

Responsible Volunteering Code of Good Practice

Responsible Volunteering in South Africa

Volunteering as a global travel practice is big business. Unfortunately growth markets are susceptible to unethical practices and we should endeavour to operate our programmes within guidelines that are recognised, respected and adhered to.

More and more organisations in South Africa are now offering volunteer packages to their clients. However, it is important that volunteer programmes are well thought out and impact positively on economic, social and environmental issues in the community.

Most importantly if you are going to offer volunteer travel it should be done in a transparent and responsible manner that recognises the needs of both the community and the volunteer. Responsible operators should guard against exploiting the communities they serve and set realistic goals and expectations for volunteers they place.

Responsible volunteering should be about creating a better place for people to live in and a better place to visit.

As a responsible volunteer operator we pledge our commitment to uphold a minimum Code of Good Practice, which includes but is not limited to:

- Having a long-term relationship and agreement in writing with the host community.
- Programme outputs must be determined by and with the community, for example, via a needs analysis, collective consultative meeting.
- Having a shared vision with the community/project on the role played by volunteers.
- Volunteers must not be taking the place of local employees.
- Where overseas placement organisations are used to source volunteers, these organisations should be charging fair prices in a transparent way.
- Volunteers must be screened for personal references and criminal records.
- Volunteers' skills/interests/hobbies must be matched to the programme needs.
- The community or programme must have final right of acceptance or rejection of applicants. Automatic acceptance should not be the norm.
- Volunteers must be provided with a written Task Description outlining project duration, resources, supervision, reporting structures and final objectives/ measurable outcomes.
- Volunteers must transfer skills to the community.
- Volunteers must be orientated effectively prior to arrival and on the programme.
- Volunteers must be self-funding so as not to burden the host community.

- Volunteer programmes must be financially transparent by giving volunteers access to information on the breakdown of their fee and what amounts go into the community.
- Volunteers must be effectively managed on the ground (assistance, guidance, supervision) by programme co-ordinators, so as to ensure community and volunteer gets value from placement.
- Volunteers must abide by a written code of conduct.
- Volunteer programmes must carry volunteer specific insurances (legal compliance).
- Volunteer programmes must carry PDP permits and relevant insurances when charging volunteers for transfers/transportation.
- Volunteering management companies/ agencies must adhere to basic legal requirements of their specific sector of the industry and laws of South Africa.
- Volunteer project must have a Responsible Tourism Strategy that addresses economic, social and environmental policy.
- Volunteer programmes must have a structure/system for monitoring feedback and de-briefings with the volunteer.
- Volunteers should be advised what form of post volunteering support the programme can offer with regards to continued communications, fundraising, awareness issues.
- Volunteer programmes must have a reporting process back to the sending organisation, where applicable.
- Volunteer programmes must have a reporting process back to the community that allows for community participation.
- South African volunteer companies should adhere to this Code of Good Practice to be recognised as responsible operators.

For further information and discussions regarding the Code of Good Practice for Responsible Volunteering in South Africa, please feel free to contact:
Calabash Tours

Imvelo Awards for Responsible Tourism 2003: Winner Best Social Involvement Category

Imvelo Awards for Responsible Tourism 2003: Finalist Best Economic Impact Category

WTM Responsible Tourism Award 2004: Joint Overall Winner

WTM Responsible Tourism Award 2004: Winner Poverty Reduction Category

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Voluntours

Imvelo Awards for Responsible Tourism 2007: Chairman's Award Joint Winner

Imvelo Awards for Responsible Tourism 2007: Highly Commended Best Economic Impact Category

Imvelo Awards for Responsible Tourism 2007: Finalist Best Social Involvement Category

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