destination, prior to departure, is an extremely important side of good eco-tourism practice. Learning about the history, culture, language, and natural environment of your destination area aids both cultural interaction and appreciation of local ecosystems. People are more likely to socialize if you show a prior knowledge of their country and home. Prior knowledge of local ecosystems means you are more alert to different animals and plants to look for. Information is available from local libraries, your tour operator, national tourism organizations, and visitor centres on arrival.

While you travel...

The manner in which you conduct yourself on vacation determines the impact you personally will make on your chosen destination area. Essentially you can make a significant difference through maximizing your positive impact and minimizing your negative impact on the host natural and cultural environments. It is important to remember that travellers are guests in the host destination.

Travellers can help to conserve the environment by making sure that their economic impact directly benefits the local population. Question who will benefit from the choices you make. Ensuring that the money you spend goes to the local inhabitants means that they will want to conserve the natural environment that has attracted you to that destination.

After your trip...

- Foster and generate a natural and cultural understanding of the places you have visited.
- If you observed management problems during your trip, you should inform the relevant government authorities and non-profit organisations. Be helpful. Suggest changes or areas for improvement. Acknowledge areas where you saw the successful application of eco-tourism principles.
- Advise travellers to avoid buying corals, ivory and other souvenirs that may exploit wildlife. Remember: Many marine curios cannot be exported without a license.
- Dispose of litter carefully. Bottles, cans and other packaging can be deadly to wildlife.
- Don't stay silent if you come across environmental problems. Contact your nearest environmental or tourism organisation.
- Conserve water and energy switch off lights.
- Always remember the three Rs for effective waste management: reduce, reuse and recycle

MINIMUM IMPACT GUIDELINES FOR ADVENTURE TOUR OPERATORS

- Use kerosene or gas stoves instead of lighting campfires for cooking purposes.
- Use only biodegradable soap and toiletries; do not encourage showers on treks, as heating water requires wood burning.
- Bring a trowel to dig toilets and carry matches to burn used toilet paper.
- Encourage clients to pick up trash along trails, and garbage is burned, not left behind.
- In culturally sensitive areas, discourage wearing skin tight clothing or short shorts.
- Ask the clients to refrain from giving trinkets to local communities, as this encourages begging.
- Local staff should be trained to be environmentally and culturally sensitive.
- Encourage bus drivers to stop their engines when waiting for clients; educate hotel employees about the benefits of "stopping the engines" so they can put pressure on the taxi drivers who service the hotel.
- Learn about protective environmental measures and teach them to clients. Educated clients can pass valuable information on to other clients and can effectively evaluate the tour operator's environmental consciousness.
- Develop workshops that instruct employees how to participate in ecologically sound tourism and that outline the benefits, both environmental and financial, of operating a business according to ecological ideas.
- Initiate and encourage clean-up campaigns around the village in attempts to underscore the importance of keeping the area clean. The people we visit are essentially farmers and fishermen, so caring for the environment has always been in their best interests. Non-biodegradable rubbish is relatively new and is also an unfortunate by-product of their additional purchasing power as a result of tourism.

BASIC MINIMUM IMPACT GUIDELINES FOR HOTELS

- While planning for a new resort in virgin locations, ensure that extreme care is taken to minimise the impact on the local population and environment.
 1. Make only low height buildings.
 2. Use energy efficient construction material.
 3. Use local material and design.
 4. A high end luxury resort does not need to be an eye sore.
 5. Avoid cutting trees to clear areas and for construction.
 6. Employ and train the local population.
- Set target for a 50 percent reduction in landfill waste and a 20 percent reduction in paper use.
- Buy recycled--close the recycling loop.
- Re-distribute and/or recycle all used soap and amenities.
- Establish programs at all properties to recycle the following: paper, newspaper, cans, organic waste, motor oils, cardboard, plastics, bottles, coat hangers and printer cartridges.
- Establish a policy and procedure for the identification and disposal of hazardous waste.
- Eliminate all single-serve packaging.
- Introduce "blue boxes" for collection of recyclable materials in guest rooms.
- Avoid wrapping foods in plastic film and don't use Styrofoam.
- Use fabric napkins.
- Replace all shower heads and taps with low-flow alternatives.
- Establish a standard temperature for the setting of all hot water tanks.
- Convert all necessary paper products to unbleached kraft or recycled materials.
- Streamline use of cleaning agents and, where available, replace with non-aerosol products; eliminate hazardous chemicals and synthetic perfumes.
- Use water-saving sterilisers for dishes and glasses; use only when full.
- Initiate strategic alliance with suppliers to purchase organically grown foodstuffs. Encourage your suppliers to pack goods in returnable, reusable plastic crates. Initiate negotiations with suppliers to eliminate and reduce packaging where ever possible.
- Waste Management: Recycle bottle corks to make cricket balls, floor tiles, etc. From recycling proceeds, the Inter-Continental Hotel Sydney has contributed A\$18,000 to a war veterans retirement village for the purchase of wheelchairs.
- Noise: Install proper door seals and double glaze windows of guest and function rooms.
- Storage Tanks: Inspect fuel and gas tanks regularly for leaks; shutoff valves must be working properly.
- Pesticides/Herbicides: Ensure that all chemicals are environmentally friendly, properly stored and labelled.
- Hazardous Materials: Identify all hazardous materials; establish correct storage and handling procedures.
- Water: Use all cold water storage tanks continuously wherever possible to avoid stagnant water problems and minimise chemical water treatment.
- Community Action/Innovation: Encourage staff to contribute suggestions; some hotels have initiated a staff-driven environmental awards programme.
- Plant native species--they have good all-year colour and consume less water (reduces pesticide use also).
- Washing machines with high-speed spin will ensure a maximum reduction in water.

