



Green Trekking Code of Ethics

The northern territories of Pakistan are renowned for their natural beauty and attractive mountain landscape. It is the meeting places of great mountain ranges of the Himalayas, the Karakorums, Hindukush and Pamir. Because of its unmatched beauty of natural landscape, it is known as a paradise for trekkers and adventure tourists. However, over the last few decades the ever increasing tourism activity in this area, especially the rapid growth in domestic tourism is becoming a serious threat to the fragile natural environment and the landscape beauty. Every summer thousands of foreign and domestic trekkers and adventure tourists visit these mountains areas. Many of popular trekking routes are already polluted to the point of being dangerous to both people's health and the natural environment.

In order to save the natural landscape of Pakistan's great mountain areas from the irresponsible tourism, Sustainable Tourism Foundation Pakistan (STFP) has launched an awareness and public advocacy campaign

under the title of **"Green Trekking"**. The slogan of this campaign is *"take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints"*.

In this campaign, STFP has developed following code of ethics for the trekkers and visitors going to these mountain areas to educate the trekkers about the practical steps which they can take to minimize their negative impact on the natural, cultural and economic impacts.



Green Trekking Code of Ethics

We hope you will make your contribution in the promotion of green trekking by taking due notice of the following points.

Plan to Pack it Out

- Pack items in reusable containers
- Remove unnecessary wrapping papers before you go on trek.
- Minimize the non-biodegradables you bring in to the mountains.
- Bring enough sturdy waterproof bags to pack out all non-biodegradable and non-burnable garbage.
- Bring durable lithium batteries from home rather than depend on inferior quality batteries.



Small is Better

- Logic dictates that the fewer your number, the less your impact. The more people that travel at one time, the greater the impact.
- Limit your group size 10 to 15 or less, considering that with support staff you will triple that number.

Do not litter. Burn it, Bury It or Carry It Out

- Litter is not only a sore for eyes but also harbours hazardous pollutants. All trash you or your staff, including porters produce should be separated each day and treated properly.
- Burn burnables (dry paper only); bury biodegradables such as food wastes. All non-biodegradables including glass, plastics, aluminum foil, batteries and cans etc. should be packed up and carried out to be disposed off properly. You can sell these items in the main towns and cities.
- On the trail all members should carry polythene bags to collect any used paper, which you can burn in the evening.

Conserve Firewood

- Another important aspect to consider while trekking in the Northern Areas of Pakistan is deforestation. This area has very little natural wood and increased tourism activity has a great potential to eliminate the remaining standing trees,

so always keep in mind the following points:

- Support the use of kerosene for cooking by going with a trekking agent who regularly uses it.
- Encourage the agent to use kerosene for porters' cooking also but expect to pay a bit more for its cost and transport.
- Be sure to dress warmly and see that your porters have some kind of wrap so that none of you are dependent upon firewood for nighttime warmth.
- If you are staying at a hotel, rest house, or lodge; choose one that cooks with kerosene or gas.
- Try to coordinate menu selections and eating time with other trekkers to reduce the use of wood.
- Avoid campfires in such an environment where wood is scarce.



Leave No Trace

- Choose established camp sites wherever possible rather than disturbing new ground, even if it means sharing site with another group.
- Avoid trenching around tents if the site is sloped and on high ground; a plastic sheet under the tent should suffice against rain seepage.
- While trekking stick to the main trails, by avoiding steep shortcuts which contribute to erosion.

- Don't create multiple trails across the meadows; try to leave them in their original condition.
- At high elevations, trampling can wipe out an entire plant community which may not grow back for years. Loss of vegetation contributes to erosion. So don't walk through shrubs no matter how hardy they appear.
- One could summarize by saying *"take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints"*.
- Discourage members of your group and trekking staff from writing their names on rocks or trees; it destroys their natural beauty.



Save Wildlife

- The wildlife on mountain areas of Pakistan is threatened due to reduction of natural habitat in many places. Give space to wild animals. Do not feed them; it only weakens their defenses.
- Be wary of buying products made of animal skins or furs, as the protected status of animals is often disregarded in the mountain areas.
- Insist at the beginning, of your trek that your porters or other staff does not hunt. Do not eat any wild animal they might kill, and don't reward hunters with tips.

Use Water Wisely

- Avoid bathing or washing clothes in streams, rivers and lakes. Carry a bucket of water away from the water source and use biodegradable soaps only. Biodegradable soaps are difficult to find in Pakistan so bring along an adequate supply with you.
- Also instruct your support staff to adopt the same procedure for cleaning cooking utensils.



Toilet Techniques

- Human waste causes water pollution and destroy the beauty of the surrounding environment. At a few established camp sites there are pit toilets that can be used. Otherwise make sure that your trek organizer provides a toilet tent for camp site use.
- Set up toilet tent at least 50 meters away from camp site and water source. Holes should be dug at least 18" deep, keeping a single sod top for re-covering if possible. Sprinkle some dirt in the pit after every use to keep flies away. If possible, carry lime to sprinkle onto the pit to diminish the stench.
- Do not forget to instruction your support staff to use the toilet. At the end of your stay pack the earth down tightly and cover the hole with sod top.

- On glaciers or hard snow, where it is almost impossible to dig a hole, try to find a good toilet spot away from camp and the melt pools that are the water supply for your camp. Do your best to cover the used toilet spot with rocks.
- On the trail pick your toilet spot carefully. It would be better if it were away from the trail and the water source. Be sure not to pick a toilet spot near a sacred site.



Be a Good Guest

Remember your trip will be a cross cultural experience. Local people commonly ask why trekkers come so far to walk in these mountains and experience their simple ways. Try to communicate them what you find enriching about their area and help them appreciate what they have. Explain to them the realities of your home country, good and bad. Bring photographs of your family, home and country to share with your new friends. Discourage smoking and drug use among young people and encourage them to be proud of their culture.

- Kindly also respect Pakistani customs in your dress and behavior. Women should not wear shorts or revealing blouses. It will be more appropriate if they could wear Pakistani salwar-kamiz. For men, knee-length hiking shorts are better than jogging shorts, and always wear a shirt. Avoid physical displays of affection publicly.
- Be respectful of religious places. Heads should be covered and shoes removed before entering any mosque or shrine. Modestly and neatness are especially appreciated when visiting religious places.
- Get permission before taking photographs and respect people's right to privacy.
- Giving money, pens, candy etc. to begging children creates a patron-pauper consciousness and should be strictly avoided. Instead, make a positive contribution to a school or a community health center of the local NGO which will benefit the entire community. You can also promote local art and crafts by buying local handicrafts.
- Above all, remember that your vacation has a great impact on the natural environment and the people of this area. By making an effort and taking the above points into consideration you could help the natural environment and local communities enormously.

(To get a copy of Urdu version of this code of conduct, please send us an email at stfpak@gmail.com)

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