



**HIMALAYAN QUESTS & ADVENTURES P. LTD**

**SUSTAINABILITY POLICY**

**23 SEPTEMBER 2024**





## **SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT**

Himalayan Quest's leadership is wholly committed to the company's sustainability performance and endorses the company's sustainability mission statement and policy.

We commit to continuous improvement of sustainability practices, including the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of our sustainability policy, with dedicated personnel and resources to achieve our sustainability goals.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

As a Nepali organisation and we are dedicated to preserving Nepal's landscapes, cultures and diverse ecosystems for generations to come. Our mission is rooted in a profound respect for this land and we strive to foster sustainable tourism practices that enables us to travel in a way that conserves the areas we visit and brings positive benefits to the local communities.

We aim to minimise our environmental footprint, conserve natural resources and protect endangered species. We prioritise eco-friendly transportation where available, promote energy efficiency and advocate for waste reduction and recycling throughout our operations. Where possible, we partner with local partners, suppliers and businesses with sustainable philosophies, thus ensuring resources and wealth remain within the country, helping to build Nepal's economy.

Alongside our own principles, we ask that our clients be responsible tourists and when visiting a destination be concerned about the protection and preservation of places, cultures, and environments.

In doing this, we subscribe to a number of core principles in relation to responsible, sustainable travel, of which the main ones are:

1. Protect the environment – its flora, fauna, and landscapes
2. Respect local cultures – traditions, religions, and heritage
3. Benefit local communities – both economically and socially
4. Conserve natural resources – across all stages of the journey, from planning to destination
5. Minimise pollution – from our internal and external operations
6. Ensure the welfare of staff – fair pay, insurance and the appropriate kit for all our staff

Furthermore, we are deeply committed to supporting the social and economic well-being of Nepal's communities and we invest in community development projects through our sister not for profit, Himalayan Quests Foundation, focusing on healthcare and education.

Our Sustainability Policy is divided into 9 themes. Each theme consists of a set of principles and practical actions accordingly.

## **1. SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT AND LEGAL COMPLIANCE**

Himalayan Quests commits to sustainable management by practicing the following actions:

- To have a designated employee who is responsible for sustainability coordinator tasks
- To have a sustainability mission statement that is published on our website and communicated to customers, partners and suppliers
- To have a written sustainability policy that aims for a reduction of the negative social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of the company's activities; and includes employee related health and safety aspects that are publicly accessible
- To have sustainability action plan with clear targets, actions, measures, responsibilities and time planning
- To publish our sustainability report at least every two years
- To ensure that our customers, partners and suppliers are respecting and safeguarding the rights of children by:
  - Forbidding and engaging stakeholders in the prevention of sexual exploitation of children
  - Having a clause in contracts throughout the value chain stating a common repudiation and zero tolerance policy of sexual exploitation of children

We commit to complying with all national legislation, regulations and codes of practice.

## **2. INTERNAL MANAGEMENT: SOCIAL POLICY AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

Himalayan Quests commits to sustainable internal management by having clear written and well-communicated social policy that includes the following principles:

To grant employees the freedom of employment and contract termination with notice (ideally minimum one month) and without penalty. Wage rate is to be mentioned in the contract and equals or above the national legal wage.

- To determinate and compensate of overtime working hours based on agreement
- To provide medical and liability insurance according to the Nepal law
- To grant employees fixed paid yearly holiday, sick leave and unpaid annual leave allowance if not detrimental to the running of the organisation
- To have health and safety policy for employees which complies to national legal standards
- To have first aid kits and trained staff are available at all relevant locations
- To obey national law concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment
- To have effective documented procedures in place for employees to voice out their complaints and expectations
- To provide periodic guidance and training for employees on roles, rights and responsibilities regarding health and safety issues. This includes fire and relevant natural disasters

We commit to practice human rights by ensuring the enforcement of following practices:

- To declare not to hinder trade union membership, collective labour negotiations and representation of members by trade unions;
- To participate and comply with a (sector wide) collective labour condition negotiation structure (if locally existing)
- To prohibit discriminations, regard to recruitment, conditions of employment, access to training and senior positions, or promotion in terms of gender, race, age, disability, ethnicity, religion/beliefs or sexual orientation

### **3. INTERNAL MANAGEMENT: ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Himalayan Quests commits to practice environmental protection and enhance community relations by ensuring the enforcement of following practices:

#### **Procurement**

- Actively reduce the use of disposable and consumer goods;
- Favour the purchase of sustainable goods and services, whenever these are available and of sufficient quality;
- Utilize office paper use (internal and administrative use) with sustainability credentials (recycled, FSC or sustainably produced), when such options are locally available;
- Set copy and printing machines and all equipment by default to double-sided printing or other forms of paper saving modes;

