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OFFICIAL SUPPORTER

We are committed to designing and operating our holidays in such a way to ensure we maximize the positive effects of tourism on the local economies, cultures and the environment whilst minimizing any negative impacts. There are a number of ways we work to achieve this.

VIP-Sliven Ltd. is dedicated to responsible and sustainable travel as it considers it vital for its operations as an alternative travel tour operator. Not only it's very trendy nowadays to be a green traveller but as such we believe that a first class experiences and unforgettable memories are delivered in isolated communities, authentic cultures, preserved habitats and lively traditions.

Main Goal

We want to grant full association of sustainable travel with alternative tourism and to stand up as an example in Bulgaria for its proper implementation.

Our aims & objectives

We recognise that the destinations we visit are affected by our trips, so we ensure they are designed and operated responsibly, maximizing the positive effects of tourism.

Local group leaders/staff welfare – local group leaders are employed on more than 92% of our trips, and we aim to use local guides and support staff where possible, providing employment for local communities. We are committed to developing long-term relationships with our local suppliers, by working closely with them to develop new products/services and providing staff training to ensure that the economic benefit is ongoing.

All our guides demonstrate environmentally protecting behavior and are inducing such behavior as a standard for the whole group. Being in the group, your guide will provide you with general guidelines, involving staying on trails, maintaining set distances away from wildlife, and not encouraging drivers to move too close to wildlife, even if it is tempting for getting a better picture.

Use local services – by using local transport and as many local businesses as possible, money stays in-country and local enterprise is encouraged. We work closely with local restaurants, shops and equipment providers, and also choose locally-owned accommodation, 55% of our trips now feature a homestay, giving money to local families to accommodate our guests.

Information – we are committed from January 2014 onwards to provide a Trip details section in the website with information on how they can act responsibly whilst on holiday, including details of local projects they may visit whilst away. Whilst now, our local group leaders help our customers gain an insight into the culture of the country they are visiting.

Environment – we audit all of our trips according to their environmental impact and then work to

minimize this. This means making sure local trekking guidelines are followed, no litter is left behind, water sources are environmentally friendly and responsible cooking fuels are used, if applicable. We also have guidelines in place for specific excursions and packages, like those related with buggy riding and jeep safaris to ensure that everything is intact. Thinking about the reducing the carbon emissions during your travel, starts at home. We encourage our customers to consider donation for offsetting their flight carbon emissions. While in Bulgaria we always use vehicles with low carbon emissions. We always provide with and encourage our tourists to learn about the vital ecosystems in Bulgaria – WWF Danube-Carpathian Program (www.panda.org/bulgaria) and BALKANI Wildlife Society (www.balkani.org) before arriving to the country. 75% of the guesthouses we work with have the **Green lodge®** certificate issued by

BAAT

which acts in several directions: Support of environmental friendly agriculture, Efficient use of energy and water, Active waste reduction policy, Contribution to nature protection, Focus on cultural heritage, Contribution to the local economy, Environmental information services to guests, Continuous improvement of environmental performance.

All our tours and actions comply with local and international environmental conventions and laws.

Itinerary Development – when planning our trips, we consider how each one can run responsibly. Can we source a homestay? Where can we use local transport, instead of a charter bus? Is there a project we can support, or is there a visit where fees paid will go towards environmental development?

Once the trip is operating, it is audited on these things and many more. We aim to ensure our trips are as responsible as they possibly can be.

Our office – We drink Fair Trade tea and coffee, and our staff t-shirts are from a sustainable supplier. We recycle our office paper, and educate staff on how to cut waste. By developing our website and electronic literature, we're also trying to reduce the amount of paper materials we produce. That's for now, more to come and be done as we develop !

Local Community – we assess our local community suppliers to ensure they work under our criteria. Moreover, we link them to other responsible tour operators worldwide in order to deliver more work and income for them.

Our partnerships

VIP-Sliven Ltd is a proud member of the **Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism (BAAT)** where our owner Mr. Hristo Yanev takes part in the governing body. With BAAT we work towards certifying guesthouses according to the Association Sustainability guidelines and also work mutually on various projects concerning the sustainability in the alternative forms of tourism on the territory of Bulgaria.

We're in the process of creating a range of trips which combine the different aspects of alternative tourism as well as a variety of a usual trip, with 2-3 days helping local communities, or a wildlife or environmental project.

Many VIP-Sliven Ltd customers tell us that their favourite holiday highlights are born out of genuine interaction with local communities, the times on tour when they are able to get involved in life as it goes on around them. We listen to what our travellers say, and so now we are almost ready with such trips.

