



# TIPS

for Responsible  
Travels

Making destinations better  
places for people to live in and  
for travelers to visit

 *This booklet was printed on recycled paper*

 THE GIOI  
PUBLISHERS



# Respect cultural differences

*"Carefully consider  
your every action.  
This is your holiday  
but it is their everyday  
lives."*

## **Responsible Tourism**

I pledge to be a responsible tourist.

I take this pledge as a guest to your home, to preserve  
and protect your beautiful and unique Asia.

I vow to tread lightly, act kindly and explore mindfully.

I shall not take what is not given.

I shall not harm what does not harm me.

The only footprints I shall leave are those that will  
wash away.

# Greeting

*Learn how to say 'hello', 'goodbye' and 'thank you' in the local language. People highly appreciate it!*

*In Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar a respectful way of greeting another individual is to bow the head slightly with both hands pressed together at the chest, as if in prayer.*



**Asian societies remain fairly traditional and are attached to old customs.**

Avoid showing affection in public as it is considered quite offensive – sorry, no kissing!

Don't point or gesture with your feet or put your feet up on furniture. Avoid touching someone on the head.

When using a toothpick, use one hand to cover your mouth.

Present money and gifts with both hands and accept them the same way.

Always let the oldest be served first and bend slightly in front of elders.

Don't curl your fingers to beckon somebody over or point it at another person's face. Asian people generally use a subtle downward waving motion to summon someone.

Don't touch people of the opposite sex.

# Be sensitive to local cultures

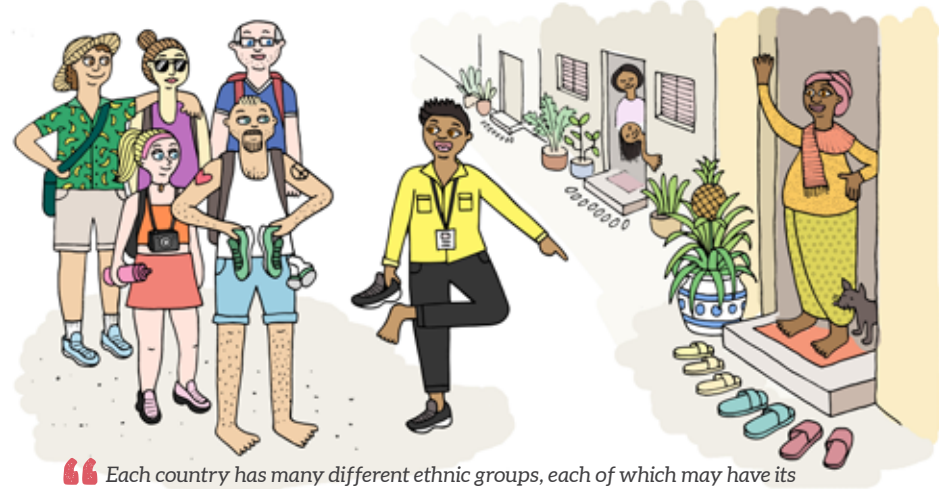
*Learn about culture and customs, the more you know about your destination the better you will appreciate and understand it.*

*When faced with strong cultural differences, the first thing to consider is whether you would act this way in your home country.*

## Try to understand their aspirations

We admire the rural beauty of traditional bamboo houses or the sight of a farmer harvesting his rice field. However, we tend to forget that these houses offer little comfort, are vulnerable to extreme weather conditions and that too much strenuous work reduces life expectancy.

Like most people, locals aspire to develop economically and have access to the same material possessions that we take for granted. You may provide a balanced view of development by expressing that modernity is best when enhancing traditional ways instead of denying it.



“ Each country has many different ethnic groups, each of which may have its very own etiquette and taboos. Always listen to the advice of your guide.

Cultural diversity and exoticism is what you came looking for so accept the differences and enjoy it! Do tell locals about your own culture, most are just as curious as you are to learn about other cultures. ”



# Connect with people before taking pictures

*Take some time to chat with the locals first. The photo will become a shared memory which you can send back to them.*



## Answer questions

Be prepared to answer, on numerous times, personal questions like: "Where are you from? Where are you going? Are you married? How old are you? etc..." Most people are simply trying to be friendly, to practice their English skills or start a conversation.

