

Human Rights Policy

Adventure Alternative takes a comprehensive approach to human rights issues, including concerns around child and bonded labour, workplace health and safety, commercial exploitation of children, exploitation of migrant workers, discrimination and displacement of indigenous people and vulnerable groups.

We adhere to the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and we do not ‘greenwash’ our credentials in order to fill the gap between policy and practice; we deal with the challenges of human rights by operating a structural system that has a positive social and cultural impact. We are members of the Ethical Tour Operators Group, but fundamentally the relationships with all of our staff in-country are drawn from personal friendships built up over many years.

We do not operate a system of low margins and high turnover, and we are aware of all the individuals involved in our supply chains, from drivers to hoteliers and porters, and we actively teach those people to be aware of their value in that chain. It is fair to say that these principles were at the heart of Adventure Alternative when Gavin started the company in 1991, hence the word ‘alternative’.

Our diligence covers the following recommendations:

- We respect all human rights with respect to all our staff
- We assess the impacts of our activities and make sure they are positive
- We have a sympathetic corporate culture towards all our staff and their rights
- We track our performance internally with regular reviews amongst all the staff
- We look closely at our supply chain to ensure there are no human rights abuses
- We maximise benefits to local communities by providing money and development
- We use our Gap trips to develop institutions and communities
- We guarantee a full time living wage for our staff and give them UK employment standards such as written contracts, paid holidays, safety equipment, training, leave and home visits after long trips
- We provide all our information about staffing policy to all our staff and to our clients
- We understand our responsibility towards climate change and we fund our own forest enrichment programme

Where the Money Goes

Our all-inclusive packages, whereby the tourist pays upfront for all the needs of the holiday, do bring extensive benefit to the host countries where we go. We spend an average 55% of every trip fee on local expenses, which are funded by the company we started in-country. By defining the standards of that company and investing heavily in it, training the staff and working with them constantly on good business practises, we can absolutely ensure that proper salaries are paid and that this income goes towards the creation of new jobs, and stimulating development. This is not idle rhetoric, it is the belief that stands central to our business model.

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We also supply an average of 11% of all Gap trip fees in direct payments to organisations and institutions like schools and clinics, community centres and orphanages, which work with any of our Gap clients. This form of income has developed over many years and has produced positive and tangible results. These payments are implemented through our charity Moving Mountains which exists both in the UK and in our host countries as registered non-profit organisations. The company supports the charity financially so that these direct payments are not 'leaked' into administration.

We also provide continual and comprehensive monitoring of how these funds are spent, and we work with the local communities to increase their stakeholding in the income, by giving them advice and training and holding regular meetings to decide the future of this type of volunteering tourism. We want to be sure that what is good for tourism and for Adventure Alternative, is also good for the recipient community.

Rights that we specifically identify and promote positively with our trips

1. The right to health and well being – we respect the right for our employees to have a quality of life and an individual choice which is not exploited by long hours, hard labour, low pay, lack of rest and an unhealthy environment. For example, our porters in Nepal, Tanzania and Kenya.
2. The right to dignity, respect and privacy – we do not let our tourism subsume or consume the local communities where we visit, and we always work with the local elders and authorities to make sure that our presence there is accepted and wanted. The locals have control over who visits their homes. This is particularly true for visits to slums and into the remote areas of the jungle.
3. The rights of the child – we actively promote the development of the family unit, both in the company and in our charity Moving Mountains, and we provide counselling and resources to assist staff so that child care is available.
4. The right to work – we actively involved as many people as possible in becoming shareholders of the tourist equation and we do make sure that there is correct financial recompense and sharing in the economic, social and cultural benefits. For example in the Ulamba centre in Western Kenya and in the lower Khumbu region of Nepal, where income and interaction from visitors has created a wide variety of employment, and many friendships.
5. The right to leisure – all our staff in-country enjoy a good salary, plus training and proper contracts which identify their right to leave, paid holidays and rest time after a job. For example in Kenya, all staff are given a weekday off if they work over the weekend. In Tanzania our guides and porters do two trips per month (one week each), and then rest time at home.

Adventure Alternative recognises that human rights are a fundamental element of any sustainable approach to development. Our company ethos ensures their protection.