MINIMAL IMPACT CAMPING

Lets call it "No Trace Camping"

- Look for low impact campsites. Sand or hard surfaces are better than boggy or grassed areas. Camp at an existing campsite rather than a new one and keep at least 20 metres away from watercourses and the track.
- Use modern camping equipment, waterproof tents and foam sleeping-mats to minimise damage to camping areas. Digging trenches around tents is damaging and unnecessary if the tents are sited properly.
- Leave campsites better than you found them by removing rubbish and dismantling unnecessary or unsafe fireplaces.

MINIMAL IMPACT MOUNTAIN BIKING.

Cycle right.....

Mountain bike riding has increased at a very rapid rate in recent years. The pleasure and exhilaration of cycling in natural areas has resulted in people of all ages taking to their bikes for day and overnight trips.

If cyclists are to continue to experience the pleasure of riding in relatively undisturbed areas, they will need to follow this code and limit the impact of their visit.

- Ride on roads and vehicle tracks only. Even roads and tracks are particularly susceptible to damage when wet. They cannot be used when they are seasonally closed. Bicycles may not be used in wilderness areas. Walking tracks are meant for walkers and are not for use by bicycles.
- Respect the rights of others. Other visitors have the same rights as you, so let them go about their activities without interference. Keep speeds down to avoid frightening other visitors.
- If you meet walkers, announce your presence, slow down and give them right of way as you pass.
- If you pass cattle, always give them right of way. Some cattle are easily frightened by bicycles and spooked cattle can be dangerous to you and their minders. Announce your presence by voice, dismount and talk as the cattle pass to reassure the animal. If necessary, move off the track to give them plenty of room. Be alert for signs of cattle (hoof prints or droppings) and watch for them on bends or crests.
- Avoid skidding. Skidding damages tracks by removing the harder surface layer. This can then lead to erosion. Cutting corners also causes erosion. Don't cut corners, stay on the track.
- Stay away from wet, muddy areas. Muddy areas are very prone to damage. The tracks you leave behind channel the water when it rains and this leads to erosion.

Planning your trip.....

- Let the local authorities know before you go mountain biking. Tell them about your party, your route, when you plan to return and the equipment the party is carrying., Remember to contact them when you get back.
- Keep your party small. Large parties have more environmental impact, affect the experience of others and are harder to manage.
- Go off peak. Where possible avoid the peak times of the year and the more popular areas. You will miss the crowds and spread the impact, giving the environment a chance to recover.
- Plan your route so that you can camp at recognised campsites. If possible, do not create a new site.
- Wear your helmet whenever you are cycling.
- Where ever possible, travel with a recognised tour operator who incorporates the following norms:
 1. Uses fuel stove and fuel for cooking
 2. Uses good quality tents
 3. Ensures burial of bio degradable and human waste.

MINIMAL IMPACT RIVER CAMPS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

India offers a host of rivers along the length and breadth of the great Himalayan Range. These rivers in turn play host to various outfits providing a variety of white water sports. This page contains suggestions formulated by the Indian Association of Professional Rafting Outfitters, for safe and enjoyable river trips with minimal impact on the environment and on other visitors.

Travelling down a river is one of the most enjoyable activities visitors can do, but it is not without risks. Accidents often happen through parties being ill-prepared or failing to observe necessary safety precautions. With increasing numbers on the rivers, serious damage can also be caused to the environment.

If you do the right thing travelling to and on the river, impact can be minimal.