Do note that privacy has a very different meaning in Asia.

“ Locals will never criticise you, but will be embarrassed and politely keep their opinions to themselves. ”

# Respect cultural sites

*Many cultural sites, even those in ruins are sacred grounds. It is forbidden to walk or climb anywhere out off regular footpaths, to scrawl or scribble on monuments, and to collect stones or any parts of the monument or site.*



## Contact with monks

Show respect to monks, novices and nuns, don't offer to shake hands, avoid stepping on a monk's shadow.

Ladies, do not sit next to, or hand anything directly to Buddhist monks.

Show respect by not taking photos or disturbing monks during prayer times.

Don't sit with your back or feet towards Buddha's image.

Handle Buddha images or sacred objects with respect; avoid placing them in inappropriate places (on the floor for example).

# Dress modestly and neatly

*In temples and religious sites both men & women should cover their shoulders and legs, and shoes and hats should be removed. It also applies when entering houses and some shops.*



Be sensitive observe the way people around you dress (eg: they often swim in clothes) and adjust your behaviour and clothing according to where you are.

On the beach or at sea, nude sunbathing or swimming is not accepted.

In forests and jungles: long pants/skirts and sleeved shirts are strongly recommended to limit insect bites and sunburn.

In rural spots such as waterfalls and rivers avoid bikinis and swimming suits, keep your tee shirt on and may be a sarong as well to cover your legs.

In urban settings you may see women dressed in skimpy clothing; do not consider this to be the norm. Wearing mini-skirts, mini-shorts, going braless in tight clothing is often considered offensive, especially in rural areas. Men should avoid walking around bare-chested.



# Ethical Travel

#TravelEnjoyRespect



**Do not  
give gifts  
or buy  
anything  
from  
children**



Do not give gifts, money or sweets to children or buy anything from them – although you might think it helps. It only encourages them to stay on the streets where they have little hope of a better life and are vulnerable to all sorts of abuse. These children are often exploited by local mafias.

Our guides have been trained to react appropriately when confronted by such situations, should you witness a child being at risk, please tell your guide

### **Children are not tourist attractions.**

Visiting children centres, orphanages or schools is forbidden in western countries. Research has shown that short-term visits (including volunteer tourism) can be harmful to a child's development and emotional balance.

UNICEF, Friend's International and an increasing number of children organisations are now campaigning to stop what has become an exploitative practice that turns children and disadvantaged communities into tourist commodities.

Ask yourself: would you allow complete strangers to approach your children, take pictures of them, or give them candies?

If you wish to learn more, please visit:  
[www.thinkchildsafe.org](http://www.thinkchildsafe.org)



# Philanthropy

*If you wish to alleviate poverty and provide better life opportunities for children and their families, we recommend you to do it through registered organisations.*

Of course, it's not easy to assess the reliability of an organisation in a foreign country. In response to traveller's requests, EXO Foundation offers a list of carefully selected projects you can trust  
[www.exofoundation.org](http://www.exofoundation.org)

When you give through EXO Foundation, we guarantee that 100% of your donation accrues to the project of your choice, as we cover all overhead costs.





# Consumer behaviour

TRAVEL can be used as a FORCE for GOOD

# Support the local economy

## Local transport

The diversity of local modes of transport adds to the charm of travel. You might be annoyed sometimes by endless calls to use tuk tuks or cyclos but be patient. A polite 'no, thank you.' will suffice.

Be sure to always agree on the price before taking any form of local transport.

For the best sightseeing experience, walk, cycle, take a cyclo or a rickshaw.



“ Buy locally made food & handicrafts directly from local craftsman and markets.

Scan this QR code below to find a list of shops supporting community projects that help to directly improve the livelihoods of the most disadvantaged people. ”





# Bargain within reason and with a smile!

**Keep calm,  
be patient**

Whatever the situation, try to stay calm, firm and courteous and speak without raising your voice.

Becoming angry is considered a major weakness and local people will be embarrassed for you.

'Saving face' is a subtle but important aspect of personal dignity and smiling often can help to open cultural doors.

Criticism is not as easily accepted as it is in western countries and should only be made when also giving praise.



