

Sustainability policy of Explore Messinia & Explore Greece



Purpose

The purpose of Explore Messinia's sustainability policy is to promote responsible and eco-friendly tourism practices while preserving the natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique biodiversity of the Messinia region. By implementing sustainable initiatives and encouraging environmentally conscious behavior among tourists, local businesses, and residents, we aim to minimize our ecological footprint, support local communities, and ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy the wonders of Messinia. Our commitment to sustainability not only enhances the overall visitor experience but also contributes to the long-term well-being and prosperity of the region, fostering a harmonious relationship between tourism and the environment.

Scope

This policy is applicable to all aspects of our company, covering every level from management to executives. We expect our staff, suppliers, and partners to wholeheartedly support and adhere to the objectives outlined in this policy, taking into account the limitations of current budgets whenever possible.

Mr. Fotis Kontargiris is responsible for implementing the company's sustainability policy.

Sustainability management & legal compliance

Sustainability commitment

'Explore Messinia' 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.

Sustainability management & legal compliance

'Explore Messinia' 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.

'Explore Messinia' 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 labor, and discrimination.

Internal management: social policy & human rights

Employees

- We recognize that our employees are our biggest asset for delivering meaningful travel experiences to our customers. Therefore, we maintain a clear human resource policy to ensure:
 - Legal compliance in all regards
 - A safe, healthy, and welcoming workplace
 - Fair contract conditions including fair compensation
 - Training opportunities including trainings on topics of sustainability, sexual harassment and exploitation in the workplace and in the industry
 - Participation in the sustainability planning activities
 - Inclusion and equal opportunity for all employees, particularly with regard to compensation, promotion, distribution of benefits, and professional development opportunities.

Internal management: environment

Environmental management of office operations

- We are committed to keeping the direct footprint of our business operations as minimal as possible and actively follow [circularity/the 5Rs (refuse, reduce, reuse, repurpose, recycle)/sustainability/environmentally-sound principles. We have the following measures in place:
 - Follow all local and national regulations concerning environmental law
 - Measure, monitor, and evaluate use of all commodities and products purchased, especially in terms of water, waste, energy, and carbon
 - Procure office supply. locally, seasonally, fair trade, in bulk, with limited packaging, sustainability certified whenever possible
 - Print only when absolutely necessary, and when printing, always print double-sided on grayscale. Paper must always be FSC or equivalent certified, with preference for the highest percentage post-consumer materials
 - Energy saving measures are in place in all common areas
 - All equipment and lighting is energy-efficient and turned off/unplugged/on sleep mode when not in use
 - Water saving measures are in place in all common areas and restrooms, including water capture in external areas
 - Waste is separated into the following categories: [organic, recyclable materials, e-waste] and is disposed of properly by Kalamata municipality services
 - Noise, light, and air pollution is minimised

Carbon management of office operations

- 'Explore Messinia' is committed to reducing our carbon footprint and endeavours to reduce the amount we travel as much as possible by:
 - Reduce the amount we travel as much as possible
 - Monitoring and measuring carbon footprint with the aim to reduce as much as possible and offset remaining amounts.
 - Encouraging remote work whenever possible, and when it is not possible, making it easier for employees to limit their carbon footprint by use of eco modes of transportation.
 - We commit to offsetting our remaining direct and indirect carbon from travel and fossil energy use via South Pole.
 - Implementing procedures such as [e.g. following proper maintenance for vehicle fleet, offering incentives such as bike rental stipend and showers].

- Installing energy efficient equipment and appliances [where appropriate/possible]

Land use

- 'Explore Messinia' offices are located in a urban area and abides by all local land use laws, respects local cultural and natural resources in our business operations, and favours sustainable architecture and design.

General suppliers policy

- 'Explore Messinia' is committed to sourcing its products and services responsibly, avoiding harmful impacts on society, culture and nature as much as possible. We expect the same level of engagement and commitment from our suppliers.
- 'Explore Messinia' prefers to work with partners that share the company's commitment towards sustainability. This means that we prefer partners that have a written sustainability statement as an integral part of their business policy and/or a clear sustainability policy in place.
- 'Explore Messinia' prefers to work with suppliers in the destinations that are locally owned or managed, use local and seasonal products and services and benefit the local community by hiring locally and equitably and by providing fair working conditions.
- Whenever possible, 'Explore Messinia' prefers to select partner companies that comply with tourism-specific, internationally recognized (GSTC-accredited) certifications, or other sustainability certifications like B Corp or ISO.
- 'Explore Messinia' offers incentives for partners that are actively engaged in sustainable operations.
- 'Explore Messinia' expects its suppliers to adhere to a Code of Conduct, that includes the following responsible business practices:
 - Complying with all local, regional, national and international regulations
 - Respecting all human rights including labour rights, children's rights, and women's rights
 - Committing to fair employment conditions
 - Following anti-corruption, anti-bribery, anti-extortion, and anti-discrimination policies
 - Protecting children from (sexual) exploitation through tourism
 - Protecting the environment and natural resources
 - Acting in the best interest of local communities
 - Protecting the interests of Explore Messinia

Our complete supplier Code of Conduct is available here: <https://exploremessinia.com/sustainability/>

- Following a zero-tolerance policy, 'Explore Messinia' will immediately terminate any relationships with suppliers that violate our policies/the Code of Conduct/, specifically through acts of bribery, corruption, discrimination, and violation of human rights.
- 'Explore Messinia' raises awareness amongst its suppliers to adopt sound social and environmental practices, and to minimise their carbon footprint.
- 'Explore Messinia' actively collaborates with suppliers to improve their sustainability performance. We encourage our suppliers to continuously learn about sustainability and provide/support this learning whenever possible.
- 'Explore Messinia' maintains open lines of communication with our suppliers and partners and encourage feedback from our stakeholders at any time and on any topic, particularly sustainability.