- Keep vehicles to formed roads and tracks. Craft must be carried to the water.
- If other groups are there, stagger launchings to avoid congestion and social impacts.
- When you camp, try to avoid camping with other groups (camp sharing) and choose a site with a robust bank or beach on which landing and launching of craft will have least impact.

Planning your trip

- Check the season for each river. Certain sections are not safe during Monsoon months.
- Ensure river volume is suitable before departure.
- Ensure all craft are designed for the type of paddling, are adequately equipped with fixed buoyancy, handholds, spray covers (if necessary) and are in good order.
- Carry appropriate group equipment including repair kit, comprehensive first aid kit, spare food and matches.
- Carry appropriate individual equipment including throw rope, buoyancy/life vest, helmet, personal first aid kit, adequate protection against cold, wet, hot and sunny weather. Wear life vests at all times and helmets during white water sections.
- Always raft/kayak with a minimum of two crafts.
- Keep the party in sight of one another at all times.
- Inspect rapids or difficult sections one craft at a time with the weakest paddlers in the middle of the group.
- Keep well away from trees, snags and other obstacles.
- Be familiar and comply with white water safety codes recommended by the **Indian Association of Professional Rafting Outfitters**.
- Ensure prior knowledge of the river. The leader of the trip should have experience of the river and have leadership skills. Through maps, river guides and talking to people who have travelled the river, be sure your party is aware of difficult sections, portages and campsites.

On extreme white water sections, only take appropriately skilled party members. Be sure your party members are capable of:

1. paddling to the level of the rapids expected to be encountered;
2. swimming confidently; and
3. rescuing themselves and other party members from a capsized.

- Go off peak. Where possible avoid the peak times of the year. On popular rivers try to choose quieter times such as midweek and non-holiday periods for your trip.
- Protect yourself and other group members against sunburn, cold, wind and rain. Protect your skin and always wear a long sleeved top, a hat and sunscreen.
- Plan your escape routes. Carry maps and be familiar with potential escape routes should a mishap occur which necessitates walking out.
- Have appropriate walking gear (shoes, day pack, map, compass, torch) in case this should be needed.
- Always ensure that you raft with an experienced and recognised white water outfit, adhering to safety and environmental norms recommended by the Indian Association of Professional Rafting Outfitters.

MINIMAL IMPACT MOTOR SAFARIS

Camping is perhaps the most popular way of enjoying the great outdoors, and jeep safaris is an excellent way for people of all ages to visit the Indian Himalayas and deserts. Whether you camp at a designated campsite with several other groups or have found your own private camping spot, follow this code to limit the impact of your visit.

- Drive on the track. Drive your vehicle only on roads that are open to the public and avoid using muddy tracks where you are likely to leave wheel ruts that cause greater soil erosion. It is irresponsible and, in Wild Life Reserves it is illegal to drive off formed roads and tracks. Remove fallen trees across tracks rather than driving around them.
- Drive carefully on mountain roads - they can be hazardous when wet specially if vehicles travel too fast. Slower speeds will also enable you to enjoy more of the scenery, and help protect native animals which cross and use roads in these areas.
- Take care on gravel surfaces and edges. Remember that other vehicles such as large trucks may be sharing the road with you.
- Think before you park and leave your vehicle. Are you blocking a track that may be needed in an emergency or by another visitor.
- Leave your pets and firearms at home.

Planning your trip

- Keep your party small. Large parties have environmental impact and can adversely affect the experience of other visitors.
- Go off peak. Where possible avoid the peak times of the year and the more popular areas. You will miss the crowds and spread the impact, giving the environment a chance to recover.
- Mountain weather changes very rapidly. Don't be fooled; it can snow in summer too. So be prepared.
- Protect yourself and other group members against sunburn, cold, wind and rain. Take warm clothing (jumper, gloves, cap), a raincoat and wear strong shoes. Protect your skin and always wear a long sleeved top, a hat and sunscreen.
- Where ever possible, travel with a recognised tour operator who incorporates the following norms:
 1. Uses fuel stove and fuel for cooking
 2. Uses good quality tents
 3. Ensures burial of bio degradable and human waste.

MINIMAL IMPACT HORSE/ ELEPHANT/ CAMEL SAFARIS

The use of horses , elephants and camels are part of the cultural and historic heritage in many parts of India and a source of pleasure and enjoyment for a growing number of people. Riding is accepted as an appropriate means of appreciating and enjoying areas where environmental and social impacts can be kept at acceptable levels. Saddle and pack animals are also used for camping purposes in many areas.

We have formed a few basic guidelines bearing the following aims in mind.