“With patience and a broad smile you will not only get a better price but also enjoy the art of negotiation – that is very much part of markets in Asia. Whatever you buy, be mindful that it is part of their livelihood.”

# Protect the wildlife and the flora

**Do not buy any wild animals either dead or alive.**

*For example, sometimes local people will try to sell you caged birds to be set free that helps to bring good luck. However, by paying for it you only encourage them to capture more.*



Do not purchase historical artefacts, souvenirs made of shells, corals, precious wood or any endangered species.

Trading of elephants, tigers, primates, marine animals alive or dead and animal parts such as meat, ivory, bones, shells is illegal.

Other wild animal parts such as turtle, pangolin, monkey, red tuna, seahorses, shells, coral and more should not be purchased.

Do not buy any furniture made of timber or other natural materials taken from the forest and the natural ecosystem.

# Do not support the sex industry

You risk putting money into the hands of the mafia and catching diseases. What you may see as a glitzy entertainment has a gloomy backstage. Most men and women involved are part of a larger network of human traffickers.

Pedophilia is strictly forbidden. Violators will be pursued and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, even after they return to their home countries.

“This includes the various shows in hostess bars, street prostitution etc...”





# Respect the environment

## *“Leave only your footprint”*

Asia's tremendous economic growth has taken place at the expense of its environment and precious biodiversity. Let's do our best to help keep our planet healthy & beautiful.



# Anti-plastic attitude

Plastic disposal is a major problem in Asia.

When ordering a drink, ask your guide to help you order without a plastic straw. If a glass is not clean using a straw does not make it any safer.

Avoid wrapping your luggage in kilometres of plastic wrap; protect them with locks and carry precious items with you.



“ Take your own bags with you when shopping – Say no to any kind of plastic or styrofoam food boxes. ”

# Water bottles

Bottled water is easy to find, but unfortunately recycling facilities are not.

Use a refillable bottle or simply refill a plastic one.

You'll find water fountains in many places through the Refill My Bottle mobile application.



PROUD  
SUPPORTER OF

DOWNLOAD THE APP HERE



Refill  
MyBottle

# Waste is a waste

Avoid leaving any rubbish behind, especially when trekking or visiting rural villages. Ideally pick up any rubbish you see littering the forest, the sea or beach, protect Mother Nature.

Smokers, please keep your cigarette butts with you until you find the next dustbin.



Organic waste such as food scraps should not be scattered or buried in National Parks and any natural areas. This may introduce non-endemic seeds into the local ecosystem. Carry back all your waste with you.

Bring back used batteries to your home country, there is no reliable recycling processing here.

## Toilet facilities

Please always use the toilet facilities provided. If there are none, go at least 50 metres away from water sources and people's homes.

Cover everything and carry any sanitary napkins or baby diapers back with you in a bag for appropriate disposal later.

Avoid throwing waste on a fire as it might offend the local community – many locals consider fire to be sacred.

# Save energy and water

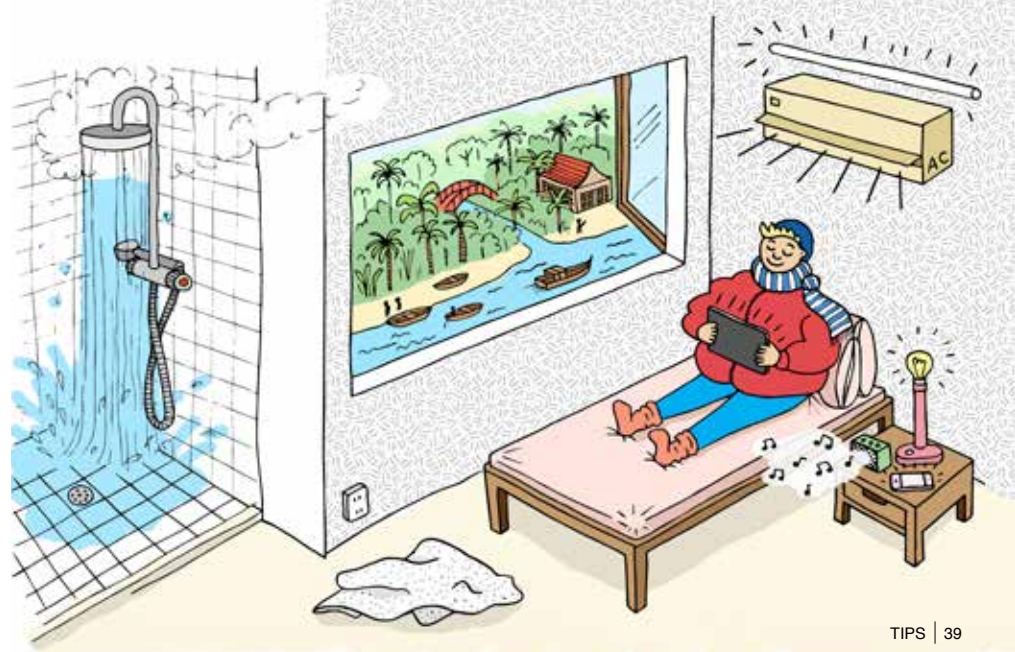
*In your room, use air-conditioning sensibly. Turn it down when you leave your room or even at night when a fan is sufficient.*

