



SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

Sampan Travel believes that responsible tourism has the potential to be a great force for good. We are determined that through the tours we organise we play our part in making Myanmar not only a better place to visit but also a better place to live. This is our mission.

By being aware of the needs and desires of the people and places that we love to visit, responsible travel can deliver an enriching and flavoursome experience while preserving these destinations for future generations.

When travelling around Myanmar we attempt to tread as lightly as possible, gently engaging with the local communities and wildlife. Engines are turned off when not in use, rubbish generated is disposed of appropriately, and mutual respect is encouraged through sensitive and informed cultural interaction with local communities.

For the last three years we have been winners at the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Awards. In 2017 our magazine Slow Travel Myanmar was recognised for its commitment to the communication of sustainability. In both 2018 & 2019 we were named Best Responsible Tour Operator.



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In May 2018 we became the third tour operator in Myanmar to be Travelife Certified, recognising our excellence in sustainable tourism.

Travelife is a three-stage certification program for tour operators and travel agents: (Stage 1) Travelife Engaged; (Stage 2) Travelife Partner and (Stage 3) Travelife Certified. We were awarded Travelife Certified (Stage 3). Travelife Certified is a recognition of our excellence towards social and environmental sustainability. We comply with more than 160 criteria related to sustainability management, office operations, working with suppliers and customer communication. Travelife is a certification body that is formally Accredited by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), the highest global body for sustainability in tourism, supported by the United Nations.”



Below is Sampan’s Sustainability Policy: a working, breathing document that outlines what we have already managed, what we are currently doing, and what we hope to achieve in the future. This Policy is guided by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. We outline where our policy aligns with the broader, overarching goals of the UN.

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Environment

Our efforts to be an environmentally sustainable tour operator begin at the office. Our policies range from simple practices such as encouraging employees through stickers and signs to conserve energy by switching off appliances in the office and utilizing duplex printing and recycled paper when documents have to be printed for internal use. Eco-friendly tips and suggestions are placed on the noticeboard and disseminated internally in the office.

The coffee and tea provided in the office has all been produced in Myanmar.

We collect used plastic bags to be taken *en masse* to the nearby village of Dala where they are made into jewelry and accessories by the workshop Chu Chu. Our food waste is separated from all other waste and passed on to the Yangon-based social enterprise [Kokkoya Organics](#), to be used as fertiliser on their farm. Waste paper, bottles, and cans are collected by the social enterprise [RecyGlo](#) monthly to be processed responsibly. RecyGlo also creates a quarterly waste audit for us, they have provided us with waste and recycling bins, and conducted a waste reduction training session for our team in 2018.



Waste generated and water and energy consumed in the office is recorded on a monthly basis. We have not yet set measurable targets for this reduction, but plan to do so soon.

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For both internal travel and for clients, the carbon produced per person per flight is calculated. Using the tools on [MyClimate.org](https://myclimate.org) we carbon offset each flight, with the money accrued donated quarterly to the organization Trees for Myanmar. (Clients have the choice to opt out of this scheme.)

We do not work with and discourage engagement with companies and organizations that we know to practice or promote the maltreatment of wildlife. Our team is informed about animal welfare through training systems such as that on [Travelife](https://www.travelife.com). We have created Guidelines for Visiting Elephants Camps, to be considered by Sampan staff, clients, and partners. We strive to keep up-to-date with animal welfare and tourism developments by reading reports and attending workshops.



Sampan strives for sustainable consumptions patterns by managing our energy and water usage and enacting responsible procurement. To tackle climate change we carbon offset our flights, recycle as much as possible and reduce the generation of waste. We attempt to tread lightly throughout our tours, preserving Myanmar's biodiversity and eco-systems.

When visiting any of Myanmar's 21 designated Protected Areas (PAs), Sampan Travel works in line with the guidelines and principals set out in the Myanmar Ecotourism Policy. We support the principals of eco-tourism and strive to promote and work with destinations and organisations practicing the principals of eco-tourism.



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Finding environmentally sustainable transport options is a hard task for any tour operator that wants to conduct responsible travel. We attempt to offer transportation that causes little damage to the environment while at the same time not losing quality. If our guests are happy to sacrifice a little comfort in order to travel more sustainably (eg. taking a bus or coach instead of a car) they are encouraged to speak to their Sampan travel advisor and we can accommodate this.

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Economy

We attempt to support local enterprises as much as possible. The Sampan Travel Welcome Bags that each guest is presented with upon arrival are made by the Phoenix Association, a self-help group in Myanmar by and for people living with HIV. The gifts inside are from the various Myanmar-based enterprises such as [Pomelo](#), [Hla Day](#), [MESO](#), [Amazing Grace](#), [Pann Nann Ein](#), and a selection of others. We also give each guest a card holder with restaurant, café, and bar recommendations; these card holders are recycled from plastic by the organization Chu Chu.



We promote and take our guests to shops selling handicrafts from local artisans. When safe, comfortable and practical, we encourage our guests to eat from locally run restaurants. Our guides are similarly encouraged to promote local business and enterprises so to prevent economic 'leakage out of Myanmar.

