

sustainability policy



Adventure Specialists
June 2024

The logo for 'koningaap' features the word in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters 'k', 'o', 'n', 'i', 'n', 'g' are white, while 'a', 'a', 'p' are yellow. The text is set against a dark red rectangular background.

écht op reis!

shoestring
➔ hoe v é r kun je gaan?

ADVENTURE SPECIALISTS

Adventure Specialists is the company behind the brands Koning Aap and Shoestring, with offices in Belgium and the Netherlands. This sustainability policy applies to both brands and locations. Adventure Specialists has been Travelife Certified since 2013. Travelife is an international certification program for travel organizations that want to do business sustainably.*



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1. INTRODUCTION

SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

Sustainability is a subject that has been included into policy for many years and is an integral part of the tours that Koning Aap and Shoestring organize. For example, local projects in the destinations are supported, homestays are part of many tours and CO2 emissions have been measured and compensated for many years.



With this reviewed sustainability policy, Adventure Specialists is taking sustainable tourism one step further. The local communities and the flora and fauna play a leading role in their journey towards sustainability and deserve to benefit from it. Travelers from Koning Aap and Shoestring get an unforgettable life experience in return.

2. OBJECTIVES

Mission

Adventure Specialists' sustainability mission is for its customers to discover the world in a responsible, sustainable way and with a positive impact and thus also contribute to the sustainable development goals of the United Nations (Sustainable Development Goals, hereinafter referred to as "SDGs"). Adventure Specialists creates experiences that are not only unforgettable for travelers, but also have a positive impact on the places visited and on the local communities they meet.

Vision

Adventure Specialists contributes to a form of tourism that gives the destination, its local communities and nature a better future. This is achieved by working with and listening to local partners, encouraging sustainable initiatives and promoting conscious tourism to contribute to a better world for future generations. The importance of the destination comes first and travel experiences are created that surprise and inspire customers. At the same time, the negative impact of tourism must be minimized (such as CO2 emissions and over-tourism), where cooperation with local partners is crucial.



3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

With the United Nations SDGs, a more sustainable world must be accessible to everyone by 2030. Tourism can contribute to these SDGs. Adventure Specialists has selected a number of specific SDGs to focus on with its trips, although they cannot be seen separately and overlap.



SDG 14 focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and seas and SDG 15 on life on land. The 'product' tourism often consists of coastal tourism and visiting nature reserves, with which it is automatically interwoven into the products of travel. Adventure Specialists ensures that land and sea and its life are used in a sustainable manner.

Adventure Specialists is aware of the negative impact its travels have, mainly in terms of climate. With a specific Climate Plan, it aims to limit the negative impact as much and as quickly as possible. Besides, they invest in projects that have a positive impact on nature.



Adventure Specialists cannot achieve sustainability alone and it is dependent on all partners it works with to achieve its objectives. Adventure Specialists sees partnership going beyond having a contract. Sharing experiences and best practices with and between partners is therefore important. This is discussed further in Chapter 5 (Supply chain).

Adventure Specialists creates fair and safe working conditions for its staff and in the supply chain. It strives for diversity and inclusion and supports local employment and economic growth in the communities visited.



Adventure Specialists not only wants to be a travel organization that seeks environmental sustainability, but also social sustainability. It underlines the importance of promoting equal opportunities, inclusion and reducing inequality as essential pillars of a sustainable society and the

communities its travelers visit. That is why Adventure Specialists wants to focus on improving the position of women and girls and ethnic minorities in the destinations visited.

Adventure Specialists believes that the right of access to clean water and sanitation is very important to the communities it visits and encourages conscious water use among its travelers. However, improving access to clean drinking water and sanitation is beyond the control of its travels. That is why this SDG is not included in direct business operations, but is included in the form of project support (see 6.4.). In this way, Adventure Specialists can still exert influence indirectly.



Other SDGs are certainly not neglected, but Adventure Specialists can have less direct influence on them through its tours. Adventure Specialists aims for sustainability at all levels, to increase positive impact and minimize negative effects. They work together with stakeholders and local communities to take responsibility for achieving these SDGs.

4. INTERNAL ORGANISATION



Sustainability team

Adventure Specialists has had a sustainability team for years, that is committed to maximizing the positive impact of travel and reducing the negative impact as much as possible.. The team includes representatives from different departments and both brands, in the Netherlands and Belgium, which leads to strong involvement.