#### **Energy**

- Have an active commitment reduce energy consumption
- Purchase green energy and efficient lighting for all areas, when available
- Switch off Lights and equipment when not in use
- Prefer low energy equipment when buying new items, including considerations of cost and quality
- Set all equipment by default to the energy-saving mode

#### **Water**

- Have actively reduce our already low water consumption where possible
- Use sustainable water sourcing, which does not adversely affect environmental flows

#### **Waste Management**

- Comply with the national legislation concerning waste disposal;
- Develop and implement a solid waste reduction and recycling policy, with quantitative goals;
- Take action to reduce the amount of (non-refillable) plastic bottles of drinking water for office use;
- Separate all materials which can be recycled and organise collection and proper disposal
- Recycle or properly dispose of batteries

#### **Reducing Pollution**

- Comply with national legislation of wastewater treatment, which should be reused or released safely
- Introduce the use of environmentally friendly cleaning/washing up products across all aspects of the company, especially during camping treks

#### **Mobility**

- Maintain and properly check motorized company vehicles, to reduce emissions and energy use and make sure they comply with the legal emission standards

#### **Sustainability training and awareness raising**

- Provide periodic guidance, training and/or information to all staff members, about their roles and responsibilities with respect to internal environmental practices

#### **Land use and community relations**

- Comply with land use, zoning and protected or heritage area laws and regulations; when planning, designing, constructing, renovating, operating or demolishing company buildings and infrastructure
- Take into account the capacity and integrity of protected and sensitive natural and cultural heritage when planning and designing newly constructed company buildings
- Adopt locally appropriate and sustainable practices and materials in planning, design, construction of new buildings or renovations

#### 4. TRANSPORT

Himalayan Quests will try to ensure that vehicles used on tours do not cause more than average pollution. We believe that transport is an important aspect of sustainable tourism and we do our best to decrease the average pollution level.

We commit to this by:

- Considering and giving preference to more sustainable alternatives when selecting transport options for transfers and excursions in the destination, taking into account price, comfort, client requirements and practical considerations
- Transport providers are provided with codes of conduct and guidance regarding sustainable driving techniques

#### 5. ACCOMMODATIONS

Himalayan Quests will try to achieve a tourism supply chain that is fully sustainable. The partner accommodations play an important role in achieving this and are stimulated and motivated to adopt sustainable practices.

We commit to this by:

- Giving clear preference where possible to accommodations that work with internationally acknowledged (e.g. GSTC recognised) and/or Travelife certification and selecting accommodations that comply with sustainability and quality standards with a special focus on the following items: *Water saving programme - Waste management programme - Energy saving programme - Energy reduction system - Child protection policy – Trainings to employees in Health & Safety - Sustainable supply chain - CSR activities*
- Motivating and encouraging partner accommodations to become sustainably certified
- Preference and selecting accommodations that are locally owned and managed
- Encouraging accommodations to fill in the sustainability self-assessment to gain insight in their practices
- Clearly and actively communicating our sustainability objectives and requirements regarding accommodations to contracted and other relevant accommodations
- Ensuring that through our accommodation supply chain, the rights of children are respected and safeguarded by having a sustainability contract in place that requests accommodation to comply with:
  - A zero-tolerance policy of sexual exploitation of children
  - Having a clause dedicated to this aspect in their contract that enables the travel company to end the contractual agreement prematurely if the accommodation supplier does not take adequate measures to prevent sexual exploitation of children
  - Training employees in children's rights, the prevention of sexual exploitation and how to report suspected cases
- Contracted accommodations are expected to limit their negative impact on local and global biodiversity, wherever feasible (e.g. not to offer red-listed species on the menu or advise on illegal souvenirs).
- Terminating cooperation with accommodation in case of clear evidence that contracted accommodations jeopardise the provision of integrity of basic services such as food, water, energy, healthcare or soil to the neighbouring companies

#### 6. EXCURSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Himalayan Quests values animal and community welfare extremely highly and we aim that tours leave little to no footprint. We are safeguarding the authenticity of the communities and the natural environment and are strongly against harming wildlife and polluting the environment.



We commit to this by:

- Advising guests on behaviour standards during excursions and activities with a focus on respecting the local culture, nature and environment
- By ensuring all guests and staff apply the Leave No Trace policy
- Communicating our sustainability objectives and requirements to contracted and other relevant excursion providers by distributing this information via code of conducts, representative agents, social media, email, discussions, and/or meetings to minimise negative visitor impact and maximise enjoyment
- Not offering any excursions that harm humans, animals, plants, natural resources such as water and energy, or which are socially and culturally unacceptable
- Not offering any excursions in which wildlife is held captive, except for properly regulated activities in compliance with local, national, and international law
- Not being involved with companies that harvest, consume, display, sell, or trade wildlife species unless it is part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilisation is sustainable and in compliance with local, national and international law

## **7. TOUR LEADERS, LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES AND GUIDES**

Himalayan Quests aims to involve as many locals as possible by employing them in the tourism business. We stand for a fair and safe working environment that supports and respects local communities.