Inbound partner agencies

- 'Explore Messinia' only works with partner agencies that adhere to the company's Code of Conduct
- In the entire process of developing and operating our travel packages, 'Explore Messinia' expects partner agencies to act in the best interests of the surrounding communities and environment as well as our guests.
- 'Explore Messinia' provides partner agencies opportunities for sustainability learning and management, including free access to the Travelife online learning and reporting platform.

Transport

- 'Explore Messinia' only works with transport providers that adhere to the company's Code of Conduct
- When selecting transport for guests and business related travel, Explore Messinia commits to choosing the most environmentally friendly options available for travelling to, from, and within the destination – taking into consideration distance, price, route, and comfort.
- Explore Messinia has implemented clear guidelines for reducing GHG emissions from transport and selecting the most environmentally friendly transport options, including the following measures:
 - Preferring ground transport over air transport for short-haul travel destinations

- Avoiding in-destination flights as much as possible
 - Offering rail-and-fly transport to and from the airport
 - Using public transportation options in the destinations
 - Using appropriate vehicle sizes for group sizes and purchasing most efficient vehicles available
 - Training drivers on eco-driving techniques
 - [add additional measures you are taking]
- Explore Messinia endeavours – and has a system in place – to measure and compensate for the unavoidable GHG emissions produced from transportation. Compensation costs are either included by default in the package price or compensation is actively promoted to the clients as a booking option.

Accommodations

- 'Explore Messinia' only works with accommodations that adhere to the company's Code of Conduct.
- In the accommodation selection process, 'Explore Messinia' considers the sustainability practices of an accommodation by taking into account their sustainability management and social and environmental footprint.
- 'Explore Messinia' favours the selection of accommodations that respect and protect land use, as well as respectfully highlight elements of local architecture, customs and traditions

Activities & Excursions

- At Explore Messinia, we take great pride in our in-house excursion design, meticulously crafted to align with our code of conduct and sustainable practices. Our team of experienced professionals carefully design each adventure, ensuring minimal environmental impact and maximum immersion in the local culture. We prioritize eco-friendly activities, and promote sustainable tourism by supporting local businesses and artisans.
- All excursions and activities run by 'Explore Messinia' respect local customs, traditions, cultural integrity, and natural resources.
- 'Explore Messinia' commits to not offering any excursions that harm humans, wildlife, environment, or natural resources such as water and energy.
- 'Explore Messinia' gives preference to excursions and activities that benefit local communities, respect animal welfare and support environmental protection.

- 'Explore Messinia' has clear guidelines/Codes of Conduct in place for environmentally and culturally sensitive excursions offered by the company. These guidelines are actively communicated to guests as well as distributed and implemented by excursion providers and guides.
- 'Explore Messinia' provides to partners opportunities for sustainability learning and management, including free access to the Travelife online learning and reporting platform.

Tour leaders, local representatives, and guides

- 'Explore Messinia' commits to hiring qualified local guides, drivers or other local staff, paying them living wages and providing safe and fair working conditions. We expect the same from our suppliers that are hiring local staff on behalf of Explore Messinia.
- 'Explore Messinia' understands that guides are the intermediaries between the guests and the socio-cultural and environmental context of the destination, conveying the appropriate behaviour to them. Therefore, we make sure that all guides hired by or leading tours on behalf of 'Explore Messinia' are trained regularly and knowledgeable in the sustainability topics of the destination.
- Our guides are specifically trained on the critical issue of sexual exploitation of children in tourism.
- 'Explore Messinia' provides guides with learning opportunities on sustainability topics including providing free access to the Travelife online learning platform.

Destinations

Sustainable destinations

- 'Explore Messinia' prefers to work in destinations that have committed to sustainability as an integral part of community and destination development.
- 'Explore Messinia' aims to send visitors to secondary or lesser-known tourist areas to avoid overtourism.
- 'Explore Messinia' does not support destinations that have a questionable human rights track record.

Contribution to local communities / local economic network

- 'Explore Messinia' commits to positive contribution to the destinations in which we operate, by:
 - Sourcing locally and responsibly, and supporting local and traditional arts and culture
 - Encouraging guests to shop responsibly and educating them about illegal/prohibited/forbidden souvenirs

- Collaborating with other local tourism stakeholders [including local government, other tourism businesses, academia, community groups] to further the sustainable tourism development of the destination
- Respecting and advocating for all human rights (i.e. children's rights, women's rights, labour rights, etc.) as well as land rights

Environmental stewardship in destinations

- 'Explore Messinia' commits to environmental stewardship in the destinations in which we operate by:
 - Ensuring natural resources remain intact
 - Educating guests about the principles of responsible travel and responsible visitor behaviour.

Customer experience

- The company aims for all customer experiences to be positive, and follows strict health and safety, marketing, and excursion policies to ensure customer satisfaction. These policies cover specific topics of (but not limited to):
 - Health and safety
 - Emergency procedures
 - Privacy
 - Group numbers
 - Greenhouse Gas emissions and offsetting
 - Transport
 - Shopping
 - Sexual exploitation
 - Children in tourism
 - Satisfaction and complaints
- 'Explore Messinia' maintains open lines of communication with our customers and encourages feedback at any time and on any topic, particularly sustainability.

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, Mr. Fotis Kontargiris**, who can be reached at **fotis@exploremessinia.com**

Effective date

This policy is effective from 01/01/2023.

Revision history

This policy was revised on 01/01/2023

This policy will be revised by 01/01/2025