

ACE Study Tours

Responsible Tourism

Introduction – 50 Years of Responsible Tourism

A founding principle of ACE Study Tours is that travel benefits both you – the traveller - and the communities that host us. We provide funding for cultural and educational projects in the regions that we visit and support local businesses wherever possible. We are striving to reduce the environmental impact of our tours and continue our long-standing support of conservation projects to protect natural habitats, fauna and flora.

Carbon dioxide and other emissions, from all types of human activity, including travel, are of increasing concern. ACE is working with Fauna & Flora International, the world's oldest international conservation charity, on a scheme to invest in conservation for carbon purposes. This provides funds for the conservation of habitats that lock-in carbon mass, such as peatland and forests. If you are concerned about your own carbon footprint and would like to contribute to this scheme, please send a cheque to ACE, made payable to Fauna & Flora International, for £5 for each European tour you have booked and £10 (or more!) for Worldwide tours.

AITO Membership



ACE Study Tours is a member of AITO, the Association of Independent Tour Operators. AITO represents some of Britain's best specialist travel companies and ACE Study Tours is proud to have been awarded AITO's highest level, 3-Star accreditation for Responsible Tourism.

Mission statement

We are fully aware of the potentially adverse impact of tourism on the environmental and social systems of the place we visit. By working with local partners and conservation consultants, and by careful planning, we believe it is still possible to experience the unique places of the earth in a responsible and positive way. Our founding principle is an understanding of and belief in the value of cultural exchange. Our tours are designed to encourage understanding between different cultures and to provide income for local communities.

Policy

- Design our tours so that our clients gain a greater appreciation and understanding of local cultures.
- Wherever possible, aim to use locally owned and run hotel and restaurants in preference to large chains.
- Request regional cuisine and locally sourced ingredients in preference to “international” food.

- Encourage participation in cultural events, providing money to local communities.
- Visit sites in a responsible and respectful way.
- Encourage our clients to act in a responsible way by providing expert lecturers to explain local historical and cultural issues.
- Discuss our objectives and environmental policy with business partners in the regions we visit.
- Consult with conservation experts on the potential environmental impact of new destinations.
- Avoid tours to destinations where we feel such tours would have a detrimental impact on the environmental or social structures of the area.
- We aim to continually improve our environmental performance, both with respect to office practice and in the regions we visit.
- Educate our staff in the benefits and practice of responsible tourism.
- Support local cultural, educational and conservation projects, through exchanges or direct financial support.
- Continue to provide financial support for environmental studies and research.
- To increase energy efficiency in our offices and to seek means of reducing energy use on our tours.

Review

The ACE Study Tours Responsible Tourism policy and associated targets will be reviewed on an annual basis. All the office staff will be invited to contribute to the review in addition to the directors and relevant conservation consultants.

Targets for 2007-8

- Introduce scheme to support conservation for carbon purposes, providing funds for the conservation of habitats that lock-in carbon mass, such as peatland and forests.
- Upgrade all lighting to the highest energy efficiency.
- Maximise use of double-sided copying.
- Encourage course directors to use public transport whenever possible for transfers to airports.
- Increase number of tours utilising rail travel.
- Introduce new database management system to reduce paper-filing requirements.
- All paper from sustainable resources.
- Introduce financial incentives for employees not to drive to work.
- Increase number of, and financial support for, cultural and educational projects in the regions we visit.
- Investigate opportunities to invest in forestry protection and reforestation programmes.

ACE Projects

Introduction

Every year ACE gives away over £100,000 to support educational, cultural and conservation projects in the regions that we visit, both abroad and in the UK. In 2006 alone we donated a total of £122,000. Projects supported tend to reflect the nature of the specialist tours we provide. For example, over the years we have offered many study tours based on archaeological themes and have supported projects in this field for over 40 years. More recently, we have increased our specialist natural history programmes and, again, this is reflected in our long running support for such organisations as Fauna & Flora International, the world's oldest international conservation organisation. Listed below is a summary of projects supported in 2006, showing the amount donated and the nationality of the beneficiaries. Also included are two case studies: the first regarding archaeology; the second conservation education. More details on any of the other projects are available on request.

Summary of 2006 Projects

| <i>Award</i> | <i>Amount</i> | <i>Country</i> |
|--|--------------------|----------------|
| Attingham Trust Summer School | £2,450.00 | Denmark |
| The Catherine the Great Orchestra & Early Music Festival | £10,000.00 | Russia |
| Postwar Reconstruction & Development Unit, University of York | £8,750.00 | Jordan |
| Prospect Burma - Scholarship Programme | £5,000.00 | Burma |
| Textile Conservation Centre Foundation (Lu Zhiyong, China) | £7,500.00 | China |
| Kuva Archaeological Excavations | £2,200.00 | Uzbekistan |
| Kuhmo Festival, Finland | £1,500.00 | Hungary |
| ACE Travel Scholarship | £1,500.00 | UK |
| Public Catalogue Foundation, Fitzwilliam Museum | £1,000.00 | UK |
| Environment & Development MSc Postgraduate Scholarship | £9,000.00 | India |
| Edward Barnsley Educational Trust Apprenticeship Training | £10,000.00 | UK |
| FFI MSc Programme in Conservation | £10,000.00 | Cambodia |
| Restoration of Stanley Spencer's Shipbuilding paintings | £5,000.00 | UK |
| ACE Masters Scholarship, Institute of Archaeology | £8,000.00 | Poland |
| FFI fundraising event | £100.00 | Cambodia |
| Friends of Babraham Church, Conservation Fund | £1,320.00 | UK |
| Conservation and Digitizing of Manuscripts from Deir al-Surian | £10,000.00 | Egypt |
| St Magnus Festival, music workshops for children | £7,200.00 | Malawi |
| University of Cambridge, educational development fund | £15,000.00 | UK |
| Miscellaneous | £6,480.00 | Internat'l |
| | Total | |
| | £122,000.00 | |

Case Studies

1. Aerial Archaeology

Aerial survey is an extremely valuable technique for archaeologists. For many years the UK has been a centre of excellence and ACE has helped make this expertise available to other countries. Archaeologists of many different nationalities have been trained in the correct techniques of aerial survey. Not only is this knowledge of immense value to their own academic studies, but also the results of the surveys can play a major part in formulating conservation strategies in the regions concerned. In the past 10 years, ACE has donated over £55,000 to the Aerial Archaeology Research Group, benefiting education and conservation in Italy, Jordan, Armenia, Hungary, Poland, Armenia, Romania and the UK.

2. Fauna & Flora International

We have always been very aware of the potential harmful effects of tourism. In the past this has been mostly concerned with the problems of over-development and the need to protect cultural monuments and artefacts. More recently there has been increasing concern for protection of the natural environment. This has coincided with a growth in our specialist tours involving study of natural history and wildlife. We recognised a need for conservation education in some of the regions we visit. Our view is that developing expertise and awareness at the local level is the best way to ensure long-term success in conservation and that such a policy is far preferable to imposing an external solution. For the past ten years we have worked with the conservation charity Fauna & Flora International, providing capacity building in conservation techniques.

The FFI projects ACE supports in Cambodia have been centred on the Veal Veng area and the need to protect a unique traditional way of life has been a paramount objective. A fine balance has to be struck between the economic aspirations of the villagers and the conservation of an area incredibly rich in wildlife and biodiversity. More recently, the project has progressed to the founding of Cambodia's very first Masters degree course in conservation studies. It is expected that the students benefiting from this scheme will have a major part to play in the future protection of Cambodia's environment including the development of responsible tourism.

In the past ten years ACE has donated over £90,000 to FFI projects in countries that we visit or have visited.