

Our Approach to Responsible Travel

Many travel companies talk about minimizing the impact of their trips. We aim to maximize ours. That's because our trips are designed to do good. When deciding whether and how to operate a trip, we carefully consider the effect we'll have on the communities and ecosystems we'll be visiting, as well as our impact on the planet. By traveling with Atlas Obscura, our trip-goers meaningfully contribute to the places they explore. If we believe a trip will do more harm than good, we won't offer it.

OUR APPROACH TO RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL IS FOCUSED ON:

- Prioritizing the wellbeing of the people and places we visit
- Ensuring local communities benefit from our trips
- Visiting sites in need of attention and financial support
- Highlighting under-represented perspectives
- Supporting the preservation of cultural traditions
- Offsetting our carbon footprint
- Supporting efforts to protect habitats and wildlife
- Contributing to scientific research and education

A COMMITMENT TO CLIMATE ACTION IS IMPERATIVE TO RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL. We recognize that travel is inextricably linked with the health of our planet, and we believe that offsetting our carbon footprint is not enough. For this reason, we've signed the [Tomorrow's Air](#) "Clean Up Pact," which represents the world's first traveler collective to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it permanently. In making our commitment to carbon removal, we hope to encourage others in the travel industry and beyond to continually reevaluate their own contributions. Climate action must remain a continuous and global effort.

WE WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE DEEPLY, PERSONALLY INVESTED IN THE PLACES WE VISIT. In most cases, the people who develop and operate trips with us are locals—community advocates, educators, artists, writers, scientists, conservationists—from outside the mainstream tourism industry. Moreover, we work with passionate advocates for the destinations we visit from the moment our trips are conceived, making them partners and not just staff. That level of personal investment results in a completely different frame of mind: looking not only for opportunities that a destination or experience presents to travelers, but the opportunities our trips and experiences present to the local communities they're a part of and the ecosystems they work to protect.

Responsible Travel

Our Commitment to Climate Action

TOMORROW'S AIR

How We Operate

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WE DO OUR HOMEWORK. Before offering a trip, we evaluate what impact it will have, guided by the framework outlined here and, above all, the perspectives of locals and experts. In order to start developing a new itinerary, the trip designer must present potential ethical or environmental concerns and how they'll be addressed, as well as opportunities to contribute positively—and measurably—in the places being visited.

WE VISIT PLACES THAT OTHERS DON'T. Whether it's an entire country whose economy is in need of tourism dollars or a single outsider-art project fighting for existence, the best places we go tend to be the ones that others overlook. Even—in fact, especially—in destinations that get lots of visitors, like Berlin and Barcelona, we find the hidden nooks that most tourists never see, celebrating and providing support to deserving people, places, and institutions that don't usually benefit from travel.

WE BUILD DONATIONS TO RELEVANT CAUSES AND ORGANIZATIONS INTO THE COST OF MANY OF OUR TRIPS, guided by input from locals and experts on where we can have the greatest impact. Our [Journey Through Bulgaria's Abandoned Ruins & Otherworldly Monuments](#), for example, includes a donation to the [Buzludzha Project](#), which is working to protect and restore one of the country's most culturally and historically fascinating sites after decades of neglect.

WE CONTRIBUTE TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND EDUCATION. In addition to the financial support they provide to scientific research and conservation projects, our citizen-science trips directly contribute to important field research. Our [trip to study flammulated owls in Utah](#) led by Dr. Markus Mika, for example, contributes 10% of proceeds to Dr. Mika's research, and enlists participants to provide crucial data as part of a long-term population study that's focused on the impact of a changing climate.

WE'RE COMMITTED TO:

- Offsetting at least 110% of our trips' carbon footprint
- Contributing at least 10% of profit from our science and wildlife trips to scientific field research and conservation efforts
- Ensuring that at least 75% of our spending to operate trips goes directly to individuals and small businesses
- Having a local leader on at least 90% of our trips, with an emphasis on guides from locally under-represented communities
- Performing annual impact and accountability reviews of all our trips
- Organizing and funding student fellowships, inspired by our first [Conservation Storytelling Fellowship](#) in 2019
- Expanding our on-trip health, hygiene, and safety protocols in response to Covid-19
- Making thoughtful decisions about whether and when to operate trips in destinations impacted by Covid-19

Our 2021 Commitment