To provide riders with guidelines to minimise the impacts of riding animals on environment thereby helping to:

- prevent soil erosion;
- minimise trampling and grazing impacts;
- prevent the introduction and spread of noxious and exotic plants;
- protect waterways;
- protect significant and environmentally sensitive areas

Holding

Hold animals at least 30 metres form lakes, streams, huts and camping areas.

Tethering

- Avoid damage to vegetation when tethering. Do not tie animals to small limbs, saplings and shrubs. They are easily damaged if they pull back.
- Avoid tethering animals that do not stand easy or paw the ground. This results in bare ground around trees in a short time.
- Avoid holding animals together which are unfamiliar with each other or run them together prior to a trip. Fighting increases ground damage as well as the risk of injury.

Pack horses

The use of pack horses for camping is encouraged, even in areas open to vehicles. they allow greater flexibility in routes and campsites, thereby assisting in the dispersal of impacts. The number of pack horses can be kept to a minimum if camping equipment and food requirements are considered carefully.

Environmental protection while on safari

- Camping with animals significantly increases trampling and grazing impacts. Responsible camping practices are essential to assist in maintaining campsites.
- Avoid camping in areas commonly used by other recreationalists.
- Camp at an existing campsite rather than a new one and keep at least 30 metres away from watercourses and lakes. Spend only one or two nights at each campsite.
- Look for low impact campsites. Choose well drained sites - sandy or hard surfaces are better than boggy or vegetated areas. Do not cut trenches around tents.
- Break up and scatter manure before vacating campsites.
- Avoid crossing areas easily damaged by animals such as moss beds, swamps and steep or boggy stream/river crossing.
- Do not blaze or mark tracks or routes in any way.
- Animals must be watered downstream from camping areas and at least 30 metres from camping areas on lake fore shores.
- Rather than leading animals to stream banks and lake edges, which can cause bank erosion, bring bucket water to horses. Use watering troughs where provided.

MINIMAL IMPACT SKIING & WINTER/SNOW CAMPING

Most of India's skiing and snow camping opportunities can be enjoyed in the Himalayas.

Winter visitors can accidentally damage the fragile alpine and high altitude desert environment through inappropriate or careless practices. Some impacts can become very obvious when the snow melts.

Cooking, heat and fire

- Always carry a fuel stove when snow camping. If you carry warm clothes and use a fuel stove, fires will not be needed for warmth or cooking. Compared with fires, fuel stoves are faster, cleaner and a lot easier to use in winter.
- A fire built on the snow will burn down and damage sensitive alpine vegetation.
- Minimise the use of fires in Gaddi and Gujjar encampment areas in winter, as their stored supplies of firewood and dung patties are needed by them when they bring their herds up to pasture. It is not yours to use, except in an emergency. It is also difficult for them to replace.
- Cooking outside in winter can be a highly enjoyable and social activity.
- Use a snow-shovel to construct a kitchen area near the tent site. Dig a trench for your feet and build a wall of snow blocks to deflect any cold winds. Sit on insulating mats for comfort and warmth. Combining meals is a friendly activity and saves fuel.
- Remember to dismantle snow walls and fill in your kitchen area prior to moving camp.
- Stoves should not be used in tents, other than designated for kitchen, due to the danger of the tent catching fire, hot liquids and food spilling, carbon monoxide poisoning and the depletion of oxygen in confined spaces.

Resort Development

Big ski resorts form a major part of any Winter sport activities. While planning for Ski Resorts one must take care of the following points:

- Minimise cutting down of forest areas to make way for Ski runs. As far as possible try and use the existing barren mountain sides for this purpose.
- Guidelines must be laid down for new construction of hotels and resorts. They must conform to local architecture and design not turn out as multi storied eye sores.
- Only modern and eco friendly ski lifts and Cable cars should be used. Older designs which run on fuel should be discarded.

Planning your tour

- Keep your party small. Large parties have more environmental impact, affect the experience of others and are harder to manage.
- Sunlight in the mountains burns even on cold and cloudy days. Protect your skin and eyes. Always wear a peaked cap, good sunglasses and sunscreen.
- Be able to read weather charts and plan your trip with the forecast in mind. Also plan for delays so you are not forced to travel in white-out and blizzard conditions. Carry several extra days' food.

MINIMAL IMPACT TREKKING

On the right track.....

