



**THE INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAINEERING AND CLIMBING FEDERATION**  
UNION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS D'ALPINISME

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## Argeo's Charter

### Guidelines for Sustainable Mountain Tourism

By the UIAA Access and Conservation Commission, June 2005

#### A) Introduction

Being aware of the importance and grandeur of mountain landscapes the Access and Conservation Commission, at the instigation of Stefano Tirinzoni of the CAI, has produced the following simple guidelines for sustainable mountain tourism in countries where mountain tourism is in its infancy. By reasonable adherence to these precepts the development of such potential may avoid the common errors and omissions which have marred a century of development in the classical Alpine regions of Europe. No-one is better able to translate theory into practice than Stefano Tirinzoni, a tireless worker for the Access and Conservation Commission, an innovative and inspired architect, and an energetic and bold alpinist.

*Robert Pettigrew, President of the Commission*



## **GUIDELINES**

The document comprises three paragraphs:

### **1. Understanding and protecting the environment**

Every local community must be fully aware of its local environment in order to promote a successful sustainable development policy. The Community should focus on:

- **Water protection:** In the mountains water is a uniquely precious resource; streams and waterfalls particularly characterise mountain landscapes which is why it is important to guarantee a constant and abundant quantity of water in them; extraction policies for hydro-electric usage always needs to be well estimated and, in any case, a constant and abundant quantity of water must always be guaranteed.
- **Biodiversity:** in most mountainous regions there is a high level of biodiversity. It has to be guaranteed that this precious diversity, often specific to mountain environments, is not endangered by the development of mountain tourism.
- **Solid waste:** solid waste always needs to be properly and hygienically dispersed; if you create an open sky dump you must determine rules to control and manage it. No dumps on river banks should be allowed: in case of rain or river flood, garbage will be transported downhill and cause severe pollution problems. If waste and rubbish cannot be eliminated on the mountains, it must be transported to the valley floor.
- **Liquid waste:** sewerage plants are indispensable to collect liquid waste and channel it to purification plants so as to avoid pollution of water streams; at high altitude, where you cannot use biological purification plants, you need to create special plants, or contain the waste in special tanks which are routinely transported by helicopter to the valley floor.
- **Typical agriculture:** typical cultivations (fields, wood, pastures, ...) need to be encouraged, because they both form and characterize the landscape, culture and history of the mountains, as well as creating habitats for wildlife and contributing to the biodiversity of mountain regions.
- **Railways and roads:** roads should facilitate access to the mountains; where it is possible railways are preferable to roads. The fewer cars you have, the better it is for the environment.
- **The construction of new infrastructures in the mountains must always be well evaluated, planned and constructed because of the potential damage to the natural environment.**
- **Human presence:** the people who live in the mountains always modify the environment with their work: paths, roads, bridges, houses, churches, castles, fortresses, villages, ... all of them are an expression of the cultural identity of a population and that is why they must be preserved, never destroyed. Today we have the knowledge, skills and means to restore these constructions without destroying them; it is important to promote the creation of local training in traditional crafts to teach local designers and workers how to use typical materials and to employ methods and techniques of traditional architecture.

- Ski: ski-lifts, cable cars and ski-slopes represent contemporary sporting developments which have improved the economic conditions of mountain areas; it is important to underline that they do not have to disfigure the landscape and that they should be located in consultation with communities and other user groups, so that their construction does not preclude other activities such as mountaineering, climbing and trekking.

## **2. Preserving the cultural identity**

Tourism in the mountains includes a desire to experience traditional cultures; that is why it is important to prevent social and economical development from destroying local traditions, so that typical languages, clothes, handicrafts,... can be well preserved. Local cultures must be sustained and studied, they must be protagonist of specific books. In particular it is necessary to focus on:

- Economic development: A balance needs to be maintained. it is important to prevent economic wellness and globalization from destroying local environment and local cultures.
- Equal opportunities for the population of mountain regions.  
The preservation of local traditions need not mean the conversion of mountain regions into open air museums. The local population's desire to lead a modern life with equal opportunities must also be respected.
- Promote local cultures: at school young people should be encouraged to study local history and typical traditions; historical and ethnographic researches should be supported together with the publication of books and the production of audiovisual aids to describe, sustain and promote the local culture of the region.
- Promote local traditions: local usages, such as religious beliefs, and celebratory festivals, must be maintained and supported.
- Promote typical handicrafts: the production of typical handicrafts needs to be promoted, also the foundation of craft training workshops where an older generation of skilled artists and craftsmen can instruct and train the younger generation in the production of traditional artefacts of the mountain region.

## **3. Tourism in the mountains**

Mountain tourism (mountaineering, trekking, climbing, ski touring, ...) can really help the economic development of mountain areas. Free access to the mountains must be guaranteed and limitations must be well considered, according to each case and must be put into effect only when necessary. In many cases raising awareness of issues rather than regulating access is most effective in conserving the natural environment.

Here are some further suggestions to develop a sustainable mountain tourism policy.

- Promote the professional training of local mountain guides and the creation of local travel agencies, to protect the area from exploitation of mountain tourism by multi-national agencies.
- Build huts and bivouacs along well frequented paths; where possible by the restoration of existing structures. However, new provision must be the exception rather than the rule. Very careful assessment is necessary to avoid spoilation of the wilderness. Remoteness of the location, distance from the road or railhead, and popularity of the area are all determining factors. When all the above criteria are

satisfied and the building of a new hut is sanctioned modern methods of construction according to ecological principles should be employed. Such as constructing the hut from heat conserving materials, utilising the energy of the sun through photovoltaic panels for electricity, and producing hot water from solar panels. Promote the restoration of old civil and rural structures so that they can be used as tourists' accommodation; often tourists prefer to stay in an old traditional building, instead of in a new one. However, it is important to guarantee cleanliness, hygiene and essential facilities (toilet, wash-basin, shower) so that modern standards of health and safety are met. The provision of way-marked paths would enable visiting mountaineers to explore the region without guides.

- Create promotional materials (both on paper and electronically) to describe the region's trails and features of outstanding natural beauty.
- Ensure regulations for hunting and fishing are linked to the raising of awareness of conservation and the protection and promotion of the natural environment.

## **B) Conclusions**

These guidelines are intended to be applied, where appropriate, to communities newly exposed to mountain tourism who can then adapt them to their particular characteristics and needs.

Tourism in the mountains is vitally important to ensure sustainable economic and social development for people living in mountain regions, but, at the same time, it is important to prevent it from destroying the environment and local cultures (As has often happened in Europe and in some other places around the world). Mountain tourism has great potential to create vibrant communities in mountain regions and to increase their standard of living. People living in the mountains are an important part of the human geography of these areas. In many cases it is important to create 'parks' to better preserve flora, animals, environment and local traditions; in any case the ecological features must always be protected.

Tourists and the people of tomorrow will surely need to escape from the congestion of towns and cities to enjoy nature; the mountains will surely be both their inspiration and spiritual fulfilment.

*Stefano Tirinzoni acknowledges the kind assistance of Beatrice Martelli.*