

Responsible tourism at work: making a difference to local communities

By Malcolm Turner

Responsible tourism is an all-inclusive approach to tourism; making sure that it benefits the people it involves, strengthens their culture and protects the environment they live in. It's about going local and thinking long-term.

It means, first and foremost, involving local people in the running and development of the business so that they have control over their own future. It means employing locally; the effect that a basic salary has on a family or the wider village cannot be underestimated. It means training the staff and giving them vocational skills that could provide opportunities further down the line. It means the chance to meet new people and share cultural experiences. It means buying as much as possible locally, and helping local producers to diversify according to demand, offering training and business assistance where needed. It means assisting the local communities in good stewardship of their environment and benefitting from the sustainable use of its resources.

This is not about charity; approaching tourism in this way can only help improve the business too. If tourism involves the local people as much as possible then it means they have a greater stake in ensuring that it thrives and that a strong, open relationship is kept with the local community. Good working conditions with the opportunity for learning mean a loyal workforce. Tourists, without whom nothing works, often tend to leave happier, knowing they have had an authentic experience meeting the real people of the area and, perhaps most importantly, they know that their stay has directly benefitted the local community. Governments tend to be more supportive, as more of the revenue stays in-country and the community develops. Finally, a protected environment helps everyone; it can ultimately mean longevity of tourism in the area. [Read more](#)