

International Bicycle Fund

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A non-governmental, nonprofit organization promoting bicycle transport, economic development, international understanding and safety education.

CODE OF RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

TRAVEL TO MEET NOT CONQUER

Understand your reasons for traveling. Pick destinations that you care about. Travel to meet the world and for the experience that brings, not to "conquer it." Travel in a spirit of humility and with a genuine desire to meet and share with local people, and appreciate their dignity. Rather than: counting rolls of film shot, calculating miles traveled, blasting through villages to reach mountains, racing along the coast to "discover" a beach paradise, rushing to collect entries in your passport or accumulating other items of travel materialism -- take the time to discover the enrichment that comes from seeing another way of life in its fullness. Be sensitive that what enriches you may rob or violate others. Select activities that celebrate and preserve the diversity of the world. Reflect daily on your experiences: seek to deepen your understanding.

BE CULTURALLY SENSITIVE

Be aware of the feelings, values, customs and beliefs of other people, thus preventing what might be offensive behavior. Remember this especially concerning dress, photography and religion. Realize that people in the area you visit often have time concepts and thought patterns different from your own. Not inferior, just different. Don't wear sacred items or buy unique artifacts central to the culture. Don't patronize tourism projects or activities that undermine the local culture or value system. Remember that you may be one of thousands of visitors. Do not expect special privileges. Make no promises to local people unless you are certain you can fulfill them.

UNDERSTAND CULTURES IN THEIR OWN CONTEXT

Don't just compare the superficial aspects of places you've been. Ask how the community is getting along within itself. How are the people interacting with their family and friends and their environment? Learn to observe, think, speak and write in a language that is non-ethnocentric, non-racist, non-pejorative and non-sensationalizing. Cultivate the habit of listening and observing, rather than merely hearing and seeing. Make a habit of asking questions instead of knowing all of the answers.

DON'T CREATE BARRIERS

Travel in a manner that doesn't create barriers between you and the place you came to experience. Take advantage of opportunities to walk, bicycle and use other available forms of non-motorized transport. Consider using these as your primary means of travel. Only bring necessary technological gadgetry. Don't let gadgets get between you and the natural ways of your destination. Be especially wary of video and camera equipment (especially Polaroid), and electronic equipment that produces noise.

BE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY

Use energy, water and other resources efficiently, and consistent with their availability and wise practice in the locale. Use reusable materials when possible. Participate in local recycling programs. Use the lowest impact, practicable, transportation option. Don't participate in activities that cause the destruction of the environment. Don't harass or collect ecologically crucial life forms or materials from the water, land or sky.

BE ECONOMICALLY BENEFICIAL

Spend money so that it stays in the community's economy: use services and stay in lodging that are owned by a member of the community, and that use and serve locally produced goods. If food and beverages are sufficiently available, purchase your needs from locally produced items. If food is scarce don't compete! Travel someplace else or be self-sufficient in your dietary needs. When buying, remember that the bargains you obtain are only possible because of low wages paid to the producer. Don't patronize tourist enterprises that undermine the society or ecology. Recognize that in most areas, spending on motorized transportation only minimally benefits the local economy because the equipment and energy is imported. Be satisfied with the comforts that the local economy can provide. If you need all the comfort of home, why travel? Critique tourism "development projects" to see if they are siphon money away from other basic development need, and/or to offshore corporations or the absentee elite.

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For more info on responsible travel and economic development contact: Ecumenical Coalition On Third World Tourism, Box 24, Chorakhehua, Bangkok 10230, THAILAND, or Center for Responsible Tourism, 2 Kensington Road, San Antonio, CA 94960 USA.