

Sustainability policy of Once Upon a Trip



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1. Purpose

Once Upon a Trip is committed to minimizing our environmental impact, driving sustainable growth, and actively inspiring our partners, travellers, and communities to adopt responsible practices.

2. Scope

This policy applies across all areas of our operations, from management to day-to-day activities. We expect our staff, suppliers, and partners to actively support and uphold the objectives of this policy, working together to achieve them within practical and budgetary realities.

3. Sustainability management & legal compliance

3.1 Sustainability commitment

Once Upon a Trip leadership is wholly committed to the company's sustainability performance and endorses the company's sustainability mission statement and policy.

We will use the Travelife platform to report on our sustainability progress and to monitor and evaluate progress. We are committed to (publicly) communicating our sustainability performance (by means of the Travelife report) every two years.

3.2 Sustainability management & legal compliance

Once Upon a Trip commits to continuous improvement of sustainability practices, including the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of our sustainability policy, with dedicated personnel and resources to achieve our sustainability goals.

Once Upon a Trip follows all local, regional, national, and international regulations as they relate to human resources, human rights, children's rights, land rights, environmental management, wildlife, and land use. We follow a strict Code of Ethics, including a zero-tolerance policy for corruption, bribery, forced labour, and discrimination. Internal management: social policy & human rights.

4. Internal management: social policy & human rights

4.1 Employees

We recognize that our team is a key driver in delivering meaningful and responsible travel experiences. As a small and purpose-driven company, we ensure that our human resource practices reflect our sustainability values.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring full compliance with all applicable laws and regulations
- Providing a safe, healthy, inclusive, and positive work environment
- Offering fair contract conditions and compensation in line with our values
- Providing learning opportunities, including awareness on sustainability and responsible tourism practices
- Involving our team in sustainability initiatives and decision-making processes
- Promoting inclusion, equal opportunities, and fairness in all aspects of employment, including compensation, development, and access to opportunities.

We encourage a collaborative culture where each team member contributes to building a more responsible and impactful travel model, aligned with the values of Once Upon a Trip.

5. Internal management: environment

5.1 Environmental management of office operations

Once Upon a Trip is committed to keeping the direct footprint of its business operations as minimal as possible and follows practical sustainability principles inspired by the 5Rs (refuse, reduce, reuse, repurpose, recycle).

We have the following measures in place:

- We comply with all applicable local and national environmental regulations
- We aim to monitor and progressively better understand our use of resources (energy, waste, and carbon), in line with our size and capacity
- We prioritise responsible procurement by favouring local suppliers, low-packaging options, and products aligned with sustainability values whenever possible

- We minimise printing by operating primarily digitally; when printing is necessary, we use double-sided and FSC-certified paper where available
- We apply simple energy-saving practices, including use of energy-efficient equipment and switching off devices when not in use
- We encourage remote work and digital collaboration to reduce energy use and emissions
- Water consumption is kept to a minimum through mindful everyday practices
- Waste reduction is prioritised, and basic sorting is implemented depending on local systems available (e.g. recycling, general waste, e-waste where applicable)
- We aim to minimise indirect impacts such as unnecessary resource use, as well as noise, light, and pollution linked to our operations.

As a small and agile company, our approach focuses on practical, consistent actions and continuous improvement rather than complex systems, while ensuring alignment with our broader sustainability commitments.

5.2 Carbon management of office operations

Once Upon a Trip is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and actively works to minimise emissions linked to its operations and travel activities.

We prioritise reducing travel wherever possible, particularly by encouraging remote work and limiting unnecessary business travel. When travel cannot be avoided, we support the use of lower-impact transport options.

We aim to progressively monitor and better understand our carbon footprint, with the objective of continuously reducing emissions and addressing the most significant sources.

As a small and growing company, our approach focuses first on reducing emissions, while exploring credible options to compensate for unavoidable impacts where relevant.

We promote practical measures such as using energy-efficient equipment, adopting low-impact ways of working, and encouraging more sustainable mobility choices for our team.

Our main opportunity for impact lies beyond our direct operations, through responsible travel design, careful partner selection, and raising awareness among travellers to reduce indirect emissions across the value chain.

5.3 Land use

Once Upon a Trip operates in an urban environment and fully complies with all applicable land use regulations. We are committed to respecting local cultural and natural resources in all our activities and favour sustainable, low impact approaches in the way we run our operations and workspace.

