

Minimum Impact Travel (MIT)



The aim of this protocol is to help preserve the Nepalese environment in a sustainable way so that it may be enjoyed for future generations while providing positive benefits to all who travel in Nepal in the present.

- 1. Creating economic benefit for the nation*
- 2. Creating economic benefit for the communities visited by travelers*
- 3. Minimizing the negative environmental impact of travel and tourism*
- 4. Preserving local cultures and customs*
- 5. Meeting the expectations of all stakeholders*

The Protocol

Within this information it is hoped that the following advice will be implemented by all who use the environment for both recreation as well as in every-day life.

- Plan ahead and prepare for your journey, ensure that all eventualities have been considered so that should something unexpected occur you will have at least considered the options to retrieve the situation.
- Keep to the trail, respect wild life, plants, artifacts, and property, and consider the impact your actions will have on the environment and the flora and fauna.
- Familiarise yourself with all the regulations for using the wilderness environment in Nepal, pay the appropriate permit fees, trekking and mountaineering fees.
- If camping or picnicking choosing a high-use location, avoid creating another picnic or camp site, don't pollute water sources, don't disturb the ground cover as this speeds up erosion, ensure the camp site is left as you would expect to find it.
- Dispose of waste properly, anything left behind will affect the environment and wild life and pollute the locality.
- Minimise fire and fuel impacts, don't cut live timber, avoid lighting fires and use lodges running on solar or gas power for heating and cooking.
- Fire is banned in national parks and conservation areas, respect this law to preserve trees and jungles.
- Be considerate to others, other people will use the location for many varied reasons, respect those reasons and maintain the tranquility of the wilderness areas.

Be a Responsible User of the Environment

The purpose of this protocol for travelers is to help and provide advice on ways to reduce the footprint of the modern way of life and tourism in Nepal and the key to developing minimal- impacts from travel in Nepal is to be aware of the following;

- Local regulations and to ensure that all travel partners, support staff and stakeholders abide by those rules
- The fact that even one person contributes to environmental degradation and

be aware as to how this can be minimize through conservation practices

- Local customs and beliefs and to respect them
- The impression you create and then leave behind
- The rural area your journey passes through is someone else's local environment and treat the area with the care you would want others to give your locality.

Economic Benefit

- Pay the appropriate guide and porter wages, including an appropriate tip for their service
- Support the lodges by eating in the same lodge as the one you have chosen to stay in.
- Although local purchases for small souvenirs might be a little more expensive in the wilderness areas your purchases go a long way to supporting the local economy.
- Where possible try to purchase goods, biscuits and basic food items in the areas you visit, purchasing these items in the town will not support the remote local economy.
- Above all is fun but remember the seller is trying to make a living, consider this before making an offer.
- DON'T offer sweets, money or gifts to local children, this creates a charity dependency, instead give those items to the local school or Mothers' Group so all children may benefit from your gifts.

Minimising the negative environmental impact of travel and tourism

Responsible White Water Rafting

- Implement all good environmental practices regarding toilets, waste disposal, camping and river use.
- Remember the river might be a community water source, any toilet arrangements should be made at least 50m from the water

- Take all solid waste and sanitary items away with you.
- Be discrete if erecting toilet tents
- Burn toilet paper or carry out
- Burn all paper waste, wash and flatten tins and take out, wash all plastic containers and take out with you
- Do not take glass on a river trip, the river is a water source for animals and broken glass is a great danger to animal life.
- Respect the flora and fauna, do not disturb wild life especially during the bird nesting season.
- Do not cut trees for fire wood, use fallen dead timber and drift wood
- Fallen and rotting timber is the habitat for small creatures and insects do not burn this
- If using drift-wood to light fires do so below the high water line and take care to remove all signs of the fire before you leave the area.
- Remember local people might rely on drift wood for essential cooking and heating, don't be greedy.
- Ashes should be washed away
- Never leave a fire unattended or over-night.
- Embark and disembark showing respect for the local farmers and land owners.
- Do not hack a path from the river bank through crops or wild ground cover growth, these flowers and scrubs are the habitat of bees and other important pollinating insects and birds.
- If camping don't create a disturbance for the local community.
- Always ask permission to camp in a particular location
- Be prepared to pay a fee to the land-owner for the privilege of staying on their land
- Ensure all lightweight items of equipment and rubbish don't blow away in the wind