Because Adventure Specialists believes it is important to contribute to a more sustainable world, a challenge that is becoming increasingly complex, a sustainability coordinator was appointed in 2023, who focuses entirely on this topic. The sustainability coordinator leads the sustainability team, has regular consultations with the management team and is responsible for drawing up the sustainability policy and the Travelife certification. In addition, there is regular consultation with partners on various topics and challenges, both for their own organization and in the destinations.



Sustainability training and education

To prevent sustainability from just being a catch-all concept, Adventure Specialists believes it is important that all employees within the company understand what sustainability means. That is why e-learning courses from Travelife, as well as from The Code (prevention of child exploitation), are used per discipline. All employees must complete assigned trainings in 2024 and 2025, and new employees do this as part of their onboarding period. This also applies to tour leaders deployed by Adventure Specialists. In addition, the sustainability coordinator regularly organizes (mandatory) presentations on specific topics.

Information provision

No printed brochures have been published for years and all information about the tours offered is on the websites of Koning Aap and Shoestring. Various tips are mentioned on the websites for day-to-day descriptions ('écht op reis'/'pure travel' at Koning Aap and 'Hoe groen kun je gaan'/'How green can you go? TIP' at Shoestring). Under 'more travel information'/'travel consciously' you will find specific information about the country in question. In addition, the websites have a 'sustainable travel' tab, where more information is provided on various topics. Invoices and departure information are provided via a personal information page.

Budget

Adventure Specialists has allocated a specific sustainability budget, which consists of three parts. Firstly, donations are made for about ten projects every year, supplemented with donations that customers can make when booking. Secondly, there is a budget for climate-related projects to balance the negative impact of tours. Thirdly, 'general' costs for certification, contributions to partners (Travelife, Ecpat, animal welfare) and knowledge enhancement are incorporated.

Students

Adventure Specialists believes it is important that a future young generation is also properly trained. That is why it collaborates with colleges and universities and places a number of students per year, both for research and internships. Interns receive a standard compensation for their efforts.



Procurement

When events are organized by the Adventure Specialists marketing department, sustainability is taken into account. The location must fit within the company's sustainable policy, and if possible, local suppliers and local ingredients are chosen.

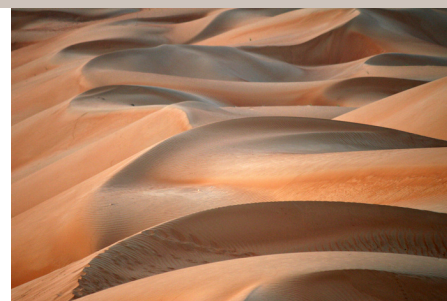


5. COOPERATING PARTNERS

Local partners at the destinations are crucial for the implementation of Koning Aap and Shoestring's tours. They not only carry out the tours, provide local transport and guidance of the trips, but they also advise Adventure Specialists in the choice of locations to visit and the accommodations where customers stay. Moreover, they are the eyes and ears of the destination. This makes the local partners an extension of Adventure Specialists in the chain and that is why Adventure Specialists aims for long-term cooperation with them.

Certification

By January 2027, 100% of the local partners must have started a certification process and by January 2030, 100% of the partners must hold a sustainability certification. In April 2024, 29% of partners has a certificate and another 10% is in the process of doing so. There are various certification bodies that are acceptable for Adventure Specialists, they must be recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.



Supplier Code of Conduct

In addition to a commercial contract, each partner must sign a code of conduct, which contains requirements in the areas of human rights (working conditions, no discrimination, no forced labor and protection of indigenous people) and the environment (climate protection, animal welfare, waste and packaging). A revised version includes provisions on tour leaders, sustainable transport and boats, accommodation, excursions, plastic, as well as the certification requirement. All local partners signed the renewed Code of Conduct in January 2024.

Tour leaders

Koning Aap partly uses local tour leaders through the local partner, or tour leaders from the Netherlands/Belgium. Shoestring only uses English-speaking local tour leaders, which gives travelers the opportunity to get local insights. In addition, this also supports the local economy. Tour leaders must complete specific sustainability training. The local partner is encouraged that the tour leaders also follow this training. Furthermore, Adventure Specialists organizes online training days regularly.