6. General suppliers policy

Once Upon a Trip is committed to sourcing its products and services responsibly, with the objective of avoiding negative impacts on society, culture, and the environment, while actively creating positive contributions to local communities. We expect a similar level of commitment and transparency from all our partners.

We prioritise working with partners who share our sustainability values. While formal sustainability policies or certifications are valued, we also recognise that many small, local operators may not have formal frameworks in place. In these cases, we assess their practices based on their real impact, ethics, and local engagement.

We strongly favour suppliers that are locally owned or managed, use local resources, and contribute directly to the local economy through fair employment and responsible practices. Supporting small-scale operators is at the core of our approach.

Whenever possible, we prioritise partners holding recognised sustainability certifications (such as GSTC-recognised schemes, B Corp, or ISO). However, certification is not the only criterion, and we actively support promising local operators in improving their practices over time.

We value and promote partners who demonstrate strong sustainability engagement by featuring them in our itineraries and encouraging long-term collaboration.

All suppliers are expected to adhere to our principles:

- Compliance with all applicable laws and regulations
- Respect for human rights, including labour, children's, and women's rights
- Fair and safe working conditions
- Zero tolerance for corruption, bribery, discrimination, or exploitation
- Protection of children from exploitation in tourism
- Environmental protection and responsible resource use
- Acting in the best interest of local communities

Once Upon a Trip applies a strict zero-tolerance policy toward violations of these standards and will terminate partnerships in cases of serious misconduct, particularly regarding human rights, corruption, or exploitation.

At the same time, we take a collaborative and supportive approach by raising awareness among our suppliers and encouraging them to improve their environmental and social practices, including reducing their carbon footprint.

We maintain open and transparent communication with our partners and actively encourage feedback and dialogue, particularly on sustainability topics, to ensure continuous improvement across our value chain.

7. Inbound partner agencies

Once Upon a Trip only collaborates with partner agencies that agree to and comply with our principles.

Throughout the design and delivery of our travel experiences, we expect partner agencies to act in the best interests of local communities, the environment, and our travellers, ensuring that all activities are responsible, respectful, and aligned with our values.

We encourage our partner agencies to continuously improve their sustainability practices by sharing knowledge, raising awareness, and promoting responsible tourism standards. When relevant, we support access to learning opportunities and tools, including those aligned with Travelife principles.

8. Transport

Once Upon a Trip only works with transport providers that adhere to our sustainability principles.

When selecting transport options for our travellers and business operations, we aim to choose the most responsible and lower-impact solutions available, taking into account distance, logistics, comfort, and local realities.

We follow practical guidelines to reduce transport-related emissions, including:

- Prioritising ground transport over short-haul flights whenever feasible
- Avoiding in-destination flights where possible

- Encouraging the use of public or shared transport within destinations
- Selecting appropriately sized vehicles based on group size to avoid unnecessary emissions Working with local providers who optimise routes and operations.

Given our size, our approach focuses on reducing emissions at source through smart travel design and partner selection.

We also aim to raise awareness among our travellers about the impact of transport choices and encourage more responsible decisions.

Where emissions cannot be avoided, we explore and promote credible carbon compensation options, either integrated into our trips or offered transparently to our clients as an option.

9. Accommodations

Once Upon a Trip only works with accommodations that adhere to our sustainability principles.

In our accommodation selection process, we carefully assess each property's environmental and social practices, focusing on their real impact as well as their level of commitment to responsible tourism.

We prioritise accommodations that:

- Are locally owned or managed, supporting the local economy
- Respect land use and integrate into their natural and cultural environment
- Reflect and promote local architecture, traditions, and identity
- Implement responsible practices in areas such as energy, waste, and community engagement.

We give particular consideration to accommodations that hold recognised sustainability certifications, such as Qualmark Sustainable Tourism Business Certification (New Zealand) or other internationally recognised schemes. These certifications provide an additional level of assurance regarding environmental and operational standards.

However, in line with our commitment to supporting small, independent operators, we also work with non-certified accommodations that demonstrate strong sustainability values and a genuine commitment to improvement.

Our approach is based on continuous improvement, building long-term relationships with our partners and encouraging them to strengthen their sustainability practices over time while preserving authenticity and positive local impact.

10. Activities

10.1 Activities & Excursions

Once Upon a Trip works primarily with small, locally owned activity providers offering authentic and low-impact experiences that benefit local communities.