- Stay on the track even if it's rough and muddy. Walking on the track edges and cutting corners on steep 'zigzag' tracks increase damage, erosion and visual scarring, as well as causing confusion about which is the right track.
- Spread out in open country where there are no tracks. Spreading out (rather than following in each other's footsteps) disperses impact. A plant stepped on only once has more chance of survival than if trampled by the whole party.
- Avoid sensitive vegetation. Sensitive vegetation is easily destroyed by trampling. Stay on rocks and hard ground whenever possible.
- Keep the wilderness wild. Cutting new tracks is illegal and marking tracks with flags, tape or other materials is unsightly and can confuse other walkers.
- Walk softly. Choose appropriate footwear for the terrain. Solid but lightweight walking boots are best. Wear wide and soft soled shoes around campsites to avoid leaving deep imprints.
- Choose a different route each time you visit a trackless area, and camp at different sites whenever possible.

Planning your trip

- Let local authorities know before you go trekking. Tell them about your party, your route, when you plan to return and the equipment the party is carrying. Remember to contact them when you return.
- Keep your party small. Large parties have more environmental impact and can adversely affect the experience of other visitors.
- Go off peak. Where possible avoid the peak times of the year. You will miss the crowds and spread the impact, giving the environment a chance to recover.
- Mountain weather changes very rapidly. Don't be fooled; it can snow in summer too. So be prepared.
- Plan your route so that you can camp at recognised campsites. If possible do not create a new site.
- Where ever possible, travel with a recognised tour operator who incorporates the following norms:
 - a) Uses fuel stove and fuel for cooking
 - b) Uses good quality tents
 - c) Ensures burial of bio-degradable and human waste.

MINIMUM IMPACT CLIMBING EXPEDITIONS

The Indian Himalayas are fast becoming a haven for climbing enthusiasts from all over the world. Unfortunately, big climbing expeditions leave behind a garbage trail for miles which remains there for hundreds of years. We have to ensure that all climbing expeditions are aware of the ecological impact they cause, and that they undertake all possible measure to ensure that the outdoors are protected at all costs.

- Only one expedition at a time on the mountain.
- Keep your climbing party small and manageable.
- Educate the porters and pony wallas on the importance of preserving the environment.
- Use only cooking gas and kerosene oil for cooking purposes.
- Make a conscious effort to bring back as much garbage as possible to the nearest village/town where it can be disposed off in a proper manner.
- Try and include extra porters / ponies in your expedition budget. These can be used specifically used for garbage removal.
- The Indian Mountaineering Foundation should ensure that the above guidelines apply not only to the private expeditions but also to expeditions organised by the various Para military forces.

BASIC MINIMUM IMPACT GUIDELINES FOR HOUSEHOLDS

Food for thought

Did you know that 50 % of all the energy used in India is for cooking ?? So improved fuel efficiency in the kitchen will help save trees, conserve fossil fuel and return more animal waste to the soil to improve it. Here are some simple ways to make the most of your cooking fuel.

- Keep the vessel covered with a lid during cooking - it keeps the heat in and helps cook faster.
- Don't cook continuously on a high flame. When the liquid in the food starts boiling, the flame can be reduced. This habit can save as much a 40 % fuel !
- Use the smaller burner of the gas stove when ever possible.
- A pressure cooker can save up to 75% of the fuel and time spent in cooking.
- Food cooks faster in aluminum vessels.
- To achieve better fuel efficiency, ensure that the bottom of the cooking vessel is large enough to entirely cover the burner.
- Turn of the stove a few minutes before the cooking is finished, keep the vessel covered to save fuel.
- Plan and keep things ready before the stove is turned on.
- Get the family to eat together, it saves having to reheat food several times.
- Maintain the stove on a regular basis.
- Smokeless choolas are more fuel efficient than traditional ones.
- Have you thought of using a Solar cooker ?

Paper Tiger

India's production of paper is estimated to be upwards of 14 lakh tons a year. Feeding paper mills with raw materials is causing forests in many parts of the country to disappear. So it's important to ensure that paper is not wasted. Selling old newspaper helps to do this, because the same can be recycled. Ensure that every scrap of paper in the house is sold. While newspapers and magazines are regularly sold, single pieces of paper end up in the dust bin. Ensure that all these including bills, brown paper covers, used envelopes hand bills, old diaries and calendars find their way on to the Kabari pile.

- Write on both sides of every sheet of paper.
- Keep your school text books in good condition. They can be passed on to your juniors when you go to the next class.
- Make rough pads with blank sheets from old note books.
- Use a slate for doing rough work, taking messages, keeping lists etc,
- Store and reuse paper bags and plastic bags too.
- Help cut down paper waste in your work place.
- Encourage photocopying on both sides of the paper.
- Use only half sheet of the paper for short memos.
- Find a way for using the backs of computer paper.

A "treeling" experience.

Given above are some ways to save trees and other vegetation from being cut. But what about growing a tree yourself ? It's not difficult, it's fun and satisfying too.