Accommodation

Accommodations are not directly contracted, but the local partners know the guidelines, which are also included in the Supplier Code of Conduct. This states that they must maximize local social impact through employment and purchasing and that accommodations must comply with local laws and regulations. These are small-scale accommodations to stimulate the local economy. Local ownership is important in this. For example, homestays are regularly used in many destinations to promote direct benefits for families. While some of these accommodations may not fully meet environmental standards, from a social perspective, partnership with these (family) businesses, that rely on tourism for their income is preferable. We will further examine how they can still meet minimum requirements. Large hotel chains are used as little as possible. They often have high-quality environmental policy measures, but profits often leak away from the destination, so that the local economy does not benefit fully.

6. LOCAL IMPACT



Tourism has an impact on the living environment. That is why Adventure Specialists, in addition to minimal impact on the climate (see 7.1), strives for maximum positive impact on the local environment. To provide insight into what part of travelers' expenditure ends up locally, Adventure Specialists has developed the Local Impact Score, based on research. This has been displayed on every tour of Koning Aap and Shoestring since 2020. This is a scoring tool in which the tour can be assessed for its sustainable value.



The score consists of two parts: the financial impact on the destination and an assessment of the local partner and aspects of the tour. A further explanation can be found at <https://feelingresponsible.org/nl-be/local-impact-score>.

Although perfection is not possible, Adventure Specialist strives for improvement. Criteria are evaluated and adjustments considered. Sustainability is an ongoing journey that puts the importance of the destination first.

Social Impact



Adventure Specialists' mission is to have a positive impact on the places and local communities they visit, taking the interests of these locals into account. A crucial aspect of making a positive impact is creating jobs and economic growth. In addition, the preservation of culture and traditions is important, and the community also has a say in the way in which they are portrayed. Examples of this are 'favela' excursions in Brazil, where local guidance is crucial. Excursions are organized with homestays at various destinations (e.g. Nepal, Cuba), with income flowing back into the community. Workshops of local artisans are often visited to buy souvenirs (e.g. Mexico, Namibia) or projects in which local employees have a say and benefit (e.g. South Africa, Madagascar). Over the years, many 'social' excursions have been included in both Koning Aap and Shoestring's tours that have a positive impact on the local community. An overview of this will be made before July 2024, so that objectives can be agreed on how many of these excursions will be included and what criteria they must meet.

Another way to have an impact on local communities is to spread tourism. When too many travelers come to one place, it causes over-tourism and a negative impact. Koning Aap's pioneer tours contribute to spreading the economic benefit of tourism and preventing over-tourism.

In the coming years, Adventure Specialists wants to make more of an effort to offer tours that have an impact on the position of women and/or ethnic minorities in the destinations visited.



ResiRest



In order to maximize the local impact, Adventure Specialists started a partnership with ResiRest in 2020 for both Koning Aap and Shoestring tours. ResiRest is a social enterprise with World Fair Trade recognition, which brings travelers to local families' homes for a meal experience. In this way, families can tell how they live and eat, what makes them proud and gives them respect in the community. They receive a fair payment per person for the meal they provide and by dividing the groups over a number of families, many families in a community benefit from this. There is also rotation, so that it is not always the same families.

In 2023, ResiRest was included in tours to Morocco, Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Colombia. As of 2024, Peru and Egypt were added and Thailand will soon be added. From 2024, the number of tours with a ResiRest experience are monitored and a monthly survey is conducted among ResiRest visitors to measure customer satisfaction.



Impact on nature

Adventure Specialists' tours have an adventurous character. This means that there are excursions into nature and the aim is to burden nature as little as possible and, better still, to help it progress where possible. That is why the updated Supplier Code of Conduct with the local partners states that they do not offer excursions that harm people, animals, plants, natural resources (e.g. water/energy), or that are socially/culturally unacceptable. The local partner will prioritize excursions that actively restore and improve the site rather than simply maintain their current state. To have a good idea of which nature-related excursions are currently being offered, an overview is ready in July 2024.



The negative impact on nature is reduced as much as possible. The climate plan (see Chapter 7) identifies a number of topics that relate to CO₂ emissions. For example, no excursions are offered that involve the use of a motorized vehicle. Part of the climate policy is the large-scale support of Justdiggit, a Dutch NGO whose aim is to green Africa and cool the earth. Chapter 8 discusses how Adventure Specialists handles tours involving animals.

PROJECTS



Projects supported by Adventure Specialists and its customers in 2023, related to SDGs.

