

Where do you pack your ethics?

-Dr Dawid de Villiers

-Harold Goodwin

We take our holidays in other peoples' homes, when we travel for leisure or business we arrive in someone else's place. This place may be very different from our own, which is often why we chose to travel there, to enjoy their environment and culture. We all make choices when we travel - how, when and where we go, where we stay and what we do. In our travel we can build up or destroy human values. Travel can broaden our minds, but only if we travel with our eyes open and receptive to the diversity which we encounter.

We all have ethics, we instil them in our children, they define what is right and wrong, they guide our behaviour and encourage

empathy. Our ethics are the codes by which we lead our own lives and we expect others to treat us as we treat them. When we travel we encounter other peoples and their cultures and they may have ethics and values which differ from our own. When we are abroad, in exotic foreign places, we may be disappointed if we do not encounter difference. We are likely to learn most about the people and place we are visiting if we listen and engage with respect. When we talk about our holidays we tell about the places we have seen, but often it is the memories of the people we met which stay with us.

The diversity of the world's cultural and natural heritage is recognised within the United Nations system as belonging to all of us, we hold it in trust for our children and for their children. We inherit our environment, our culture and our spiritual values from our forebears and we hold them in trust for generations as yet unborn. Holidays are about leisure and escape from the routine of our workaday lives, an escape which, for some, means carefree indulgence. But do we want to be left feeling guilty about our indulgence? For many of us guilt can spoil our holiday. It is no coincidence that the luxury spas and resorts offering indulgence were amongst the first to stress their environmental credentials. Increasingly, consumers expect the travel and tourism businesses that provide



their holidays to have thought about the economic, social and environmental impacts and to have minimised the negative and maximised the positive. The expectations which travellers have of the businesses they buy from are determined largely by the consuming culture they live in, but responsible consumerism is spreading as, around the world, we become more aware of the power we have as consumers to making the world a better place.

Individuals can do a great deal; we can buy local and enjoy the tastes and flavours of the destination, we can avoid buying products made from endangered species, we can buy crafts from local producers, use water sparingly and cultivate the habit of asking questions and listening to the answers – not a Western habit, and accept that other people are different, not necessarily wrong.

As the UN Charters recognise, the world is diverse and governments too have responsibilities. The United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Global Code of Ethics was adopted in Chile at the UNWTO's General Assembly in 1999 and the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2001. It emphasized the need for "the promotion of responsible and sustainable tourism" and the contribution which it can make to raising awareness of our world's diverse cultures and their inherent values, thereby contributing to world peace.

The Global Code of Ethics is composed of nine articles which outline the "rules of the game" for destinations, governments, tour operators, developers, travel agents, workers and travellers; for all of us. The Code recognises tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfilment, the right to tourism and liberty of tourism movements; it is also a driver of sustainable development, able to contribute to mutual understanding and respect between hosts and guests. Tourism uses natural and cultural heritage but it can also contribute to maintaining it. The Code recognises the rights of workers and entrepreneurs in the industry and the obligations of all stakeholders in tourism development. The UNWTO strongly believes that the tourism industry has a moral obligation and a special responsibility to



combat child labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking of children. The Task Force for the Protection of Children in Tourism has brought together governments, NGOs and businesses to begin to address the vulnerability of children in tourism.

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism is intended to be a living document; use it, think about the issues; it is our responsibility to encourage it and the ethic of responsibility to grow. Only then can tourism fulfil its economic and social promise and conserve our environment and our precious natural and cultural heritage for our children.