Get in touch with the forest department or a voluntary organization working in the field of afforestation. They will be able to give you saplings and also advise you on how to plant and take care of them.

Spend some time choosing the type of tree you would like to plant . Usually , local species are better for the environment than an exotic, i.e. A species not native to the place. The choice of tree species would also depend on what grows well in your area. For instance, the following five trees grow well in many parts of India.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Names in Regional Languages
Flame of the Forest	<i>Butea monosperma</i>	Dhak (Hindi) Khakaro (Guj) Palas (Hindi, Beng,Mar,Mal) Parasa (Tamil)
Indian Almond	<i>Terminalia catappa</i>	Adamarram (Mal) Badamchettu (Tel) Bangla Badam(Beng) Deshi Badam (Hindi) Natvodom (Tam)
Neem	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Limdo(Guj) Neem (Hindi, Beng) Vepa (Mal, Tam, Tel).
Peepal	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	Arachu(Mal) Ashvatham (Beng, Mal, Tam) Pimpal (Mar) Piplo (Guj)
Tamarind	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	Analam (Mal) Amli (Hindi,Guj,Beng) Chincha (Mar) Chintachettu (Tel)

Think about where you want to plant the tree. The soil should be good and it should be a place where you can water the sapling and watch over it.

Miracle Grass.

What on earth is miraculous about grass? It seems a simple unobtrusive plant, not worth a second glass. But think about it and you'll realize that the grass family...

- Is the world's most important crop.
- Provide the bulk of fodder and forage.
- Covers a quarter of the land surface of earth, from the snow covered Arctic regions, to the dry desert areas.
- Grows in saline soil, nutrient-poor soil, waterlogged soil.
- Can withstand trampling, grazing and fires.
- Provides raw materials for buildings and handicrafts.
- Feeds large industries-paper, alcohol and molasses, and home based industries-brooms, mats, Baskets and toys.
- Plays a major role in soil and water conservation.
- Prepares the soil for other kinds of vegetation to grow.

Go green with grass. It spreads rapidly, because it not only regenerates by means of seed, but also by putting out horizontal stems along and under the surface of the ground. Hence acting as a binding factor for soil.

Garden Wisdom

While you're outdoors how about some eco friendly practices for the garden.

- Water the garden early in the morning or late in the evening. Reducing water loss due to evaporation.
- There is always a temptation to over water the garden. Water only till the soil becomes moist not soggy.
- Explore water efficient irrigation systems. Sprinkler and drip irrigation, all can be adapted to garden situations.
- Make your garden lively-plant trees and shrubs which attract birds. Put up nest boxes and food. A bird bath is great in the hot summer months.
- Put waste to work in your garden- sweep the fallen leaves and flowers into flower bed or under shrubs. This increases soil fertility and also reduces the need for watering.
- If you have a little space in your garden, you could make a compost pit to turn organic waste from the kitchen and garden to soil enriching manure.

Dig a pit about 1/2 mtr wide, 1 mtr deep and as long as possible. Line it with straw or dried leaves and grass. Put in the waste as and when generated and cover with a sprinkling of dried leaves. Water once a week to keep it moist, turn the contents every 15 days. The compost will be ready in 3 months, to spread in your garden.

Some things that can go in your compost pit

Used tea leaves, vegetable and fruit peels and cores, overripe and spoilt vegetables and fruit, leftover spoilt food, eggshells, cut grass and fallen leaves.

Transport Troubles

Talking of economics, each one of us has felt the impact of spiralling petrol prices. Measures you take to keep your petrol bill down will save irreplaceable fossil fuel and cut down on air pollution.

- Drive at a steady speed. Each vehicle has an optimum recommended speed- you'll find that in your manual.
- Depend on the accelerator rather than the brake to control the vehicle.
- Get the vehicle services regularly to keep it in good condition and keep petrol consumption down.
- Use public transport wherever possible.
- Walk or cycle short distances. It will keep you in better shape.
- Ensure that air pressure in your tyre is as per specification.

Cool It !!....

In a hot country like ours we spend a lot of energy just trying to keep cool. It's a challenge to keep cool without using too much electricity or other resources. Here are some ways to get started.

- The roof is responsible for up to 50% of heat entering the house. Spread gunny sacks on the terrace and keep them wet by sprinkling water. This could be a good way of using some of the rinse water from the kitchen.
- Three coats of whitewash on the terrace floor will maximise the heat being reflected. This can cool the house by five degrees.
- During summer, keep the lower level windows closed and upper level ventilators open.
- Night air is cool, so keep windows open at night.
- First thing in the morning close windows to keep cool air in and hot air out.
- Use Khus curtains in summer. They keep the house cool and smell nice. The challenge is to devise a system to keep curtains wet without wasting water.

