

THE UNION OF INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN LEADER ASSOCIATIONS

UIMLA



www.uimla.org

SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

FINAL

« Union of International Mountain Leader Associations » - UIMLA

“International Mountain Leader” - IML

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ABOUT THE SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN UIMLA

The Union of International Mountain Leaders Association (UIMLA) recognizes the importance of preserving the natural environment and supporting sustainable practices in mountain regions.

As a professional organization representing international mountain leaders (IML) worldwide, we are committed to promoting responsible and ethical behavior in our mountain activities.

The actual Sustainability and Environmental Policy (S&E Policy) is the result of a working group which started in May 2021. The final document is based on a huge amount of bibliography which, for practical reasons, would be mentioned separated.

This Policy is just one of our first steps which UIMLA does in the long-term global fight against climate change.

With this document, we agree to the following actions:

Environmental Stewardship

We pledge to educate our members about the fragility of mountain ecosystems and the importance of minimizing their impact during guided activities.

We will collaborate with local communities and environmental organizations to identify areas of concern and contribute to conservation efforts.

Sustainable Tourism

We will advocate for and promote sustainable tourism practices that benefit local economies without compromising the ecological and cultural integrity of mountain regions.

We are encouraging our members to lead trips that emphasize respect for local cultures, minimize waste, and support local businesses.

Climate Action

As part of the Glasgow Declaration (2021) we are working to reduce the carbon footprint of our organization and members activities by adopting energy-efficient practices and supporting initiatives that address climate change.

We will provide resources to help our members understand and mitigate the impacts of climate change on mountain environments.

Ethical Practices

We will uphold ethical standards in all our activities, including cultural sensitivity, fair treatment of porters and guides, and respect for local customs and traditions.

We will encourage responsible behavior among our members, emphasizing safety and minimizing waste.

Training and Education

We will include in the IML training programs strong and practical chapters about sustainability practices, environmental conservation, and responsible guiding.

We will provide resources to help our members educate their clients about the importance of sustainability in mountain activities.

Collaboration and Advocacy

We will collaborate with other outdoor and environmental organizations to address sustainability challenges in mountain regions collectively.

We will advocate for policies that protect and preserve mountain environments and promote sustainable tourism on local, national, and international levels.

Continuous Improvement

We will regularly review and update our sustainability policies and practices to ensure they remain aligned with the best available knowledge and evolving global standards.

We will seek feedback from our members, partners, and stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of our sustainability initiatives.

Reporting and Transparency

We will maintain transparency in our sustainability efforts by regularly communicating our progress, challenges, and achievements to our members and the public.

UIMLA is dedicated to leading by example in promoting sustainable practices among mountain leaders and enthusiasts.

The following chapters of our S&E Policy are going a little further on making suggestions to embrace sustainability principles, to contribute to the long-term well-being of mountain ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

Marian Anghel - UIMLA vice president
The chairman of the S&E Working Group,
October 2023

CHAPTER 1: Transport policy to/from the mountains

Background

Green House Gases (GHG) emissions in the transport sector primarily involve fossil fuels burned for road, rail, air and marine transportation. Most of the world's transportation energy (95%) comes from petroleum-based fuels.

Transport is responsible for 14% of global GHG emissions.

In some “rich” regions, this share is (much) higher: about one quarter of total European emissions, making it second only to the energy sector and 29% of total U.S. emissions - the largest contributor.

Worryingly, this share keeps growing due, in large part, to increased demand for travel. Research showed that at the global level, transport-related emissions from tourism were forecast to increase by 25% by 2030 from 2016 levels, against the current ambition scenario.

In the European Union, of all transport modes, GHG emissions from aviation increase the most rapidly— by an average of over 3 % each year since 2013. This increase is mainly due to the development of low-cost airlines across the continent.

Transport can be estimated to account for at least 75-80% of GHG emissions of a typical one-week hike in the mountains.

One study from the French ministry of Sports estimated that emissions from the transport sector (in this case, mostly cars) accounted for 91% of the carbon footprint of a local 2-day walk.

A French hiking tour operator calculated that 88% of its carbon footprint derives for travels abroad, primarily air transportation. Even for their walks in France, transport remains – by far – the biggest contributor to GHG emissions (80%).

Aviation is a much larger GHG emitter than other means of transportation such as cars or trains. Taking a return flight from London to Chamonix and back leads to GHG emissions of about 400kg compared to 210kg if traveling by car and 25kg (16 times less!) by train.