We commit to this by:

- Preferring to work with local tour leaders, local representatives, local tour guides, porters, drivers, cooks and other local staff in case of equal ability and provide training as required
- Ensuring that tour leaders, representatives, guides and other locally active staff, contracted by us, understand the terms and conditions of their employment, including remuneration
- Paying tour leaders, local representatives, guides, porters and other local staff contracted by us at least a living wage that is equal to or above the legal minimum or relevant industry standard
- Ensuring that our tour guides, hosts and other employees under contract are qualified and trained regularly
- Ensuring that our local guides are informed on relevant aspects of our sustainability policy and comply with it, by newsletters, references or supplements to contracts, emails, or training and information sessions
- Ensuring that the trekking staff has the appropriate clothing and other equipment related for the excursions and ensure the national standard on trekking weight
- Having our tour leaders, local representatives and guides inform clients on relevant sustainability matters in the destination (e.g. protection of flora, fauna, and cultural heritage, resource use), social norms and values (e.g. tips, dressing code and photography) and human rights (e.g. sexual exploitation)
- Training our employed tour leaders and local representatives on the avoidance of sexual exploitation of children. This will include training on how to check the requirements concerning exclusion of child abuse

## **8. DESTINATION**

Himalayan Quests aims to maximise positive impacts and minimise negative impacts at the destinations to ensure the sustainable development of the places that we operate in.

We commit to this by:

- Considering sustainability aspects in the selection process of new destinations and offering alternative, non-mainstream destinations where necessary



- Not selecting destinations in which tourism leads to negative structural or local effects, (unless the company's involvement results in clear counter balancing effects);
- Complying with legally based spatial planning, protected areas and heritage regulations, and with destination management strategies of local, regional and national authorities
- Not promoting souvenirs which contain threatened flora and fauna species as indicated in the CITES treaty and the IUCN 'Red List', or historic and archaeological artefacts

## **9. CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION AND PROTECTION**

Customer welfare and information are very important to us, so Himalayan Quests ensures clear and constant communication and high protection to our clients.

Prior to booking, we commit to this by:

- Ensure that customer privacy is not compromised
- Comply with relevant standards and voluntary codes of conduct in marketing and advertising messages and not promise more than is delivered
- Make product and price information clear, complete and accurate with regard to the company and its products and services, including sustainability claims
- Provide destination information, including sustainability aspects which are factually correct, balanced and complete
- Clearly inform (potential) direct customers about sustainability commitments and actions

After booking and during holidays, we commit to this by:

- Provide Information to consumers about the natural surroundings, local culture and cultural heritage in the holiday destination
- Inform consumers about key sustainability aspects and issues in the destination and receive recommendations on how to make a positive contribution
- Inform customers about risks and precautions related to health and safety matters in the destination
- Keep a contact person and a telephone number permanently available for emergency situations
- Train personnel and keep guidelines available, on how to deal with emergency situations
- Provide clients with documented guidelines and/or codes of conduct for sensitive excursions and activities to minimize negative visitor impact and maximise enjoyment. When possible, guidelines are developed in collaboration with relevant NGO's and the affected community;
- Inform clients about applicable legislation concerning the purchasing, sales, import and export of historic or religious artefacts and articles containing materials of threatened flora and/or fauna
- Motivate clients to use local restaurants and shops (where appropriate)
- Inform clients on sustainable transport options in destinations, when feasible
- Encourage clients to donate to local charity and sustainable initiatives

After holidays, we commit to this by:

- Measure systematically client satisfaction and take into account the results for service and product improvements
- Have clear procedures in handling complaints from clients

Himalayan Quests maintains open lines of communication with our customers at all times (pre, during, post trip) and encourage feedback on any topic, particularly sustainability.



### **SUSTAINABILITY RESPONSIBLE PERSON**

The implementation of this policy will be led by the Sustainability Coordinator, Kate Ale, who can be reached at [kate@himalayanquests.com](mailto:kate@himalayanquests.com)

However, all staff are responsible for the ownership and undertaking of this policy as well as being responsible for the promotion and implementation of this sustainability policy within their departments.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

This policy is effective from 23 September 2024

### **REVISION HISTORY**

This policy will be revised by 23 September 2026