Electrifying Information....

Items which were luxuries just a few years ago are common place today. Now that they are here to stay it's important to use them properly and save electricity. Here are some simple ways.

- Early to bed and early to rise can really cut down your electricity bills.
- Switch off fans and lights when you leave the room. This is specially important in offices schools and public places. Because here nobody feels responsible.
- Use tube lights rather than bulbs.
- Don't open the ridge too often and don't keep it open too long.
- Wait for food to cool before putting it in the ridge.
- Defrost the fridge regularly and keep the coils at the back clean.
- Switch off television and radio as soon as programs of interest are over.
- Install a solar water heater. In most parts of the country it can be used for almost eight months saves vast amounts on your bills.

Water: the Elixir of Life

Ready availability of clean water contributes greatly to the quality of life, but we tend to use it wastefully. We need to be more aware of how to use water and simple ways to collect and conserve it.

- Make sure that the tap is turned off when you brush your teeth or shave.
- Ensure that tap is closed when scrubbing clothes and pots and pans.
- Get leaking taps fixed is a priority.
- When drinking water take only as much as you need.
- In case you store water in the house, utilise the unused stored water for soaking clothes, watering the garden, mopping the floors etc.
- Wash vegetables fruits etc. in a pan of water rather than under a running tap.
- Collect rain water during the rainy season. Use the channel from the terrace to feed a tank.
- Use defrost water from the refrigerator to water the garden.

Close to Home.....

To live in a nice clean neighbourhood is everyone's dream. The responsibility is ours. By both collective and individual action and by seeing that the civic authorities act as and when necessary.

- Find out whom to complain to, if roadside taps are leaking, pot holes are unfilled, garbage does not get cleared, share the information with your neighbours.
- Plant trees or grass where ever possible.
- Don't let people spoil your neighbourhood by putting up posters and hand bills. If you can get all residents together it's possible to stop this.
- If there is a monument in the locality, work out ways to keep it clean and looked after.
- During the monsoons ensure that there are no pools of stagnant water which become a health hazard.
- Start a drive to keep your neighbourhood free of noise pollution. This would include awareness about use of vehicle horns, volumes of radios and televisions and use of public address systems during weddings and festivals.

Wisdom of the Ages.....

Many of our traditional practices are environmentally sound, but we are either forgetting the practices or practising them as rituals. You can begin with

- Water harvesting- many old houses have efficient ways of collecting and storing rain water.
- Pest control- Most mothers and grand mothers have effective ways for pest control. Neem leaves among the woollens., dried lemon peels in book shelves, turmeric powder to keep away ants and dhoop to deter mosquitoes. These cost little and don't cause pollution in their manufacture or use.
- Biodegradable containers- Sounds Hi tech, but that's what leaf plates and kullhars are. What about using them for journeys, picnics parties instead of plastic cups and plates ?
- Traditional cleaners - Ash or mud to clean utensils are as effective as factory made powders.

Speak out for the Planet.....

And most important share your concerns about saving the environment with family and friends - your ideas could help us all live healthier and make the world a better place for the next generation.

Consumer Power.....

We consumers are ultimately responsible for how the industry treats the environment. If enough people buy products that are better for the environment, they will be made. However, it is not easy being green.

Much packaging now displays the familiar recycle symbol, but it is not always what you think. Manufacturers recognise the value of the symbol and put it on everything they possibly can. If you look closer, you may see the word Recyclable, meaning the material can be recycled, not that this product contains any recycled material.

Many paper products show the recycled paper symbol, but that is now becoming a meaningless claim. Often, that does not mean the paper has been used and then returned for recycling. It just means that trimmings from the paper production have been added to the next batch of paper. Paper mills have done this for centuries.

Finally, we as consumers must do our part. If we do not buy products made from recycled materials, manufactures won't produce them.

MINIMUM IMPACT GUIDELINES FOR HOTEL GUESTS

- Take a five-minute shower instead of a bath. This saves close to 13 gallons of water per shower.
- Fill sink basin with water when shaving instead of letting water run continuously. You will save about three gallons of water with every shave.
- Use hair dryers on "low heat" setting; it save energy and is better for your hair.
- Phone-in room service orders instead of writing them on an order card.
- Close curtains when leaving room to alleviate energy use needed to keep room cool.
- Try and re-use towels and napkins.