We maintain a clear overview of our activity providers through direct relationships, internal evaluation, and ongoing communication, complemented where possible by recognised certifications such as Qualmark Sustainable Tourism Certification (New Zealand) or other equivalent schemes.

Sustainability is a key criterion when selecting new activities and providers. We assess their impact on the environment, respect for local culture, and approach to wildlife and community engagement.

All providers are expected to align with our responsible tourism principles and sustainability expectations, which are clearly communicated during the onboarding process and throughout our collaboration.

We maintain open dialogue with our partners and regularly discuss sustainability topics. Our approach is collaborative, supporting smaller operators in improving their practices rather than excluding them.

Performance is monitored through traveller feedback, internal reviews, and ongoing exchanges, allowing us to identify improvements and work together on progress.

While we do not deliver formal training programmes, we actively raise awareness and encourage partners to strengthen their practices, including aligning with frameworks such as Travelife or pursuing certifications such as Qualmark where relevant.

We support partners through:

- long-term collaboration
- increased visibility in our itineraries
- preference in product development

Success means working with partners who either demonstrate strong sustainability performance (including Qualmark certified providers) or show continuous improvement over time, resulting in experiences with a positive impact on communities and the environment.

11. Tour leaders, local representatives, and guides

Once Upon a Trip primarily works with qualified local guides, drivers, and representatives, as we believe local people are best placed to deliver authentic and responsible travel experiences.

We prioritise hiring individuals who are knowledgeable about their destination, respectful of local culture and environment, and aligned with our sustainability values. We also expect our partners to apply the same standards when sourcing local staff.

We ensure that guides and local teams are fairly compensated and work under safe and respectful conditions, in line with local standards.

We maintain a clear overview of their performance through direct collaboration, regular communication, and traveller feedback, allowing us to continuously assess quality and sustainability awareness.

Guides play a key role in influencing traveller behaviour. We therefore ensure they are aware of responsible tourism principles, including respect for local communities, environmental protection, and appropriate conduct.

We actively communicate our expectations and sustainability approach during onboarding and throughout the collaboration. We also encourage open discussions on sustainability topics.

While we do not provide formal training programs at scale, we:

- raise awareness on sustainability issues
- encourage responsible practices in tours
- highlight key topics such as cultural respect and environmental protection.

We support continuous improvement through:

- long-term partnerships

- regular feedback and dialogue
- preference for guides demonstrating strong sustainability engagement.

Success for Once Upon a Trip and its guides means delivering experiences that:

- respect local communities and environments
- positively influence traveller behaviour
- continuously improve in terms of sustainability practices.

12. Destinations

12.1 Sustainable destinations

Once Upon a Trip works primarily with local guides, drivers, and representatives who play a key role in preserving and communicating the authenticity of each destination.

We prioritise individuals who:

- have strong local knowledge
- respect cultural integrity and environmental limits align with our sustainability values.

Our guides contribute to promoting less-visited areas and managing visitor behaviour responsibly, helping to avoid overtourism.

We do not operate in destinations where there are serious concerns regarding human rights or environmental protection.

12.2 Contribution to local communities / local economic network

We are committed to creating positive local impact by:

- prioritising local employment, ensuring guides and representatives are fairly paid and work in safe conditions supporting local economies through our collaboration with local teams
- using guides as ambassadors of local culture, traditions, and responsible behaviour encouraging travellers to engage respectfully with communities and support local businesses.

We maintain strong relationships with our guides through direct communication, feedback, and long-term collaboration, ensuring continuous alignment and improvement.

12.3 Environmental stewardship in destinations

We recognise that guides are essential in shaping traveller behaviour. Therefore, we ensure they:

- promote responsible travel practices
- educate travellers on respecting natural environments and local customs
- help minimise negative impacts on ecosystems and resources.

We raise awareness among our guides on sustainability topics and encourage them to integrate these principles into their tours.

Our approach is based on continuous improvement, supported by:

- regular feedback from travellers ongoing dialogue with guides
- preference for partners who demonstrate strong sustainability engagement.

13. Customer communication and protection

13.1 Privacy

Once Upon a Trip reaches its customers and travellers through digital channels, including its website, email communications, and direct exchanges. These channels allow clear, transparent, and personalised communication before, during, and after the trip.

We place strong importance on customer protection by ensuring:

- transparent and accurate information about our services
- clear communication throughout the booking and travel process
- responsiveness to customer questions, feedback, and concerns.

