

CODE OF CONDUCT for Yukon's Wilderness Tourism Operators

At the core of a code of conduct is responsibility. For a wilderness tourism business this means responsibility at all levels, from marketing to hiring, and from purchasing supplies to providing the wilderness experience itself. Being responsible means ensuring that all aspects of the operation are sustainable – environmentally, socio-culturally and economically.

The code of conduct below (8 principles, each with a number of suggested operational guidelines) outlines the ways operators can ensure that their businesses are as sustainable as possible, that the quality of the experiences they offer are high, and that the Territory continues to benefit from wilderness tourism activities

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES and OPERATING GUIDELINES for RESPONSIBLE and SUSTAINABLE WILDERNESS TOURISM OPERATIONS

1. Provide quality guest experiences

Strive to provide experiences that are as safe, informative, enjoyable and healthy as possible.

- Market responsibly by providing information that leads to realistic expectations
- Ensure guides are skilled and knowledgeable (with respect to the specific activities engaged in, and the location of the trip (including its potential hazards and seasonable operating conditions))
- Encourage guides to interpret the natural and cultural history
- Hire guides who have good leadership, teaching and interpersonal communication skills
- Ensure a strong safety network is in place (with reliable communication devices, adequate first aid supplies, an up-to-date emergency contingency plan, and guides trained in wilderness first aid and activity-specific rescue techniques)
- Have a guide-to-client ratio that is suitable for the activity being undertaken
- Educate guests on how to act in potentially hazardous situations (e.g. wildlife encounters, water crossings, whitewater boating, cold water immersion, cold weather conditions, etc.)
- Provide adequately for nutritional needs of guests and guides

2. Create an environment in which staff can excel

Staff is the frontline of the company, and critical to the quality of the guests' experience, and the sustainability of the company they work for.

- Support educational, training and certification opportunities
- Provide in-house training (on company expectations, sustainability practices, location-specific operating guidelines, and applicable social and environmental issues)
- Provide fair financial remuneration (at or above industry standards)
- Provide incentives for staff to exceed the minimum level of training and knowledge
- Accommodate personal needs of staff members, as much as possible
- Provide quality and helpful feedback to staff on their performance

3. Support wilderness conservation initiatives

Wilderness tourism depends on pristine natural environments.

- Provide experiences that foster deep appreciation of wilderness
- Ensure guides are informed, and educating guests, about wilderness values and local conservation issues
- Support only those resource developments that are operated responsibly and do not damage the environment
- Promote the company's sustainability practices.
- Support the work of conservation NGO's and initiatives (through advocacy, financial contributions, etc.)

4. Ensure operating practices are environmentally sustainable

Ensure the environment in which tourism operations are carried out is not degraded by the activities.

- Continually seek improvement in sustainability practices
- Ensure guides are informed about wildlife viewing guidelines and educate their guests in appropriate behavior around wildlife
- Ensure guides are knowledgeable about ways to minimize impact (through following Leave no Trace guidelines)
- Be aware of potential cumulative impacts if there are other companies operating in the same area.

5. Benefit local communities

Local people must benefit socially and economically if there is to be ongoing support for wilderness tourism and preservation.

- Support Yukon businesses
- Hire and buy locally when feasible
- Inform clients of local events and attractions, and where to purchase locally manufactured goods
- Consider supporting a community initiative

6. Respect cultural values

Celebrate the Yukon's unique cultural history while respecting the rights of First Nations peoples.

- Respect First Nations culture and traditional activities
- Ensure that guides are knowledgeable about First Nations culture and customs in areas of operation
- Know implications of Final Agreements in areas of operation.
- Know which sites are protected, their cultural significance, and what activities and behavior is appropriate at those sites.
- Hire First Nations member to interpret their own sites and culture when possible

7. Respect historic and archaeological sites

Intact sites and artifacts can teach us about Yukon's unique history and need to be preserved.

- Ensure guides know about the archaeological and historic sites in areas of operation
- Respect the sites and leave any artifacts in place
- Abide by guidelines established by Cultural Services, Heritage Resources

8. Responsibly represent Yukon's wilderness tourism industry

Ensure that your company's operations reflect well on the Yukon's wilderness tourism industry as a whole.

- Be an advocate for sustainable tourism in the Territory
- Cooperate with other tour operators, especially where areas of operation overlap
- Comply with government regulations regarding guide standards and company policies