

# Leading the Way

Creating better, more sustainable  
tourist excursions



the **Travel**  
**Foundation**   
Case Study

In 2016, we teamed-up with the Dutch Travel Association, ANVR, to support their members to improve the impact and quality of tours.

The resulting online training course, called 'Leading the Way', has been completed by over 500 tour guides and managers across 17 countries, from the Netherlands to Nepal.

### Excursions are one of the best ways for tourists to truly experience their holiday destination.

Tours bring visitors into direct contact with local people and enable them to enjoy places rich in natural and cultural heritage. When managed well, excursions deliver a great customer experience, whilst also bringing benefits for local communities and environment. But if care is not taken, tours can have a negative impact on the people and places visited.

Sustainable tours can bring benefits for everyone involved.

- Customers enjoy a more authentic, memorable experience.
- Communities gain opportunities for income, respect for their way of life and a chance for their voice to be heard.
- Tour leaders and managers benefit from improved job satisfaction, great reviews and repeat custom.





*"In the end, it is all about creating better places and experiences for locals and holidaymakers. Tour guides and leaders can use the inspiring knowledge straightaway and put it into practice."*

*Gerben Hardeman, Manager Responsible Travel & Tourism at ANVR*



# What we did

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Our challenge was to support ANVR members to drive up sustainability standards throughout their supply chains. In response, we developed a training course for guides who represent these tour operators on excursions and who have direct contact with customers.

The accessible, online course enables guides all around the world to gain an understanding of sustainable tourism and how to integrate it into their day-to-day role. The training is divided into four modules:

1. The principles of responsible guiding
2. Following responsible guiding practices
3. Communicating with customers
4. Professional development

Each module includes tips and examples from expert guides, followed by multiple choice questions and answers.

## Example question

On return from a guiding trip a colleague asks for advice.

“I experienced again today the problem of the farmers being aggressive (shouting and throwing vegetables in our direction) towards visitors taking photographs of them whilst they were working. I don't think that we should take visitors past the farmers' fields any more.”

Those completing the course are asked to select which actions they would take to apply responsible guiding principles.

In fact, this was a real-life situation. Mutually beneficial solutions were found by working with the farmers to agree the best times to visit and what to exchange in return for their time.

Now guests are invited to try and dig out vegetables with much laughter on both parts. The farmers are happy to be photographed and even take photos for the visitors. The experience is unforgettable and unique.

## The Benefits

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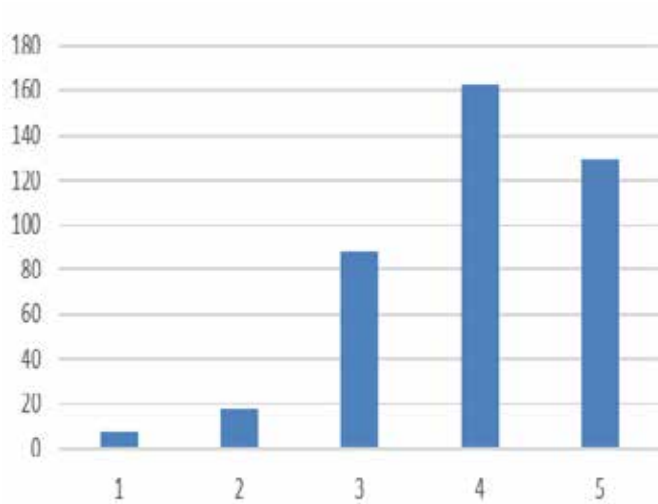
*“Even if you already know a lot and are aware of some obvious matters, I was still surprised about the numbers of issues I didn’t know yet and what you as a tour leader and the group can do in the field of sustainable tourism whilst travelling.”*

