

www.himalayankingdoms.com

Responsible Tourism

AITO 3-star Responsible Tourism rating



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.

Northpoint School, Kathmandu

Since 2005 Himalayan 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. In 2007 we raised almost £6,000 for the school through a host of fundraising activities and client donations and hope to raise even more this year.

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, Himalayan Kingdoms is offering a course of English lessons to Nepali 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. Thirty regular trekking staff who were keen and have the aptitude to become lead guides were invited to participate and their progress will be assessed and graded by oral and written exam later this month.

New Life Centre, Kathmandu

Himalayan Kingdoms provides on-going support to the New Life Centre - an orphanage in Kathmandu, run by one of our past clients. We are planning a host of fund-raising projects in 2008 to help them raise £90,000 for their new purpose-built residential centre. HK has contributed £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 is being built early 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. Himalayan 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@himalayankingdoms.com

Jude AITO Media Day

Carbon Offsetting

Himalayan Kingdoms is working with TICOS in offsetting carbon emissions from staff, trek leaders, and clients. 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. We send out a form to all clients travelling with us, encouraging them to pay £12 to offset the carbon emissions caused by their long haul flights.

HK have offset the carbon emissions for all its staff, and freelance trek leaders (who have led trips for us this year). We are working with TICOS to try 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.

At present, we are operating this as an opt-in system for clients, but hope in the next year to operate this as either an opt-out system on clients' invoices, or to include half the cost in our holiday prices with an opt-in for the remainder.

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 Himalayan 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. HK 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 Himalayan 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 ✿

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