Adventure Specialists does not only make an impact on local communities through its travels. Vulnerable communities and children do not benefit from a visit from travelers. By supporting local projects, Adventure Specialists can make a difference in another way. Most projects receive long-term support from local partners, who are actively involved or regularly visit the project. Adventure Specialists has annual contact with the local partner and/or the project itself to get a clear picture of what the donations are spent on.

A budget for each project is made available annually by Adventure Specialists. In addition, customers can indicate during the booking whether they want to support a project. They can choose to do this for € 10, € 25 or € 50. The total collection is donated to the projects at the beginning of the following year and accounted for via a blog on the page of Feeling Responsible.



Projects

Termination

Every year, the projects are critically monitored to ensure that the donations are well received and spent. Sometimes, project activities have changed or a project enters a different stage; they can support themselves or no longer meet our aims or policy.

Although Adventure Specialist strives for long-term relationships with its projects, this may be a reason for sponsorship to end.

Accountability

A number of projects have been supported since 2014 or longer.

Adventure Specialists donates €1,500 per project, which is supplemented by customers' generous donations.

The project page of Feeling Responsible contains more information per project. From 2024, projects must provide annual accountability by means of a questionnaire, to receive unambiguous information.

New

New projects must align with the chosen SDGs that are not yet sufficiently represented in projects.



climate



Climate plan



A Climate Plan was published in June 2023. The plan shows the sources of CO₂ emissions of Koning Aap and Shoestring's tours. It explains how emissions are measured and what challenges are faced. It describes the measures taken to reduce the impact of travel and Adventure Specialists' plans to achieve the goals. The main goal is to reduce CO₂ emissions. It also explains how progress is monitored.

Read the full Climate Plan (available in English):
<https://feelingresponsible.org/nl-be/Klimaat>

LOOKING BACK

SCOPE 3

Calculation of CO2 emissions from customer trips with Adventure Specialists (Scope 3)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total CO2-emission (tCO2)	32.495	31.758	1.891	2.019	18.985
Base for compensation	32.495	31.758	1.891	2.524*	23.731*
Average CO2-emission per traveller	2.18	2.14	2.10	1.35	2.22

UPDATE

	Forecast 2023	Realized 2023	Forecast 2024
Total CO2 <u>emission</u> (tCO2e)	29.400	31.844	29.150
Average CO2 emission per traveller (tCO2)	2.4	2.429	2.2

- The CO2 emissions in tonnes (tCO2e) of international flights of customers of Koning Aap, Shoestring and (including 2023) YourWay2GO.
- In 2021 and 2022, 125% of emissions were offset.
- Since end 2023, YourWay2GO ceased operations. Forecast 2024 reflects emissions of Koning Aap en Shoestring only.
- The 2024 forecast was issued in mid-2023, before the Gaza war. The loss of destinations in the Middle East is expected to have a negative impact on the average CO2 emissions per traveler, because many travelers choose other (often further) destinations.

Adventure Specialists aims to select projects that meet the following criteria:

- *have a positive impact on nature (CO2 calculation is not always necessary) and*
- *have a social impact and/or regenerative by nature (not 'sustain' but 'improve') and*
- *aligns with the character of its activities*

WE SUPPORT



JUSTDIGGIT

Climate-impact projects

Adventure Specialists is committed to reducing the negative impact on the climate as much as possible. At the same time, she is aware that the impact as a long-haul travel specialist is still significant for the time being. That is why Adventure Specialists takes its responsibility and invests in climate-related projects.

Justdiggit Partner since 2023



Justdiggit is a Dutch non-profit organization with the mission to reach 350 million farmers and shepherds in Africa by 2030 and inspire them to green their own land. They restore natural vegetation instead of planting trees, which reduces CO2 and improves water and food security, biodiversity and the climate.

Adventure Specialists donated €75,000 to a project in Singida, Tanzania in 2023, € 100.000 in 2024 and will make an annual donation. Justdiggit also has a 'bund' project, in which crescent-shaped holes retain rainwater to germinate seeds. A bund costs € 8. Customers of Koning Aap and Shoestring can donate to this project when booking a trip. In 2023 this amounted to a total of € 1,366.

