

Looking for Eco-friendly Tour Operators

Currently, there are no universal guidelines as to what should qualify as eco-friendly. In view of this, finding out if tour operators, hotels or lodges are eco-friendly can be a challenge. This is because they are commercial ventures, which can easily exploit ecosystems and local communities. As a green traveler, you wish to enjoy your tour but not at the expense of sustainability. How to distinguish eco-friendly tour operators?

One of the ways in which you can find green tour operators is by assessing their environmental policies. Companies that are keen on sustainability often have a statement of their environmental policy on their websites.



The other consideration when finding eco-friendly tour operators is to ask about their relationship with the local community. A conscientious tour operator seeks to incorporate the local community into its operations. This can be done through employing the locals and partnering with local businesses. In so doing, a tour operator gives back to the community that attracts its patrons. This is important, since incorporating the locals causes them to value their environmental resources. A local community that feels respected in tourism ventures involving its wildlife, landscapes or cultural heritage values these aspects. Consequently, such a community is more likely to support the preservation of natural resources.

The other factor that you need to consider in eco-friendly tour operators is the evidence of their commitment. It is not enough for a tour company to state its environmental policies; such policies should also be put into practice. You should for instance find out if the operator has any recycling facilities and safe waste disposal. Find out if they utilize energy saving light bulbs, or natural illumination wherever possible. You may also find out if the tour operator's mode of transport is energy efficient. An eco-friendly tour operator should make efforts to reduce its carbon emissions by using energy efficient vehicles and fuels.

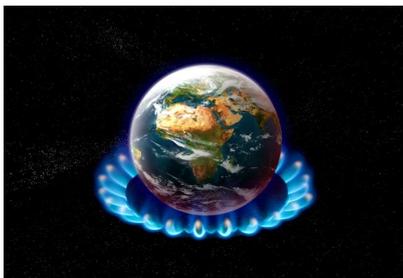


Another way in which you can tell if tour operators are eco-friendly is by assessing if they are culturally sensitive. Eco-friendly tour operators will encourage cultural sensitivity by seeking to protect important cultural and historical sites. They also seek to preserve important local traditions, and offer information on the local customs. Further, such tour operators also limit the sizes of their groups to promote meaningful encounters.

You can also find eco-friendly tour operators by investigating their protocol in tours to natural areas. Tour operators need to strike a balance between exposing visitors to the wonders of a given ecosystem, while also protecting it from disruptions. Tour operators that use baiting in order to draw animals for instance may not be sustainable. This is because such animals become accustomed to handouts, which changes their normal behavior. As their normal behavior is altered, their chances for long-term survival are decreased.

The other way in which you can determine if a tour company is eco-friendly is by considering their charity works. You need to find out if the operator has any links with local charities or if they donate some of their profits to the local communities. This may be done through funding local development projects, schools or hospitals.

Further, you can also tell if a tour operator is eco-friendly by seeking any articles about them or reviews from other travelers. This will give you a better picture of the operator's sustainability practices. You may also seek information about eco-friendly tour companies from reputable organizations specializing in eco-travel. One such organization is the International Ecotourism Society, which rates tour operators' eco-friendly policies.



The absence of universal guidelines for defining the term eco-friendly poses a challenge to green travelers. This article has addressed this difficulty, as it has given you tips for finding an eco-friendly tour operator. As you have no doubt realized, you will need time to ascertain the operator's credentials as discussed in the article. This also means that organizing an eco-friendly tour may take time, but your efforts will be worth it. We are living at a time when most of the world's ecosystems are threatened with destruction. As such, any effort on your part to conserve the existing natural resources is of utmost importance.

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