A return flight from San Francisco to Punta Arenas via Santiago (Chile) to hike in the Torres del Paine National Park, leads to 4.25t of CO₂ emissions. This is more than twice the total annual carbon budget of every individual on the planet to limit temperature rise to 2°C or less, and avoid catastrophic climate change.

In light of the above, also considering that by signing the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, UIMLA committed to aligning its actions with the latest scientific recommendations, and considering the magnitude of the challenge of tackling the climate crisis - not the least in the transport sector, it is clear that incremental change and marginal improvements are simply not enough.

Bearing in mind the various national and regional circumstances related to transport (including available alternatives to planes and cars), and recognizing that no guidance can cover all cases, UIMLA prepared the following transport guidelines to all its members for their professional activities.

UIMLA Guidelines

1. All International Mountain Leaders (IML) worldwide are expected to consider the environmental impact of any travel they undertake.

As a general rule, they should always select the least environmentally damaging way of travelling. Time efficiency and cost price, however important, are to be considered criteria of lower importance.

2. For domestic travel, public transportation should be the rule.

Taxis and private cars should only be used where there is no reasonable alternative (for example: when carrying excessive amounts of material, when there is no public transport available, when it is not safe to take public transport...).

If a vehicle needs to be rented, priority should be given – where available – to electric vehicles or, if not possible, at least to hybrid and fuel-efficient ones (smallest possible, size fit to purpose), and definitely not diesel-fueled ones.

3. For international travel, train should be the preferred option - and flying an exception.

No flight should be taken if the destination can be reached within 24 hours with another less environmentally damaging mode of transport. Where available, night trains are a particularly valuable alternative.

IMLs should of course ensure their ability to function safely upon arrival. Therefore, one should, if necessary, make a stop with an overnight stay.

If travelling by car, UIMLA members should make sure to respect necessary resting times (e.g. a stop of at least 15m every 2 hours whilst driving).

4. While bearing in mind that it is much better to put everything in place to avoid flying as much as possible, rather than install the possibility or habit of offsetting flights, UIMLA recommends - as a last resort option - to offset flights that do happen anyway.

Preference should be given to offsetting schemes that encourage reforestation, forest protection or projects of renewable energy and/or energy efficiency, such as those bearing the Gold Standard.

5. Even though IMLs are usually not in charge of arranging transportation for their clients (and, in some cases, are not allowed to by law), leading by example is important. If IMLs cannot change their behavior, how can they expect this from their clients?

In the planning and setting of their activities, the IMLs should use various tools to encourage their clients to travel in the least environmentally damaging way:

- By setting meeting places (start and end) and times that can be easily be reached by public transportation and match timetables;
- By informing their clients about public transportation options and providing them with all the information needed (timetables, websites and booking horizons etc.);
- Whenever practically possible, by offering to centralize and book public transportation for their group of clients, at cost. Instead of 'wasted time', travel then

becomes a good opportunity to get acquainted, cement the bonds between group members, provide them with latest information, safety briefings etc.

- When public transportation cannot be an option, the IMLs should encourage car-sharing by acting as interface between clients or refer them to existing car-sharing schemes

With regards to internal UIMLA meetings (Board meetings, General Assemblies etc.), journeys should always be essential and arranged as environmentally as possible.

Meetings through video-conferencing and other communication tools should, whenever practical, be preferred as an alternative for travel. When meeting physically (e.g., General Assemblies), UIMLA attendees will strictly abide to the aforementioned guidelines.

CHAPTER 2: Accommodation in the mountains

Background

Mountain tourism is a 19th century invention, giving rise to the infrastructure of railways and grand hotels in the European mountains that transformed once remote villages deep in the valleys into today's resorts.

Those who wanted a more rugged alpine experience could hike using tents for camping or could stay in the mountain shelters (when available), where they could expect a sleeping bunk, maybe a warm meal and a little more.

Mountain shelters were originally created as spaces where one could escape from danger, providing shelter from a harsh environment.

In Europe, the majority of the mountain shelters had been built at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. Most of these were rudimentary constructions; shepherds' huts with collective sleeping arrangements.

Today, the world's mountain regions have a varied and unevenly developed infrastructure. There are regions with high quality mountain huts and many others with no shelters at all, wild camping being the only option.

Between these extremities there are many options.