*Sylvia Timmermans, Dutch tour leader*

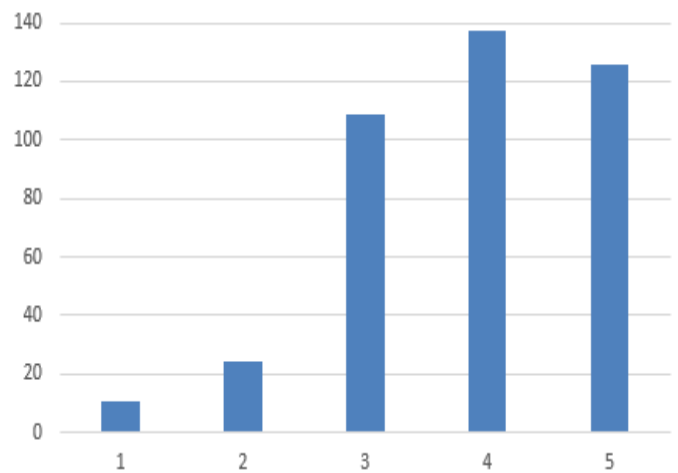
# Improved guiding skills and knowledge

Over 500 guides and managers have completed the course and, as a result, they have gained new expertise and motivation. Most rated the course 4 or 5 out of 5 for developing their knowledge of responsible guiding principles and for professional development.

**Rate how useful you found the training for developing your knowledge of responsible guiding principles**



**Rate how useful you have found the training for your professional development**



Some of the changes that guides have told us they have made:

- Developing a new programme of dos and don'ts
- Speaking openly about culturally sensitive issues
- Giving customers information on the local way of life
- Getting in touch with local people directly
- Telling customers about souvenirs that are made locally
- Eating locally
- Reducing the use of plastic bags and bottles and encouraging clients to do the same
- Reducing water use and disposing of rubbish properly

## Improved benefits for local communities

More sustainable tours enable local communities to get a fairer deal from tourism, by ensuring they can earn an income, preserve their cultural identity and that tours respect their wishes and privacy.

Most guides who have completed the course said that they intend to improve practices or introduce new practices where relevant:

- 95% said they will make changes to build relationships with communities and businesses.
- 95% said they will change processes to increase the positive contribution of tours to the local economy.



Ali de Boer, tour leader with the Indonesian Tourist Guide Association, is now sharing ideas with communities to improve product quality and using services provided by local people to spread the economic benefits of tours.

Ali also gives tourists information about the local way of life which helps the client to “feel, see, hear, taste and speak the Indonesian or local life.”

Ali said, “Customers enjoy the tour more and have more respect and understanding about local life and wisdom.”

*“The best thing about the training is that it is helping me go from being a ‘Tour Leader’ to ‘a great Tour Leader’”.*

*Ali de Boer, tour leader, Indonesian Tourist Guide Association*







## Improved environmental conservation

Responsible tour guiding supports wildlife conservation and the protection of natural resources on which we all rely, such as clean water.

96% of guides who completed the course said they intend to make changes to minimise environmental impact.

*“Encouraging guests to see wildlife and enjoy nature is good for the destination; it helps to protect the environment, supports the livelihoods of local people and makes a fantastic experience.”*

*Valance James, Tour Guide, Saint Lucia*



## Better tours

Sustainable tours create a better, more competitive product that is valued by customers. Expert guide, James Crockett, from Jus' Sail, Saint Lucia said: "I know that customers value our ethos, the evidence is in our Tripadvisor reviews."

Within the training, guides receive a checklist and action plan for continued professional development, to ensure ongoing improvement of their product. Of the first 22 guides to take the course, 20 have already taken further steps to increase their own knowledge on environmental protection, socio-cultural issues, arts, crafts and history.

In the long-term, responsible tours ensure a healthier future for the business by protecting the very assets on which tours depend: beautiful natural environments and good relationships with local people.

***"The sustainable ethos has been passed down through the business and every employee is an advocate for this approach. It is the differentiating factor / unique product offering for our company."***

***Steve Parker, Inside Japan***

## In numbers

So far, over **500** tour guides and managers from **17** countries have completed the training.

Most guides who completed the course said that they intend to improve practices or introduce new practices where relevant:



95% said they will make changes to build relationships with communities and businesses



95% said they will make changes to increase their positive contribution to the local economy



96% said they will make changes to minimize environmental impact.

Of the first 22 guides to complete the course:



18 have improved the way that they communicate with customers, for example briefing customers about cultural sensitivities.



20 have taken further steps to increase their knowledge on environmental protection, socio-cultural issues, arts and history.



To find out how your organisation can benefit from Travel Foundation training courses, please contact:

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