We handle customer data with care and responsibility. We maintain a clear privacy policy to ensure:

- full compliance with applicable data protection regulations
- secure handling and protection of personal data
- transparency on how customer information is collected, used, and stored.

Customer trust is essential to our approach, and we are committed to maintaining high standards of data protection, transparency, and responsible communication at all times.

13.2 Marketing and communication

Once Upon a Trip is committed to honest, transparent, and responsible marketing at all times.

We ensure that all sustainability-related communication:

- accurately reflects the reality of our products and experiences
- avoids any form of exaggeration or misleading claims
- is aligned with our actual practices and commitments.

We are strongly anti-greenwashing and stand behind all our sustainability statements. We only promote what we actively do and can demonstrate in practice.

We also ensure that our marketing is inclusive and respectful, taking into account cultural, religious, and social sensitivities across all destinations.

As a continuous improvement approach, we aim to further strengthen our communication by:

- increasing transparency on the impact of our trips (e.g. partners, practices)
- educating travellers on responsible travel choices progressively
- structuring and formalising our sustainability messaging.

Success means building trust with our customers, ensuring they clearly understand the impact of their travel, and making informed, responsible choices.

13.3 Sustainability communication

Once Upon a Trip ensures that customers are clearly informed about the social and environmental impact of their journey and are encouraged to make more responsible travel choices.

We provide transparent communication on:

- Accommodation choices, including the use of certified properties such as Qualmark-certified or other responsible accommodations where relevant
- Activities and excursions that support local communities, culture, and environmental protection
- Responsible consumption, including guidance on ethical shopping and awareness of illegal or harmful souvenirs.

In addition, we:

- highlight locally owned partners and their positive impact
- encourage respectful behaviour towards local cultures and natural environments provide practical tips before and during the trip to support responsible travel practices.

Our objective is to empower travellers with clear, honest, and useful information, helping them better understand the impact of their choices and contribute positively to the destinations they visit.

13.4 Customer experience

Once Upon a Trip aims to ensure that every customer experience is positive, smooth, and meaningful from start to finish.

We achieve this by:

- maintaining high standards in health and safety, including clear procedures and trusted partners ensuring transparent and accurate communication before and during the trip
- carefully selecting experiences, transport, and partners to deliver quality and consistency
- addressing key topics such as privacy, responsible travel, and ethical considerations (including protection of children in tourism).

We also keep open and direct communication with our customers at all stages and actively encourage feedback, particularly on sustainability and overall experience.

Feedback is used to continuously improve our trips, partners, and operations.

14. Contact / Responsible person

All staff are responsible for the ownership and undertaking of this policy.

All staff are responsible for the promotion and implementation of this sustainability policy within their departments.

The implementation of this policy will be lead by the Sustainability Coordinator, Diane Dumee-Duval, who can be reached at [bookings@onceuponatrip.nz.com](mailto:bookings@onceuponatrip.nz)

15. Definitions

“Sustainability” is defined as meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, by balancing environmental, social, and economic considerations.

“Responsible tourism” is defined as tourism that minimises negative impacts and maximises positive contributions to local communities, culture, and the environment.

“Local partners” is defined as locally owned or managed businesses that provide services within the destination and contribute directly to the local economy and community.

“Small-scale operators” is defined as independent or locally run businesses operating at a human scale, often without formal certification but with strong local impact.

“Environmental impact” is defined as the effects of business activities on natural resources, ecosystems, biodiversity, and climate.

“Carbon footprint” is defined as the total greenhouse gas emissions generated directly and indirectly by the company’s operations and value chain.

“Continuous improvement” is defined as an ongoing process of monitoring, evaluating, and enhancing sustainability practices over time.

“Stakeholders” is defined as all individuals or groups affected by the company’s activities, including employees, partners, suppliers, local communities, and travellers.

“Customer protection” is defined as the safeguarding of customer rights, safety, data privacy, and overall travel experience.

“Sustainable suppliers” is defined as partners that demonstrate responsible environmental, social, and ethical practices, or show commitment to improving them over time.

“Low-impact travel” is defined as travel designed to minimise environmental footprint while supporting local communities and preserving cultural and natural heritage.

16. Effective date

This policy is effective from 15 May 2026.

17. Revision history

This policy was revised on 15 May 2026.

This policy will be revised by 15 May 2027.