Mountain huts (MHs)

A mountain hut is an isolated construction in the mountains, where not only the access to utilities is complicated, but it is also difficult to transport anything to the hut.

MHs are usually built from wood and stone with not sufficient insulation material to maintain comfort and provide shelter for visitors and hut keepers.

In the operation of the hut, electricity and heat are needed as two main energy sources that provide comfort and are needed for basic operation.

As they are usually isolated from heating and electricity grids, they usually depend on fossil-fuel powered generators and boilers, but also increasingly on renewable energy options (solar PV, solar heating, small wind turbines, small hydro).

Especially energy generation for heat, electricity and transport are the key contributors to the environmental impact of MHs during their operation.

Estimated emissions for a hut:

CO₂ (Carbon Dioxide): 4678kg/year

NO_x (Nitrogen Oxides): 65,9kg/year

According to the studies, the highest environmental impact for CO₂ and NO_x emissions comes from electricity/heating generation and transportation of goods to/from the huts.

The mountain huts are vital to help local economies and communities.

The positive aspects of a mountain hut

The quality huts significantly reduce the environmental impact of trekking/mountain sports in many ways:

- Considerably less land is required for huts than for equivalent capacity camping, reducing impacts on flora and fauna.
- Huts reduce the potential for human/wildlife conflicts by separating people, food and waste from wildlife. This is safer for both.
- Huts minimize environmental damage by concentrating and controlling human use.
- Huts reduce the use of fossil fuels by providing more efficient, centralized cooking, water purification and lighting systems and eliminating the need for users to haul in fuel containers.
- Huts provide for more environmentally sound management of black and gray water. The human waste are removed from the mountains, where the land has very limited capacity to absorb wastes without pollution of the local watershed.
- Huts provide safe emergency shelter for trekkers and mountaineers stranded by poor weather conditions or injuries.

When a hut is constructed in an area where camping has been permitted, this provides land managers with the opportunity to reduce or eliminate campground use and rehabilitate the land.

The negative aspects of a mountain hut

In remote areas, the mountain huts represent almost the only local source of (human-induced) pollution.

The main environmental issues of mountain huts:

- the supply (transport);
- the heating and electricity production,
- solid waste management,
- water supply;
- wastewater treatment,
- the number and behavior of the visitors (noise);

Transport

The basic transport technologies used are: animals, mini trucks, helicopter, rope way which is using electricity and diesel engine and drones

The helicopter transport has the biggest environmental impact and careful planning of transport has to be done in order to minimize the impact. Also, the helicopter is the only option in some locations.

Electricity

In all the mountain huts the electricity may be generated with Diesel generators, photovoltaic (PV) panels, hydro power, wind power.

The biggest impact to environment has 1kWhe generated from diesel-electric generators.

The best technology environmentally wise is electricity from small hydro power and wind.

Heating system

For heat generation in mountain huts are used the following: hard/mixed wood, pellets, propane-butane (natural gas) in gas heater, Diesel heater, electrical grid.

From the environmental point of view, the heat from diesel and electricity is not a good choice.

Wood, if used in an efficient way in general, is a good choice of heat generated, but in the case of pellets impacts are higher since pellets have to be manufactured and that requires some energy.

The solid waste

Solid waste resulted from the operations of the hut must be minimized and removed, not dumped down the hill.

In the mountains where there are no roads, transportation on the ground with porters or animals is difficult or impossible. In other places, winter/snow covered terrain is the best season to transport everything.

Today, in some places around the globe the garbage can still be incinerated nearby the hut area, but this is highly polluting and not allowed in many other places. To transport the garbage by helicopter is not a sustainable alternative either.

The most important thing is to make sure that there is as little waste as possible.

- Minimize the amount of trash and food waste;
- Clean, compress and sort all the recycling;
- Take back your portable trash with you.

Human waste disposal

The most common waste disposal systems used are:

- helicopter removal by sucking the waste from containment tanks,
- small containment tanks on rail systems to allow helicopter removal of whole tank when full,
- composting toilets
- hybrid systems using septic tanks and leach fields for liquid waste, while containing solids which are pumped out periodically.

Pit toilets are used at huts that are not frequently visited or that are sited in inaccessible locations, or in situations in which it is difficult to work/dig.

They are frequently dug with pick and shovel and sometimes with the assistance of dynamite. When pit toilets become full, the waste is buried and the restroom moved to a new location.

