

# [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com)

## Responsible Tourism



### **AITO 5-star & Award Winning Responsible Tourism**

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit the local communities, protect the environment by minimising pollution, and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. We support a number of charities and projects, some of which are detailed below. Our major Responsible Tourism initiative is our on-going support for Northpoint School in Kathmandu through the UK registered charity SHIVA. In 2008 Mountain Kingdoms was awarded AITOs new five star rating - the highest status achievable and we were also presented with the prestigious annual AITO Responsible Tourism award.

### **Northpoint School, Kathmandu**

Since 2005 Mountain Kingdoms has been committed to working with SHIVA Charity to support Northpoint English School, near Bhaktapur, Nepal. The school, currently housed in a rented building, has struggled to pay the teachers whilst still providing the necessary books and equipment. We raised almost several thousand pounds for the school through a host of fundraising activities and client donations and we will continue to make Northpoint our major Responsible Tourism initiative. We also hold a dedicated 'Wilderness' lecture each year with all proceeds going to another SHIVA charity school - the Ginette Harrison School. In December 2007 this lecture raised over £3000 for the school, which has meant a new building for the school, can now be finished.

### **English lessons, Kathmandu**

A brand new initiative, Mountain Kingdoms is offering a course of English lessons to Nepalese trekking staff. Many have not had the benefits of a good education and yet good spoken & written English would significantly improve their career progression to become sirdars (head guides), and/or to work in offices in later life.

We have designed a course focusing on vocabulary related to the Himalayan environment and the first of these intensive 45 day courses began in December 2007. Around thirty regular trekking staff, who are keen, and have the aptitude to become lead guides, are invited to participate in each course and their progress is assessed and graded by oral and written exams.

### **New Life Centre, Kathmandu**

Mountain Kingdoms provides on-going support to the New Life Centre - an orphanage in Kathmandu, run by one of our past clients. MK has contributed over £1000 in the last two years. We also encourage our clients to support the New Life Centre by including it on our Himalayan charities leaflet sent out with all post trek/tour questionnaires. This new residential centre, the first stage of which was built in 2008, will mean that the centre will be more sustainable long term, with money being spent on the children and their education, rather than rent. The first stage will accommodate the existing 30 children and basic amenities. The 2nd stage will provide facilities such as library/study room, offices, physiotherapy room and volunteers' accommodation.

### **Machermo Porter Shelter/Rescue Post**

We actively support IPPG (International Porter protection Group) who, in association with CAN (Community Action Nepal), have established a first aid post and rescue centre for porters in the Gokyo valley. The facility not only saves lives but also acts as a place to educate porters on the dangers they face in the mountains. The shelter has been so successful that IPPG and CAN are now aiming to build a second centre at Gorak Shep, close to Kala Pattar and Everest Base Camp. Mountain Kingdoms is helping to raise funds towards establishing this vital facility.

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For further Responsible Tourism information contact Niki Morgan, Responsible Tourism Manager on 0845 330 8579 or e-mail [niki@mountainkingdoms.com](mailto:niki@mountainkingdoms.com)

## Carbon Offsetting

Mountain Kingdoms is working with TICOS on offsetting carbon emissions from clients, staff and trek leaders. TICOS is an industry wide programme supported by international agencies such as UNESCO and tourism industry bodies such as the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) to stimulate collective action by tour operators and travel agents selling holidays which include air travel. From 2009, all our holiday prices (that include a flight) will automatically include an amount to offset the carbon emissions caused by their long haul flights. We are working with TICOS to get these funds allocated to a solar energy project by the Druk White Lotus School in Ladakh, a charity we have worked with for a number of years.

## Agent Manual

We have created a manual for all overseas agents detailing how we expect our trips to be operated including advice on waste removal at campsites, encouragement of socially and culturally responsible behaviour from clients, taking care of local trekking staff, and acting in a way which does not impact negatively on the environment. Only on the agent's agreement to adhere to the principles and practices in the guidelines, will the agent be accepted to work with Mountain Kingdoms.

## Client Information & Support

We have a comprehensive section in the trek dossiers, which are set out to all clients highlighting our responsible tourism practices, policies and recommendations. We advise our clients how to trek sympathetically with awareness of, and sensitivity to, local customs and culture. Specifically we give information on: Visitor Impact, Preservation of local culture, Protecting the global environment, Porter Protection and Himalayan charities.

We also send out a charities leaflet to all our clients when they return from their holiday. Since January 2005 we have raised nearly £5,000 for our combined charities from the generous donations of our clients.

## Client Feedback & Leader Evaluation

Clients and leaders are invited to feedback on issues concerning staff welfare, or any other concerns to responsible tourism on their holiday through a post-holiday questionnaire. Any issues are then fed straight back to the supplier so any problems are quickly resolved.

## Office Practice

We have a formal Responsible Tourism policy for office practice. This includes guidelines on reducing waste, recycling, heating, lighting, buying fair-trade products, supporting local independent shops, buying environmentally friendly cleaning products and use of compute, printers and photocopiers. MK is happy to pay a premium for goods and services that are environmentally friendly and ethical, and in the last 12 months has significantly increased recycling and fair-trade product purchase.

## Other charities supported by Mountain kingdoms

✿ Dental Project, Peru ✿ Druk White Lotus School, Leh, Ladakh ✿ The Michael Aris Memorial Trust, Tibet ✿ The Tibet Foundation ✿ The Bhutan Society of the United Kingdom ✿ Jimmy Roberts Memorial Fund, Nepal ✿ Everest Memorial Trust, Nepal ✿ The Gurkha Welfare Trust ✿ Global Action Network ✿ KINOE ✿ Sir Edmund Hillary's Himalayan Trust ✿ Ginette Harrison Memorial Fund ✿ LATA Foundation, South America ✿ the Temple Garden Foundation, Cambodia

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