Turn off taps and switches when not in use. You can choose not to have your towels and bed linen changed daily, just follow the signs!

Wherever water is heated with cut timber, avoid hot showers it will invigorate your blood circulation.

Ask your driver to open windows to cool down with fresh air in rural areas.

“ WATER IS PRECIOUS, HELP SAVE IT. ”





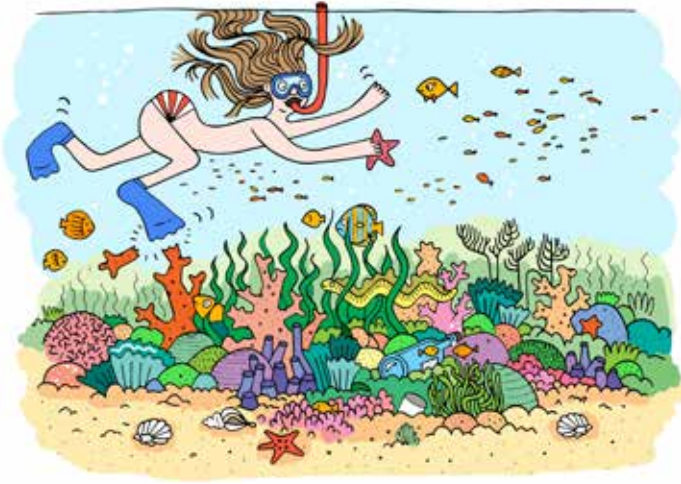


# Natural areas

“Look with your eyes,  
bring back memories, and leave  
things just as they are.”

# Animal in tourism

*When snorkeling, be aware that touching coral formations hinder their growth – and note that coral cuts are prone to infection. Do not collect nor buy any coral or shell.*



We want to protect wildlife and promote conservation, we therefore recommend a sensitive approach to all animal attractions, such as elephant camps, primate centers, tiger zoos or marine wildlife attractions.

An easy rule of thumb for you: places where animals have to perform in an unnatural way, or are chased or lured are not recommended! Please do respect animal's natural behavioral patterns.

Animals should always have access to food and water, and live free from pain, discomfort, fear or stress.

Never feed or touch wild animals on land or underwater.

Never stare or smile at primates.

If you visit an elephant camp and you see an elephant forbidden to eat grass, walking on concrete, under the sun, carrying over 150kgs, or performing unnatural activities such as painting, playing football etc... Refuse it!

# Stay on beaten tracks

This is particularly important during the wet season, when it is all too easy to create new tracks in order to get a better footing. When this happens the trail soon becomes a series of footpaths that turn into erosion gullies.

Be aware that some tropical plants are stinging or poisonous, avoid touching what you don't know.



In limestones caves, do not touch formations as natural body oils hinder their growth and discolour the limestone. These have taken thousands of years to shape into what you can see today!

Reduce deforestation by avoiding unnecessary use of scarce firewood such as limiting beach bonfires.

On nature treks, when you need to bathe in streams or lakes, limit soap usage and/or use organic soap and shampoo.

Detergent powder is even more harmful to the natural ecosystem, so avoid using it when possible.



No plastic bags, please.

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