Huts in the alpine zone present special challenges.

Vault toilets (no water toilets) are increasingly common, particularly in the newer huts and those with the highest level of amenities.

These have an encased vault that effectively contains the waste. They are designed to permit pumping of waste into storage containers, which are flown out by helicopter to join the waste stream at a sewage treatment plant.

There are occasional problems with ice and snow fouling the pumping works, but this system is becoming the norm in newer huts. Helicopter removal is expensive and non-sustainable.

Wild camping

Multi day trekking in remote areas is a challenge, both for the participants and the guides. When a group is in the mountains, shelter is mandatory and camping is one possible solution.

Wild camping is accepted in many countries, tolerated in others and forbidden in some others.

For wild camping, everybody should follow the "Leave no Trace" principles:

- Plan & prepare
- Travel & camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts,
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors.

UIMLA Guidelines

1. High in the mountains, whenever possible, the IML should use a mountain hut accommodation as an alternative to the wild camping.

The impact is less and helps the owner to keep maintaining the hut in that particular remote place.

2. The IMLs should work with the owners to improve the environmental impact of the mountain hut.

In many mountain regions, the local alpine clubs are running the huts. Most of them are paying attention to the environmental impact but may not have the financial support to keep the impact low. Check the quality and the environmental standard of your chosen huts.

Private or belonging to a club, the IML should be curious and inform the group members about the way the hut owner is managing the key administrative aspects: goods transport, heat & electricity, solid & human waste.

3. Any "luxury" in a mountain hut may mean a higher environmental impact.

In the mountains, the group expectations from a remote hut services must be kept low by the IML. A clean toilet, a warm bed and a tasteful simple dish made from local products would be more than enough for mountain lovers.

Always save the water and the electricity!

4. If willing or mandatory to camp with the group in the wilderness, along the chosen route, the IML must be sure that it is legal and allowed by local rules.

Even if the wild camping is allowed or tolerated, that may not apply to campfires as well.

5. If it is mandatory to use tent during the trekking expedition, always camp in the designated areas, if any.

Usually, the local guides and porters knows exactly where are the best places to camp but they may not be aware of the environmental impact. Always work with the locals and bring your own knowledge and experience to reduce the impact.

6. If the wild camping is illegal, an IML should organize the trekking expedition accordingly, without advertising the option of wild camping nor practice it, unless is mandatory.

Cases of mandatory wild camping due to the bad weather, for example, may be the exception.

On our website (www.uimla.org) there is the list of all UIMLA country members and the local rules regarding wild camping: allowed (Yes) or not allowed (No).

"No" is stated even in the countries where wild camping is tolerated by the state/local authorities but not officially allowed by the legislation.

However, under certain circumstances wild camping may be tolerated in some way in all countries.

CHAPTER 3: Food

"Surveys show people are anxious about their personal carbon footprints and cutting back on car journeys and so on, but they may not realize that changing what's on their plate could have an even bigger effect." - Rajendra Kumar Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) from 2002 to 2015

Background

GHG emissions from food production - carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide - make up more than a third of total global emissions. Animal farming is responsible for the bulk of food-related emissions: converting forests into fields for animal feed (thereby removing trees that help suck up and store carbon dioxide in the first place), artificial fertilizers using a lot of energy to produce and releasing nitrous oxide and livestock itself producing a lot of methane (which, like nitrous oxide, traps much more heat than carbon dioxide).

All in all, modern industrial farming practices and the staggering number of animals involved cause huge environmental damage, squeezing out wild animals and accelerating climate change.

Diet is a personal thing, and everyone has their own reasons for eating what they eat – health, culture, personal values etc. But if we are to avoid a major environmental collapse, we need to reduce the amount of meat and dairy we eat by more than half by 2030.

The good news is that eating less meat and being an outdoor enthusiast are not incompatible, on the contrary: many top athletes were or became vegetarian/vegan during their career.

Reducing the impact of food production during mountain activities does not only involve reducing the amount of meat consumed; it also means favoring fresh, organic, local, seasonal and bulk products.

Food consumed in mountain areas indeed generates significant amounts of (plastic) waste, mainly packaging, which can pollute groundwater, streams, lakes and soil through improper storage and disposal. It also requires paying attention to the way food is brought to the mountain.

For example, food supplied to huts by mules or similar means of transportation has a far lower environmental impact than if brought by helicopter. "Food for thought" before ordering yet another helicopter-hauled beer at 2,500 m altitude...