MARINE CONSERVATION

(sailing, water skiing, snorkelling, scuba diving, wind surfing, jet skiing, deep sea fishing, sea kayaking and other water sports)

Viewed from space we can see that oceans and seas dominate our planet, covering more than 70% of the surface. Oceans play an important part in controlling climate and weather, as well as providing us with food, energy, minerals, routes for communication and transport, and of course a large area for recreation. The oceans and their wildlife have provided us with myths and legends, and subjects for painting and poetry, yet most people are unaware of how they benefit from the oceans and why it is necessary that we should all be concerned for their future.

If we want to continue using and appreciating the valuable resources of the sea on a sustainable basis, it is vital that marine conservation becomes a significant part of a sensible management regime for the seas.

Marine Debris. Some basic facts....

- Every day ships throughout the world jettison 5.5 million items of waste into the sea.
- Three times as much rubbish is dumped into the world's oceans annually as the weight of fish caught.
- 2 million tonnes of plastic is produced in the UK every year, and it is estimated that only 3% of it is recycled.
- Fishing debris, as a percentage of total marine debris found, is higher in Tasmania than anywhere else in the world.
- Wildlife in particular is at risk. Discarded fishing nets, bait pack ties, which often last for years, entangle and drown birds, fish and marine mammals. Birds get caught up in plastic six-pack rings, turtles ingest plastic bags, mistaking them for jellyfish.
- Plastics are the most common man-made objects sighted at sea.
- Plastic production has increased to more than 4.5 kg for every person on earth.

What is Marine Conservation?

Marine nature conservation is often described as the "Cinderella" of the conservation movement. Conservation on land has always been given priority because the impacts of human activity are highly visible. Whereas with the oceans it is a case of "out of sight, out of mind".

The public is becoming more aware of the impact that human activity has on the marine environment as a whole. Risks of over-fishing, of over-exploitation of resources, of pollution due to contaminants and the possible environmental consequences of run-off from agricultural land all provide headlines in our newspapers and material for documentaries on 'TV. Conservation has broadened to concerns about habitat and ecosystem protection as well as larger environmental issues.

What is Marine Conservation ?

The targets of our effort have become habitats and communities; coral reefs and seagrass beds are just two examples. Even so, we tend to concentrate on seabed communities, forgetting about open water and deep sea communities, about which much less is known. The-ultimate goal is to ensure that the whole system is healthy. This is a huge challenge to conservationists when you think of the scale of most marine problems.

To achieve marine conservation we need to:

- understand the degree and nature of ecological hazards;
- be clear about what we hope to achieve (eg. saving endangered species, preventing loss of habitat, or preventing pollution);
- identify the target of our efforts (eg. whales, mangroves or beaches);
- decide how we are going to carry out the conservation task (eg. setting up marine protected areas, banning the disposal of sewage to the sea).

Why is marine conservation different to land conservation?

- Individuals or organisations cannot buy areas of sea.
- The sea is effectively a 'fenceless' environment with the traditional "freedom of the seas" allowing rights of navigation and access to most areas.
- Hazards to marine areas often come from diffuse, land-based activities so that potential problems may be difficult to resolve.
- It is not easy to see the impact of damaging activities on underwater habitats and species.
- Managing and stopping undesirable activities on and in the sea is far more difficult than on land. Contaminants are quickly diluted and dispersed in the sea, but effects might also be wide-ranging or considerably delayed.

For marine conservation we have to

- understand and conserve coastal and oceanic ecological processes;
- make people more aware of the importance of the oceans and seas;
- apply integrated approaches to coastal and ocean management;
- involve local communities more in the management of marine resources;
- strengthen regional and global cooperation.
- Campaign for 'user-friendly' disposal and recycling facilities at ports, marinas, beaches and harbours.
- Support clean production and encouraging minimum use of packaging.
- Insist on the secondary (biological) treatment of sewage as the minimum treatment level prior to sewage discharge to sea.
- Encourage local community awareness of their responsibilities, e.g. the litter produced by boating and fishing activities.
- Establish an effective database on litter collected from beaches during the Beach-Cleans.

BASIC MINIMUM IMPACT GUIDELINES FOR CRUISE SHIPS

- Enforce a strict "no-dumping" policy in ecologically-sensitive areas.
- Don't release balloons or throw streamers from the deck of the ship.
- Eliminate golf-ball chipping and skeet shooting over the ocean.
- Replace disposable plastic glassware with re-usable items.
- Purchase canned beverages in cardboard boxes rather than in plastic rings.
- Equip ships with treatment plants to break down "black water" from showers, sinks and toilets into environmentally harmless components.
- Implement programmes to segregate, manage, label and off-load any hazardous waste (batteries, paints, cleaning materials, etc.).
- Install closed-circuit TV cameras so funnel smoke emissions can be continuously monitored by engine controllers.

While selecting local tour operators and port agents, give preference to "**GREEN**" companies

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