



# PATA RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS TRAVEL GUIDELINES

PATA has been a champion of environmental and cultural heritage since its inception. Measures taken to demonstrate PATA's stance on social responsibility include the 1970 conference on Tourism and Heritage Conservation and the adoption of the [APEC/PATA Code for Sustainable Tourism](#) in 2001; the establishment of the [PATA Foundation](#) in 1984, and the annual [PATA Gold Awards](#). Of worthy mention is the Environment award that each year honours best practices upheld by individuals or organisations in the protection and conservation of the environment.

The PATA [Sustainability and Social Responsibility \(SSR\) Committee](#) works tirelessly to address the issues and challenges facing our industry by promoting policies that embrace the development of tourism in a sustainable and responsible manner. For many years, specially-convened [PATA Task Forces](#) have been formed at the request of national governments to work with public and private sector bodies in seeking to re-establish tourism businesses affected by disasters.

PATA continues to develop its sustainability and social responsibility programme by creating and maintaining effective [partnerships](#) with sustainability-minded organisations such as [EarthCheck](#), [GIZ](#), and the [Global Sustainable Tourism Council \(GSTC\)](#). These organisations provide a broad range of member benefits such as education webinars and tools on how to embrace and implement sustainable business practices. PATA also enjoys strong and binding links with various branches of the United Nations including UNWTO, [ILO](#), [UNEP](#), UNESCO and [UNISDR](#). By working closely with these esteemed organisations we gain additional support and strength in promoting the importance of a sustainable and responsible visitor economy in the Asia Pacific region and beyond.

Highlights of PATA's sustainability and social responsibility activities include the implementation of a [sustainability policy](#), the development and management of an [online sustainable tourism knowledge platform](#), and the 'greening' of all PATA events. PATA headquarters in Bangkok recorded the notable achievement in May 2016 of achieving Silver Status Certification from EarthCheck, irrefutable evidence that, at PATA, we practice that which we preach. The PATA Responsible Business Travel Guidelines are essential reading for participants at PATA events worldwide. They address, in particular, the supply chains that support travel and tourism activities and they provide valuable advice on how companies and individuals may act responsibly at every stage of a travel itinerary and event. *Let us work together for a better tomorrow.*

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## Planning your Trip

- 1. Plan your trip to help reduce your carbon footprint:** Where possible, take more direct flights, combine your trips and maximise your time in each destination.
- 2. Booking:** Make a real contribution by using a 'green' booking engine. Two examples are [Book Different](#), a booking engine that gives part of their profits to a charity of your choice, and [BookGreener](#), a booking site that helps travellers to search for 'green' hotels. Use PATA's Strategic Partner [TripAdvisor](#) to identify hotels that are part of the 'Green Leaders' programme – hotels committed to green practices ideally evidenced through third party certification.
- 3. Think about your emissions.** Consider your [carbon footprint](#) when travelling. For example, a return flight from Bangkok to London in economy class generates 1.3 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. A seat in business class generates 2.76 tonnes ([click here](#) to calculate your flight's carbon footprint). Consider offsetting your emissions by contributing to a programme such as the [Carbon Neutral Company](#) or [GreenFleet](#). Many airlines allow you to determine the footprint of your flight and to compensate it by making a form of environmental donation towards low-carbon development or reforestation. Consider an airline with a sound environmental record.
- 4. Packing:** Travel light – think about what you pack. Every pound and kilogramme on the plane adds to fuel consumption and carbon emissions. Be careful to observe all quarantine restrictions.
- 5. BYO:** Say 'no' to plastic bottles and containers. Taking your own eco-friendly container contributes to the reduction in plastic waste. Consider travelling with your own toiletries, thus minimising the use of the complimentary 'single-use' bathroom products provided by many hotels.
- 6. Minimise paper usage.** Reduce, or preferably eliminate, printed collateral materials at meetings and trade shows. If you must print, travel only with the minimum quantity required and use only recommended stock such as recycled or FSC certified paper.