UIMLA Guidelines

Even though they are not always in charge of providing food/cooking for their clients, UIMLA members are expected to reduce as much as possible the environmental impact of food consumed (by themselves and their clients) during their activities.

UIMLA members are therefore encouraged, when making food arrangements for their customers, when staying at mountain accommodation or when giving advice to clients for their own food purchases, to comply with the following guidelines:

1 .The amount of meat and animal products consumed during activities should be reduced as much as possible.

Preference should be given to vegetarian/vegan food. At the least, requests from people on a vegetarian/vegan diet should be catered for.

2. Whenever practically possible, fresh, organic, seasonal and bulk products should be provided/requested.

3. Insofar as possible, ingredients sourced locally - minimizing the distance food travels from farm to fork - from small-scale growers and artisan producers/processors should be the rule.

4. Food price, however important, should generally be considered a criterion of lower importance.

In order to lead by example, internal UIMLA meetings (Board meetings, General Assemblies etc.) should only serve vegetarian/vegan food and preference should be given to fresh, organic, seasonal and bulk food products produced locally.

CHAPTER 4: Equipment used in the mountains

Background

In the work of a mountain leader outdoor products represent essential equipment that are used extensively by the guide and also in relation to his or her clients.

Equipment production, transport, retail, use, maintenance and disposal have certain impacts on the environment: greenhouse gas emissions (associated with climate change), depletion of natural resources, use of harmful substances, water usage, material waste, pollution, social issues (child labor, unfair wages, unsafe working conditions, etc), animal welfare and other impacts.

According to various analysis performed by some outdoor brands, most impact associated with an outdoor product happens during the initial stages of production. This has been also stated in a report produced in EU showing among others that most impacts are happening at the production stage of textiles.

Some significant impact takes place during usage and care (microfibers/microplastics, DWR, PFAS, etc.) and at the end of its life (landfill, limited recycling resulting in emissions, pollution, contamination, resources wasted in form of raw materials, water, energy that went into manufacturing process and care/maintenance). For example, the most-used fabric in the world, polyester, sheds non-biodegradable microfibers while in use and also during cleaning in the washing machine that contribute to plastic build-up in the environment. In a study on Everest region, microplastics were found in snow and stream water samples on Mt. Everest. The highest microplastics were discovered in a sample from 8,440 m.a.s.l. Most microplastics were polyester fibers, likely from outdoor clothing and equipment (Napper et al., 2020).

Waterproof clothing or items with a durable water repellent finish (DWR) often contain Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), previously referred to as perfluorochemicals (PFCs). These are toxic and so called “forever chemicals” as they do not biodegrade but accumulate in the environment.

As professional consumers of outdoor equipment, the choice that a mountain leader is making has impact at all stages of the product lifecycle. Acquisition will influence the impacts at production and distribution stage while how the equipment is used, maintained and disposed of has impacts in later lifecycle stages.

Considering that there is a large variety of outdoor equipment and some brands have taken a more sustainable approach, and that there are better alternatives regarding product care, maintenance and disposal, UIMLA prepared the following guidelines for all its members to consider in their professional activities regarding acquisition, maintenance and disposal of outdoor equipment.

UIMLA Guidelines

1. Acquisition of Outdoor Equipment

Follow “reduce, reuse, recycle” approach (3R) as it can help reduce impact generated by purchasing and using a new item. Before buying new equipment, think of the following:

- Is the purchase of new equipment necessary?
- Can you borrow/rent from a friend/club/organization?
- Can you purchase second hand?
- Does the manufacturer offer a good policy for repair, recycling and upcycling once equipment is broken or at end of life? Is the product repairable?
- Is the manufacturer engaged in sustainable production? Has implemented any sustainability related certifications? (But not the only criteria, avoid greenwashing!)
- Is the material more environmentally friendly? (Biodegradable, recycled, upcycled, recyclable, compostable, organic, natural, etc)
- Priorities durability over weight: lightweight is not designed to be durable; hence more impact and waste will be generated by purchasing several items of the same type, and also be more costly
- Priorities environmental/social considerations over cost: try to avoid products manufactured in places with a poor environmental and employment track record
- If buying from a shop: try to use environmentally friendly transportation, support small locally owned outdoor shops, bring your own bag, minimize packaging
- If buying online: order the right size and products to avoid returns, select more environmentally friendly delivery options
- Transport and delivery: consider where the equipment is manufactured (prefer locally produced in countries with good environmental and labor regulations, shorter transportation routes, etc)

2. Use, care and maintenance of Outdoor Equipment

It is important to maintain and use your equipment according to the manufacturer's recommendations and use the right care materials that are also environmentally friendly.