Responsible Mountain Biking

- Ride along open trails only, avoid carving your own trail as this will severely damage the fragile eco-system, plants, mosses and insects which might survive your passing or never grow again
- Ride Responsibly, avoid locking brakes and carving deep ruts in the top soil, this will eventually form a path for precipitation run off especially during the monsoon and will rapidly lead to serious erosion
- If using vehicular transport to and from a venue park appropriately with respect for other trail users.
- If using a dedicated mountain bike trail or local road show respect to other users, there may be trekkers, members of the local community, children or animal along the way
- Adopt the appropriate speed
- Avoid sensitive areas, field crops, paddies or single tracks that are ostensibly paddy dams, areas of scientific research and the fragile high Himalayan regions, a little damage could have significant negative impact in both the short and long term
- Always be well prepared for both mechanical and climate eventualities
- Always carry a first aid kit and know the first aid basics

Responsible over-land expeditions (4x4 vehicles and off-road motor trails bikes)

- Drive only in permitted areas and trails
- Despite the temptation do not venture onto the fragile Himalayan hill sides that might be easily accessed from a road. There are rare Himalayan flora and fauna that might become extinct as a result of churning up their habitat.
- Prepare well for all eventualities including terrain and weather
- Road etiquette, be aware of other road users, pedestrians, children and animals

- Use caution, expect the unexpected
- Be considerate avoid loud music, over revving of the engine, this noise disturbs wild animals and birds
- Save fuel and reduce pollution and drive appropriately for the conditions
- Keep the engine serviced and drive in the appropriate gear for the trail conditions, bottom box low ratio might consume a bit more fuel but that will be cheaper than a new clutch and avoid wheel spinning
- Comply with all signs, these have been erected for safety reason and for the safety of other road or trail users.
- When winching, make sure that the anchor is solid and always use a wide strap to spread the load.
- Do not rearrange boulders or other environmental elements to enable you to pass, this will disturb the habitat of many species living around the locality
- Stop frequently to allow other road user who maybe faster than you to pass, if you are traveling in a group allow spaces between vehicles to allow for overtaking
- Wash your machine after any trip so as to minimize pollution and the possible spread on non-native invasive species.
- Only wash your vehicle in an appropriate washing facility do not do this on the trail side for the risk of contaminating local drinking water.

Responsible trekking

- Always inform a responsible person if you intend to travel and trek solo
- Stick to your planned route do not make diversions unless absolutely necessary
- Carry all the appropriate equipment that you might require on your intended expedition and understand how to use it
- Follow all appropriate environmental advice to preserve the environment
- Take guide as appropriate, cover his insurance and 'running' costs
- Refrain from playing loud music or having loud parties that will create

excessive noise disturbing the wild life or nearby communities

- Dispose of all rubbish appropriately and take home other rubbish to be disposed of in an environmentally friendly way
- Keep to the trail and walk in single file, to travel several abreast will only widen the trail, damage the local ecology, flora and fauna and create rapid erosion
- Make sure that trekking poles have rubber tip caps that fit securely so as to avoid penetrating deep into the topsoil and encouraging erosion
- If stopping along the trail move to one side to allow others to pass
- If camping is involved do so in such a way as to minimize any negative environmental impact
- Do not pollute local water sources, those might supply local communities with drinking water
- Do not wash clothes or do your washing up in the rivers
- If making toilet arrangements do so at a minimum distance of 50m from water sources
- Burn all toilet tissues and while taking sanitary item away with you

Preserving local cultures and customs

- All ethnic groups have their own dress and cultural beliefs and rituals is important to understand those and not to offend.
- These customs often include issues concerning dress courtesy, religious behavior, seating positions, non-verbal issues (pointing, showing the soles of feet etc)
- Watch how the local people behave, wait to be invited and always ask if in doubt
- Don't take photographs of people without first asking permission
- Don't give gifts to children in a begging situation, if you really want to help

find a responsible village leader and try to deal through them

- Encourage local dances and displays of ethnicity but insist on 'quality' displays not dirty shirts and scruffy fleece jackets
- Avoid displaying signs of wealth creating possible envy or inequality

Meeting the expectations of all stakeholders

Everyone we meet has expectations and especially within travel and tourist related activities. Tourist both foreign and domestic and the people they encounter expect:-

Value for money- don't barter too aggressively, pay the appropriate charges, offer the appropriate services and provide the appropriate courtesies

Respect - This is earned a given right, be respectful to all including animals and they in turn will respect you

Communication- for the point of exchanging information and knowledge, show an interest but do not become too 'pushy'

Safety- in all encounters people expect to be safe, do not do any activity that might negatively affect others.

Consider that your traveling and tourism activities are carried

Thoughtless use of the wilderness areas can and does destroy wildlife habitats

Travel safely and with minimum impact!