Other projects

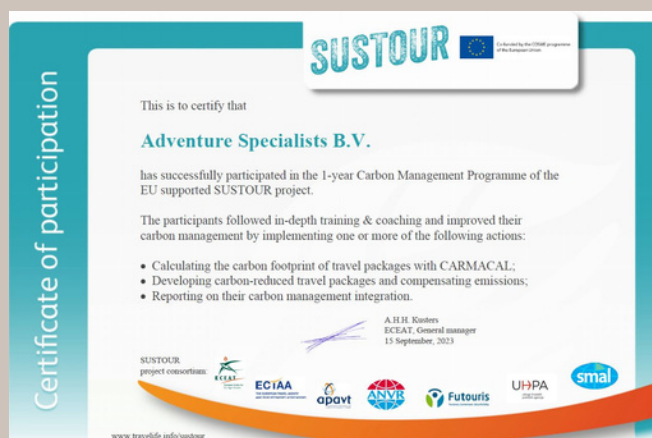
In addition, it is being investigated whether additional projects can be supported that have a positive impact on nature. For this purpose, research is conducted under supervision by a group of Master students from various disciplines at Wageningen University.

MISCELLANEOUS POLICY

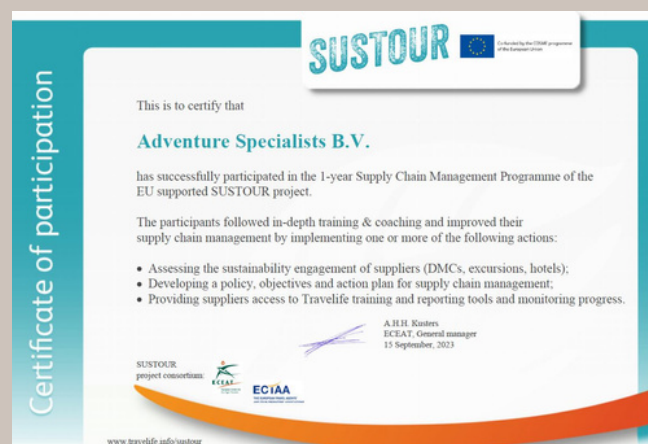
Sustainability has many facets. Adventure Specialists strives to have a positive influence in as many areas as possible.

Travelife certification

Adventure Specialists has been Travelife Certified since 2013 and must provide evidence every two years on approximately 250 criteria. In 2023, she participated in two EU-subsidized projects: Sustour Carbon Management - part of which resulted in the Climate Plan and the Sustour Supply Chain program, which in part means that all local partners must have sustainability certification by 2030. Travelife will continue to play an important role in Adventure Specialists' policy in the future.



13 CLIMATE ACTION



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



MISCELLANEOUS POLICY

Human rights

In the Supplier Code of Conduct, Adventure Specialists has included clauses for minimum fair working conditions (including minimum wage or industry standard, which is sufficient to live in dignity; no child labor) and clauses on inclusion and diversity. In addition, Adventure Specialists wants to bring progress with its tours, also in countries where there is a different view of human rights. It is a challenge to do this correctly. Parent company DERTOUR Group is a member of the Roundtable Human Rights in Tourism, which allows Adventure Specialists to explore this further in the coming years.



We protect children in travel and tourism

To prevent sexual exploitation and other misconduct against children, an active policy is pursued to protect children. That is why Adventure Specialists is a Top member of The Code and reports annually on how it contributes to their mission.

For example, it is not permitted to visit schools or orphanages with travelers, or to do volunteer work with children. When visiting families during an excursion (e.g. dinner experience with local families) or homestays, there is a “2-adults” protocol: children may under no circumstances be left alone with an unknown adult.

Adventure Specialists staff, as well as tour leaders, must complete an e-learning. The communication to customers also includes where they can report if they see a suspicious situation or suspect sexual exploitation.



Animal welfare

On many tours, Koning Aap and Shoestring travellers encounter animals. The welfare of animals always comes first. Since a long time, animal-unfriendly tours have not been offered (elephant rides, swimming with dolphins, ostrich rides and visits to tiger and crocodile farms, etc.) or have never been offered (where animals are kept in captivity, such as animal shows, animal circuses, etc.). In 2023, an overview was made of all tours involving animals. Most of them involve wildlife observation, taking into account local regulations. During safaris, our local partner ensures (by providing information to drivers and tour leaders) that the impact on the natural ecosystem is as small as possible. The Supplier Code of Conduct contains explicit rules. If advice is needed, World Animal Protection is contacted.