Some options for reducing impacts during use and care/maintenance phase for textiles:

- reducing washing temperature and reducing tumble drying
- optimizing the load of appliances
- improvement of washing/drying appliances efficiency
- use only environmentally friendly cleaning and care products (including waterproofing)
- use filters/washing bags to reduce microfiber pollution when washing

Simple repairs can be done by the mountain leader with minimum costs. Other repairs can be done under warranty by the manufacturer, or outside the warranty at a cost and the life of the product extended and its quality maintained. This way additional impact on budget is also avoided while in the same time environmental footprint is not increased.

3. Disposal

If the equipment is still functional - sell it, exchange it, donate it to a friend, club, organization, etc. Equipment that is not functional anymore can be disposed of at collection points for clothing and footwear, producer recycling programs or other recycling facilities. Avoid sending equipment to landfills.

CHAPTER 5: The guiding/tour operator behavior

Background

There are two different perspectives:

- The IML working as self-employed,
- Companies, tour operators either owned by IML or those hiring IML and offering tours that are led by IML

The way tours in the mountains are organized and run has an important impact on sustainability of tourism. In both cases there is a need for an approach that puts sustainability in focus. UIMLA acknowledges the real potential for mountain tourism to be a catalyzer for sustainable mountain development and for IML to take a leading role in facilitating change.

Global carbon footprint of tourism is around 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and is expected to increase as the tourism sector increases. The tourism is a major generator of waste. Around 90% of ocean plastic comes from land-based sources. Major single use plastics are represented by water bottles, disposable toiletries, plastic bags and bin liners, food packaging and cups, items that are used frequently in tourism. Other sources of plastic pollution that can be found also in touristic destinations are cigarette butts, wet wipes, sanitary products.

Since 2021 UIMLA is part of the Global Plastic Tourism Initiative (GPTI) - UNWTO initiative which is endorsing the common vision of a circular economy for plastic, where plastic never becomes waste.

Besides the plastic pollution created, conventional plastics are produced from fossil fuels. As such GHG emissions are generated at fossil fuel extraction phase and later in the phases of production, processing and sometimes disposal of plastics.

Has been emphasized that tourism has a major role to play in addressing the triple planetary challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. On top of the environmental challenges, touristic destinations are also struggling with socio-economic and cultural challenges, some of them associated with tourism.

International Mountain Leaders are in a privileged position to facilitate the interaction between mountains and people. As such, there is no better context for talking about sustainability challenges, raising awareness and fostering change and also for taking action and being a role model. Guides have been identified as playing an important role in contributing to mitigate the current sustainability challenges through visitor education, interpretation, and sustainable travel practices.

As such, a holistic approach is needed for the IML to engage and facilitate a positive change at different levels, addressing environmental, socio-cultural, economic and relational dimensions at the same time. Considering these, UIMLA has prepared the following guidelines for all its members to follow in their professional activities as freelancer, employees or company owners.

UIMLA Guidelines

UIMLA recommends to both self-employed IML and tour operators to make sustainability a priority in their work. Best way to use the guidelines is to incorporate these in a sustainability policy and procedures that are updated on a regular basis.

1. Environmental dimension

- Prioritize low carbon tours and low carbon mobility (see more about this in the Transportation chapter)
- Implement best waste management practices; use of water, energy and other resources in a sustainable way; prioritize low carbon and more sustainable accommodation (see more in the Accommodation chapter)
- Source food more responsibly and reduce food waste; prioritize low carbon diet (see more in the Food chapter)
- Acquire more sustainable equipment and products used in your activities and office (see more in the Equipment chapter)
- Promote animal welfare, for example when animals are used to carry equipment make sure they are treated well, avoid illegal wildlife trade, avoid disturbance of wildlife, respect restrictions in place to protect wildlife (for example birds nesting)
- Protect biodiversity, contribute to restoring it; protect vulnerable ecosystems and respect protected areas; stay on trails to reduce soil erosion; observe local rules and regulations

