



Sustainability policy of BALKAN PEARLS TOUR OPERATOR

Purpose

The company is committed to introducing and practicing sustainability principles. The purpose of this policy is to guide towards sustainable tourism, for all stakeholders involved by sharing it with everyone.

Scope

This policy applies to all operations, from the bottom to the top executive level of our company.

Everyone is responsible for implementing the company's sustainability policy.

Sustainability management & legal compliance

Sustainability Commitment

Balkan Perls's 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 (using the Travelife report) every two years.

Sustainability management & legal compliance

Balkan Perls 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.

Balkan Perls 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.
- Balkan Perls supports both career-related and job-related professional development activities.
- Balkan Perls is committed to the principle of fair and equal pay for like work and for work of equal value for all its employees, and contractors, regardless of gender/sex, race, national origin, marital status, age, religion.
- Balkan Perls is committed to fostering a safe, healthy, and inclusive work place/work culture where all employees are able to perform their duties/to recognize their potential.
- Balkan Perls is committed to a zero-tolerance policy for acts of bribery, corruption, discrimination, and violation of human rights, including forced labour, human trafficking, and all rights of children.
- Balkan Perls further expects this commitment from all partners and suppliers.

Internal management: environment

Environmental management of office operations

- Balkan Perls is committed to managing environmental impact as an integral part of our operations. It is our policy to assure the environmental integrity of our processes and products at all times by:
 - Continuously seeking opportunities to improve our environmental performance by establishing objectives and targets, measuring progress, and reporting our results, including but not limited to energy, water, paper, and carbon.
 - Practising a waste hierarchical approach to always reduce, reuse, and recycle commodities and products instead of waste, particularly waste to landfill.
 - Promoting participation and communicating our commitment to responsible environmental management by promoting environmental responsibility amongst our employees and stakeholders and soliciting input from them to better achieve our environmental goals.
 - Minimising pollution including light, noise, and any soil, water, or air contaminants, and avoiding use of any toxic or hazardous substances.

Carbon management of office operations

- Balkan Perls 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.
 - Implementing procedures such as [e.g. following proper maintenance for vehicle fleet,

offering incentives such as bike rental stipend and showers]

Land use

- Balkan Perls offices are located in an 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

- Balkan Perls 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.
- Balkan Perls 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.
- Balkan Perls 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, Balkan Perls prefers to select partner companies that comply with tourism specific, internationally recognized (GSTC-accredited) certifications, or other sustainability certifications.
- Balkan Perls offers incentives for partners that are actively engaged in sustainable operations.
- Balkan Perls 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 Balkan Perls

Our complete supplier Code of Conduct is available here: [\[Libri i Punonjesit\]](#)

- Following a zero-tolerance policy, Balkan Perls 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.
- Balkan Perls raises awareness amongst its suppliers to adopt sound social and environmental practices, and to minimise their carbon footprint.
 - Balkan Perls 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.
- Balkan Perls 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.
- Balkan Perls considers sustainability aspects in destinations in selecting new destinations and in the product development process. We intend to provide social and environmental benefits to the communities we visit. We understand the importance of visitor dispersion and of not exceeding the carrying capacity of destinations; therefore, we encourage the promotion of lesser-known areas (with the approval of the local community), to prevent over-tourism and its negative impacts.
- Balkan Perls do not allow the purchase of souvenirs containing threatened flora and fauna species, any illegally obtained historical/archaeological artifacts, drugs or illegal substances, and abide by local and international laws in place to prevent this.
- Balkan Perls ensures that no marketing and advertisement document, statement, or other publication, shall contain misleading information, over advertise and under deliver. We guarantee that all our staff are aware of and ensure that what is offered can be delivered to our clients with ease.
- The company does not employ children (14 year or younger) to complete work which is normally undertaken by adults. And, there are special working times and conditions for children working within the business in accordance with national regulations and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, whichever provides most protection incorporating the exceptions under the ILO convention 138.

Inbound partner agencies

- Balkan Perls 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, Balkan Perls expects partner agencies to act in the best interests of the surrounding communities and environment as well as our guests.
- Balkan Perls provides partner agencies opportunities for sustainability learning and management, including free access to the Travelife online learning and reporting platform.

Transport

- Balkan Perls only works with transport providers that adhere to the company's Code of Conduct.
- When selecting transport for guests and business related travel, Balkan Perls 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.
 - Balkan Perls has implemented clear guidelines for reducing 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

Accommodations

- Balkan Perls only works with accommodations that adhere to the company's Code of Conduct. □ In the accommodation selection process, Balkan Perls considers the sustainability practices of an accommodation by taking into account their sustainability management and social and environmental footprint.
- Balkan Perls 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

- ❑ Balkan Perls only works with excursion providers that adhere to the company's Code of Conduct.
- ❑ All excursions and activities run by or on behalf of Balkan Perls respect local customs, traditions, cultural integrity, and natural resources.
- ❑ Balkan Perls commits to not offering any excursions that harm humans, wildlife, environment, or natural resources such as water and energy.
- ❑ Balkan Perls gives preference to excursions and activities that benefit local communities, respect animal welfare and support environmental protection.
- ❑ Balkan Perls has clear guidelines in place for environmentally and culturally sensitive excursions offered by or on behalf of the company. These guidelines are actively communicated to guests as well as distributed and implemented by excursion providers and guides.
- ❑ Balkan Perls provides excursion and attraction providers opportunities for sustainability learning and management, including free access to the Travelife online learning and reporting platform.

Tour leaders, local representatives, and guides

- ❑ Balkan Perls commits to hiring qualified local guides, porters, 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 Balkan Perls.
- ❑ Balkan Perls 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 [company] 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.
- ❑ Balkan Perls provides guides with learning opportunities on sustainability topics including providing free access to the Travelife online learning platform.

Destinations

Sustainable destinations

- ❑ Balkan Perls prefers to work in destinations that have committed to sustainability as an integral part of community and destination development.

We added to our sustainability policy the clause:

"We aim to only promote responsible tourism where the benefits of tourism far outweigh far any negative effects. As a responsible tour operator, we endeavor to refrain from further stressing destinations we consider unsustainable."

- Balkan Perls aims to send visitors to secondary or lesser-known tourist areas to avoid overtourism.
- Balkan Perls does not support destinations that have a questionable human rights track record.

Contribution to local communities / local economic network

- Balkan Perls 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

- Balkan Perls 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 behavior.

Customer communication and protection

Privacy

- Our customer protection is our priority. Therefore, we maintain a clear [privacy policy](#) to ensure
 - Legal compliance in all regards
 - Customers and their data are protected
 - Customers know how their information is being used

Marketing and communication

- Balkan Perls strives to be truthful in all situations and at all times. We offer products and services that do what we claim in our communications.
- We honour our explicit and implicit commitments and promises.
- We are anti-greenwashing and stand behind our sustainability claims 100%. □ We endeavour to be inclusive and representative in our marketing, and to always take into account cultural, religious, and ethnic sensitivities.

Sustainability communication

- Customers are informed about the social and environmental impact of their journey, and are educated about the sustainable choices they can make, including transparent communication on:
 - Certified accommodations
 - Activities and excursions that benefit the local communities and environmental protection
 - Responsible shopping and illegal souvenirs

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
- Balkan Perls 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 led by the Sustainability Coordinator, Silvana Malluta, who can be reached at s.malluta@balkanpearls.com

Effective date

This policy is effective from May 1st, 2024.

Revision history

This policy was revised on April 30, 2026

This policy will be revised by April 30, 2027

Signed by: *Vilma META*



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