Through our guides, partner agencies, and upon the [Green Heroes](#) page on our website, we allow those guests of ours who wish to make a monetary or material donation to a particular cause, project or organization in the country to do so in a responsible and informed fashion.

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Society

Sampan Travel abides by the workers' rights of the Myanmar Labour Law. We employ local staff and invest in their ongoing training. Our team regularly attends workshops and seminars on tourism so to increase their know-how and capacity. As stated in our Internal Regulations, Sampan Travel does not discriminate against current or potential employees on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexuality. Regular appraisals and feedback sessions with management engenders a familiar and open forum for discussion, debate, complaint, and suggestion.

As a company, once a month Sampan staff visit different charitable organisations operating near our office to make a donation and spend time with those working there. Aside from the donation, this allows us to make relationships in our wider community, learn from them, and not forget those that are more vulnerable than ourselves. In 2019 we began to additionally donate our time, by volunteering somewhere once a month.



We no longer offer visits to schools or orphanages as part of our itineraries. Nor do we offer short-term, unskilled voluntourism placements. We understand that the vast majority of people requesting to visit schools and orphanages do so with the best intentions. However, not only can these visits be disruptive to

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the children's learning, but more worryingly the commercialization of orphanages through 'orphanage tourism' in other Southeast Asian countries has led to the maltreatment of the children that these orphanages purport to be helping. Guests that are interested in donating to or helping young people in Myanmar, are encouraged to speak directly to their Sampan travel advisor or to have a look at [our Green Heroes](#).



Sampan supports local businesses so to reduce economic leakage out of Myanmar and keep the dollars spent on tour in-country. By supporting organisations such as Yangon Bakehouse and hiring as many women as we can both in the office and in the field, we hope to play our part in fostering Myanmar's next generation of female leaders. We believe that we are stronger together - have a look at our choice of "Green Heroes" to see some of our partners in Myanmar.

Sampan Travel is a member of [The Code](#) and is an official supporter of the [ChildSafe Movement](#). Both organisations are helping us put in place policies and practices that protect children from exploitation. Our employees either have already received or will soon receive training to become ChildSafe Agents. All employees have taken online training with The Code. We have written a Child Protection Policy to ensure that we are proactive and effective in our efforts to safeguard the welfare of children.

In support of gender equality, Sampan enthusiastically works with organisations dedicated to the empowerment of women, such as [Yangon Bakehouse](#). We do not take part in activities or use suppliers that discriminate or exploit women, children, or minority ethnic groups.



Staying the night in a monastery has fast become a popular thing to do in Myanmar. Although it is indeed a wondrous experience, we have heard from some monks that the continual presence of foreigners – and especially female foreigners – can be uncomfortable. Many tourists do not realize that it is against the rules of conduct (the *thei kha*) of the Buddhist order in Myanmar (the *sangha*) to sleep under the same roof as a woman. Because the monks will rarely themselves deny accommodation to those who ask, we take it upon ourselves to urge caution and the upmost respect if and when requesting to stay in a monastery overnight. We ourselves try to avoid including such overnight stays in our itineraries unless the compound is large enough to accommodate female travellers.

We place a huge emphasis on cultural exchange as a means to truly experience and better understand a country. For this reason we provide Burmese language phrase cards to our guests upon arrival. Additionally, we give ethnic language phrase cards featuring Shan, Pa’O, Jingphaw (Kachin), and Poe (Kayin /Karen) to clients travelling to regions in Myanmar where these languages are spoken. These have been created in collaboration with the social enterprise [Third Story Project](#), an organization creating books for children on peace and child rights in over 30 ethnic languages spoken in the country.

On our website, in our itineraries, and through our guides, we attempt to present not a postcard picture of Myanmar but a circumspect and comprehensive rendition of the country. Our online magazine, [Slow Travel Myanmar](#), was recognized for this in the first ever [Myanmar Responsible Tourism Awards in 2017](#). To this end, we also provide all guests with a comprehensive list of books we recommend (“Sampan’s Favourite Reads”) for those visiting Myanmar.



We provide our clients with the useful and accessible Dos and Don'ts for Tourists in Myanmar to help them avoid committing unintentional faux pas. This, coupled with our 'Guidelines for Guides', helps our guests respect the destinations they visit, the people living there and the cultures present. This includes things such as sensitivity when taking photographs and how to behave in and around sacred sites.

4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH



10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



Education enables upward social mobility and breaks the cycle of poverty; Sampan promotes the childhood educators myME and Third Story Project as well as the vocational training centres Sanon and Inle Heritage House. Sampan supports the creation of decent jobs by respecting workers' rights and investing in continuous training. Prejudice threatens sustainable development and destroys peoples' sense of self-worth: we fight against prejudice and discrimination in the workplace.

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This Sustainability Policy is sent to the suppliers and partners that we work with in Myanmar, to ensure that they are aware of the standards that we aspire to, and to encourage them to adopt similar standards if they have not already done so. Sampan Travel avoids engaging with suppliers and partners that actively work against the spirit of the Sustainability Policy. However, patience is necessary considering that knowledge of sustainability and sustainable tourism is not widespread in Myanmar. Sampan Travel is committed to work with other responsible companies and organization in raising the sustainability standards of the Myanmar Tourism industry as a whole.

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