2. Socio-cultural dimension

- Engage with local communities and civil society, promote local culture and products
- Be culturally sensitive, learn about the destination you are visiting beforehand and while there; be aware of your cultural impact and influence on local norms and try to minimize it
- Promote human rights in relation to your staff, suppliers, guests and local communities; fight modern slavery; protect vulnerable and disadvantaged people; promote porter welfare
- Always ask permission for taking pictures or recording videos of others
- Promote cultural and historical heritage preservation

3. Economic dimension

- Show support for local communities – use of local staff, buy local food, promote local handicraft, and in general maximize the economic benefits for the host communities

- Promote local employment and provide fair working conditions, treat well your local partners and agents or representatives
- Adopt fair and equitable business practices, pay and charge fair prices

4. Relational dimension

- Employ qualified and competent leaders that through interpretation and storytelling can deliver immersive experiences in a natural and cultural context; engage visitors and connect them with nature and local people; raise awareness regarding sustainability challenges faced by the local destination
- Offer flexible and customer friendly booking terms and conditions; promote customer rights and protection
- Observe health and safety measures related to public health aspects; safety of customers
- Make sure your customers understand and follow all rules and regulations applicable at the local destination
- Provide food options for people that have special dietary requirements
- Promote diversity, equity and inclusion at the workplace and in relation to local communities, your suppliers and guests

5. Partnerships

- Support conservation and projects focused on social, cultural, economic and environmental sustainability
- Promote education and awareness for sustainable development
- Train staff to lead by example and be good environmental stewards promoting more sustainable behavior
- Develop healthy relationship with suppliers (accommodation, transport, food, equipment, etc) looking at their social and environmental practices

IML and tour operators can implement a certification or standard related to sustainable tourism for tour operators and tourism businesses. A short list with relevant standards and certifications will be available on our website.

Very relevant in contributing to sustainability and also to use as a tool to guide sustainability work is to align the operations with the Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs). On our website will be presented which SDGs are relevant for tourism.

In addition to developing an environmental policy and taking actions to maximize positive impact on nature and people and minimize negative impact, UIMLA recommends IML to

do an environmental impacts assessment whenever possible. An example and guideline will be available on our website.

Also, on our website will be presented a series of initiatives and organizations that IML could join and support, that are working with different topics related to sustainable tourism.

UIMLA recommends to continuously educate yourself and facilitate training for your staff and if possible, for your partners so that everyone is in a better position to take action in order to promote a more sustainable mountain tourism.

CHAPTER 6: Along the trail

Background

Some of the impact associated with mountain tourism is taking place along the trails and while out on the trek.

Among others, important negative impacts are related to: trail erosion, littering, damage to ecosystems, wildlife disturbance, habitat and biodiversity loss, light and sound pollution, land use change, waste.

The International Mountain Leaders are key actors that can contribute towards the transition to a more sustainable mountain tourism. They interact year-round with guests in mountainous environments and with the local communities living there. This provides IML with a great chance to raise awareness about social and environmental issues related to mountain tourism.

As such, UIMLA expects that all IML include sustainability in their work, behave as role models and lead with responsibility towards both the mountain environment and local mountain communities.

Following are guidelines and best practices that UIMLA recommends for IML while on the trail. It is time to rise to the challenge and lead by example.

UIMLA guidelines

1. Prioritize low carbon mobility (see more about this in the Transportation chapter)
2. Prioritize more sustainable food and reduce food waste (see more in the Food chapter)
3. Use water, energy and other resources sustainably (see more in the Accommodation chapter)
4. Implement best waste management practices on the trail; avoid litter, reduce waste; camp responsibly and leave no trace (see more in the Accommodation chapter)
5. Use more sustainable equipment and educate your guests about this (see more in the Equipment chapter)
6. Protect biodiversity, vulnerable ecosystems and respect wildlife and protected areas; promote animal welfare
7. Be culturally sensitive; be aware of your cultural impact and influence on local social norms and culture and try to minimize it
8. Promote human rights in relation to your staff, partners, guests and local communities; promote porter welfare
9. Contribute to the local economy and communities; support local businesses
10. Educate your guests, local communities and other people you meet about sustainability challenges associated with mountain tourism and share best practices.

Be a role model and an ambassador for more sustainable tourism!

IMLs and tour operators can implement a certification or standard related to sustainable tourism for tour operators and tourism businesses (see more details in the Guiding/Tour Operators chapter).