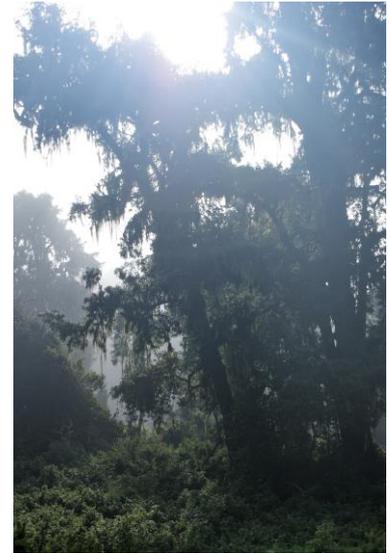


Responsible Tourism.

We all know what a fantastic experience it can be exploring a new part of the world, and how beneficial it can be for youth and adult development alike. The experience of new people, cultures, responsibility, sharing, planning, adapting and so on are all great life experiences and lessons. However as leaders we have a growing responsibility to be subtle and conscientious to the surroundings that we take our clients, and if working for a trekking company, feedback the little nuances we see to aid future leaders to be sensitive to the areas travelled. For example think about how your clients could have a negative impact on the local inhabitants or environment and try to reduce these. Here are some examples.



A group flashing from the summit of Toubkal in a muslim country. Source unknown

Visual

Some things that can have a negative impact might be locals seeing our technology and its excessive use and the large amount (to them) of disposable cash your clients have. Also magazines being left behind showing celebrity cars, houses and lifestyles.

Customs

Research and respect local religions and customs, for example is it Ramadan? Do they have issues with exposed bodies? Will certain language or behaviours offend?



A mule being loaded up with visible marks on the front legs from ropes.

Animals

Some animals in particular destinations are not treated well and we only encourage this by paying to see the snakes being charmed, or having a photo with a monkey or elephant. Look at how they are treated and signs of stress before getting involved, Glen Cousquer recently highlighted the over use and potential injuries to mules etc in Professional Mountaineer.

Tipping

Be sensitive when tipping, after a recent Kilimanjaro expedition, I witnessed tips and unwanted trekking items given to the porters en-mass. This turned into an ugly brawl in front of a group with fighting over things as little as sweets, socks and drink bottles.



There is also as with any business the pressure to squeeze costs to become more competitive to clients. This again has an effect on the local who is providing food, accommodation, staff etc. When we try to do it cheaper, all in country agents can do is limit resources, cut wages or demand more for less. This can cause resentment to tourism and ultimately mean corners are cut. For example it costs money to

move litter back down a mountain so it gets burnt in situ leaving burnt plastic waste on a mountainside, or areas being covered in paper and human waste. These photos are at basecamp above the river feeding Imlil, the villagers water source for cooking and washing. This all gets carried into the river with the winter snows and rain.



Also review and check the itinerary if heading to altitude, again to ease costs, time on a mountain can be cut limiting acclimatisation time. This can reduce chances of success but will also affect payment to locals providing staff, food, porters or park fees. So plan the logistics well or guide for a reputable expedition company and detail findings in your post trip report for future visits.

A few simple little considerations can still make for a positive experience for your clients and yet be sensitive and responsible to the area and locals. So think of any impact you may have and learn a few local words, please, thank you, hello. Speak to locals about affects and feelings and feed this back via the company you work for, to colleagues and the membership associations. This will all help make our trips more sustainable and limit impact for future generations and expeditions.



Mark Garland is a provider of CWI, CWDI, RCI, RCDI, LoLA, HML and ML. He runs BMC FUNDamentals 1-3 courses as well as acting as a Technical Advisor and moderating for NICAS, Mountain Training and NCFE.

All pictures courtesy of Mark Garland unless otherwise stated.