## During your trip

- 1. Ask questions.** Ask your tour operator or guide to give details of established environmental guidelines that minimise the impact of tourists on the environment, culture and community. Ask your hotel for details of its environmental practices, and do not be afraid to conduct your own on-site audit to ensure that they are being followed. Ask your event organisers to tell you about environmental considerations for the event. Constructive feedback is important. It helps to change mindsets and policies.
- 2. Be respectful of local communities:** It is vitally important that you show the utmost respect for local customs, religions and lifestyles. Be sensitive to local culture by wearing clothing that is acceptable and unlikely to offend. Be aware of the sensitivity in some communities to being photographed. Not all cultures share the fascination with taking photographs for social media. Always ask before you take a photograph of local residents. Remember that you are a visitor and that your cultural values may differ from those in the community. These values may include different concepts of time, personal space, communication and displays of affection that are simply different rather than being inferior, wrong or offensive. Demonstrate responsible behaviour to other travellers who are less informed than you by acting as an example and, importantly, as an ambassador of your home country.
- 3. Be respectful of the country at large and its natural resources:** Avoid activities that might contribute to the poor treatment of wild or protected animals. Be careful to not leave rubbish or to pollute the area that you visit - especially in parks, nature reserves and other protected areas. Respect the local laws - even if they contrast with the legal structure in your own country. Remember – you are the guest.
- 4. Keep your good habits.** Try to minimise your impact on the environment by behaving as you would at home. Dispose of all waste appropriately and recycle whenever possible. Do not use excessive water in the shower, reuse your towels and remember to unplug electronic equipment when not in use. Please minimise food wastage by taking only what you need from the buffet counter.

5. **Dining out:** Be conscious of the origins of food served in restaurants and that the practices adopted in preparation and cooking. Is the restaurant, for example, using local, seasonal products? Does the restaurant implement sound environmental practices? How does it deal with waste? Is water consumption monitored carefully?
6. **Getting around:** Rather than renting a car, consider using public transport. Better still, walk or hire a bicycle. Consider the fuel economy when choosing your mode of transport by taking the amount of fuel used and carbon emitted divided by the number of people who are using it. Check with your company as it may provide incentives for staff to using public rather than private transport.
7. **Include local communities in your travel:** Learn about them, try to speak their language and tell them about your own culture. They will teach you more about their country than any tour guide and they will undoubtedly recommend markets and places to stay and eat that benefit directly their local economy. Be sensitive to displays of wealth in front of people living in developing countries. Displaying expensive jewellery, for example, may give rise to feelings of resentment that create barriers to genuine and sincere interactions between travellers and locals.
8. **Be conscious of the souvenirs you take home:** Do try to buy locally-made souvenirs, particularly handcrafted items that are made by and support local communities or products that are Fair Trade. Exclude souvenirs that violate export regulations such as elephant ivory or other wildlife products. Do not remove any objects, plants or animal products from your natural surroundings. Such actions may affect the fragile ecosystem and many countries prohibit the export/import of such items.

### After your trip

1. **Give feedback** to your event organisers about your hotel and other relevant service providers. The more you demand sustainable travel options and green events, the more they will be delivered. Share success stories with peers.
2. **Continue** with your commitment to conservation at home by incorporating it into everyday life. Support organisations or societies that follow eco-principles and share your experiences with others with the goal of increasing awareness of environmental issues.
3. If not already in place, consider developing a **responsible travel policy** for your organisation that is designed to reduce environmental and social impact.
4. **Work with a responsible travel booking agency** that can support the organisation's policy of responsible travel choices where possible to further reduce travel costs and the environmental and social footprints.
5. **Consider incentivising staff** to make more responsible travel choices.

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#### Sources:

- [EarthCheck](#) Christmas Newsletter Tips
- ECOTOUR Responsible Travel Guideline  
[http://www.ecotourdirectory.com/ecotourism/guidelines\\_for\\_ecotravellers.php](http://www.ecotourdirectory.com/ecotourism/guidelines_for_ecotravellers.php)
- Responsible Travel Report – The Online Magazine of “Sustainable Travel International”  
<http://www.responsibletravelreport.com/travel-green/travel-tips>
- Untamed Path – Travel agency in South America  
<http://www.untamedpath.com/eco-tours/eco-travel-guidelines.shtml>
- GreenBiz – Environmentally Responsible Business Travel  
<https://www.greenbiz.com/research/report/2002/08/13/environmentally-responsible-business-travel>
- CalRecycle – “Business Waste Reduction: Waste Reduction Ideas for Meetings and Conferences”  
<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/reducewaste/business/FactSheets/Meetings.htm>

# PATA®

Pacific Asia Travel Association

www.PATA.org

Pacific Asia Travel Association  
Head Office  
28th Floor, Siam Piwat Tower  
989 Rama I Road, Pathumwan  
Bangkok 10330, Thailand  
Tel: +66 (0)2 658-2000  
Fax: +66 (0)2 658-2010  
Email: membership@PATA.org

PATA China  
Beijing, China  
Tel: +86 (0)10 6500-1397  
Fax: +86 (0)10 6500-1497  
Email: china@PATA.org

PATA Pacific  
Sydney, Australia  
Tel: +61 (0)40 983-9225  
Email: pacific@PATA.org

PATA Europe, West Asia, Africa  
London, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)7932 074-978  
Email: europe@PATA.org

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