

The Responsible Traveler Guidelines

The Institute for Shipboard Education is committed to responsible and sustainable travel. All voyagers are expected to follow these Responsible Travel Guidelines. A Responsible Traveler will:

1. Honor your hosts

- **Know before you go.** Educate yourself about each destination before you arrive. Learn about local customs, traditions and social conditions. Be aware of your own biases and expectations.
- **Engage to understand.** Invest in experiences that provide deeper engagement, build understanding and facilitate meaningful two-way-street exchange.
- **Reflect and process.** Be a mindful storyteller – in person and on social media. Share stories about the people you met that provide context, minimize bias and take a holistic perspective.

2. Protect our planet

- **Eliminate plastics, Conserve water.** Avoid whenever possible the use of plastic straws, cups, and bottles. Bring a reusable bottle and filter to limit the use of plastic bottles. Recycle whenever possible. Don't waste water.
- **Respect wildlife and their natural habitats.** Be wary of any activity that uses animals as part of the entertainment (e.g. riding elephants, taking photos, etc.). Purchase products that are not made using endangered plants or animals.
- **"Leave Only Footprints. Take Only Photos."** Practice "Leave no Trace" principles. Pack environmentally friendly products (sunscreen, soap, shampoo, laundry detergent, etc.) Stay on designated trails and respect protected areas.

3. Support local economies

- **Shop local.** Buy locally-made handcrafts and products direct from the artisan when possible. Avoid chain restaurants and hotels.
- **Pay a fair price.** Respect livelihoods of local vendors and artisans by paying a fair price and know the cultural norms around haggling and bargaining.
- **Hire local.** Use companies who hire local guides and tip appropriately.

4. Plan ahead and make informed decisions

- **Plan ahead!** Know and weigh the risks of where you choose to go and what you choose to do. Putting thought into what you will be doing in advance allows you to make responsible choices. Seek the expertise of a travel physician. Carry the Green Sheet. Have reliable communication.
- **Share your plan.** Tell someone where you're going and what you're doing. Don't go alone.
- **Think it's too good to be true?** Then it is. When choosing to book a pre-arranged activity, or itinerary through a company, ask questions!

5. Be self-aware & respectful

- **Observe and honor.** Observe local laws and regulations. Honor sacred spaces. Dress respectfully and appropriately. Follow the ethical photography expectations.
- **Represent with pride.** Be an ambassador. Represent yourself, Semester at Sea, your home institution and your home country with pride and humility. In your actions and exchanges, reaffirm the positive and disprove the negative stereotypes of your home country. Do not overconsume alcohol.
- **Be mindful.** Protect children from exploitation. Be thoughtful about photos you take and the activities you participate in. Refrain from giving money to begging children. Do not give candy or sweets. Give gifts based on what is NEEDED and ask for permission from an adult or administer before giving gifts.

**These guidelines were adapted from the "Tips for a Responsible Traveler" developed by the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (based on the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.)*



Conscious Storyteller Expectations

In taking photographs or videos, and/or sharing material on social media, Semester at Sea expects its participants to:

- Prioritize the safety, dignity, and well-being of oneself and the people being photographed
 - Ask for consent wherever possible
- Follow local laws and heed the advice of local tour guides, Trip Liaisons, or Faculty facilitators regarding safety and appropriateness of taking photos, videos, etc. (Unless said advice is in conflict with the guidelines below.)
- Be a mindful storyteller, and present realistic and holistic perspectives of local cultures, people, and places

Semester at Sea does not tolerate the following:

- The taking of photos or videos after expressly being asked not to (from a member of the group, guide or member of the community)
- The taking of photos or videos that compromises your or another person's safety
- The intentional and blatant objectification of locals or members of a vulnerable group in a photo, video, or any other form of media
- Visual (photographs or videos) or written material (captions) demeaning a person or culture based on discriminatory factors (may include but is not limited to name calling, racial or other slurs, epithets, jokes, put-downs, etc.)



Ethical Photography and the Semester at Sea Voyager

For many of you, this may be the first time you will experience daily life in a country different from the one in which you were born or raised. The people you meet may dress differently, act differently, greet one another differently, and relate to their surroundings in a way you may have no context to understand. Despite the initial shock of these new experiences, you will soon see that those you meet may have much more in common with you than you originally supposed based on photos you have seen or preconceptions you may have held. We understand you will be excited, uncomfortable, inspired, in awe, and will want to save these experiences to share with your families and friends, and to look back upon and remember what it was like. Take the time to ask yourself a few questions before drawing out your phone and snapping a photo or posting an image to social media:

Where am I?

This may seem like an obvious question, but in the excitement of the moment, sometimes we can forget. Does someone live here? Did someone die here? Would this be the type of place that someone would reasonably expect privacy or a heightened showing of respect? What is the history of this place and is it appropriate for me to take a photo here? What kind of photo is appropriate?

Who am I and why does it matter?

Who benefits from this photo? Who is potentially harmed by this photo? What are the consequences, to myself and others, to posting this photo online? As a traveler, do I have a position of power here? (Do community members rely on travelers like me to make a living?)

With whom do I want to share this photo?

Some photos may be appropriate to share with your family and friends on social media, while others should probably just be for you to keep. Ask yourself, "Would I feel comfortable with the story others would take from my photo without having experienced it?" If a photo cannot provide a realistic and un-biased portrayal of the experience, it may be better shared in a way

that allows you to explain the context. (e.g, some photos may be better shared via a blog vs. a twitter post.)

What story am I trying to tell? Whose story am I trying to tell?

Imagine if a stranger was to look at the photos of your life on your phone. Knowing nothing about you, what pictures would they choose to represent your story? What captions would they write? How much of their own preconceived notions about who you are, based on any of your identities (race, nationality, gender, etc.), would show up in the way they chose to frame the photo? The background? If you didn't fit their idea of what a 'person like you' was supposed to be, would they even care about your story?

What happens if I don't take this photo?

Seriously, what is the worst that could happen? Will this experience be any less meaningful? Will you forget it tomorrow? Will members of your family not believe you? If this question brings you anxiety or you don't feel good about your answers here, it may be time to thoughtfully examine why.

Photography Dos and Don'ts

We understand that some people spend years studying the ethics of travel, tourism, and ethical photography. We don't expect us all to be experts overnight! A little awareness and effort can go a long way. To start your journey, remember the 'Dos' and 'Don'ts':

DO:

- **Take stock of the situation:**
 - Where, what, who, when, and why
- **Prioritize the safety, dignity, and well-being of oneself and the people you photograph**
 - Think of the consequences, both positive and negative, to the individuals involved
 - Ask yourself "Would I feel comfortable if the same photo was taken of myself, of people in my community, people I love or look up to?"
- **Ask for consent:**
 - If including a person's identifiable features (could they be recognized from this photo?)
 - If taking a photo inside a service facility, school, or home
 - Make sure the individual is old enough to give consent (look to a parent or guardian) and that they fully understand what you are asking (even with a language barrier)
 - 'No' means 'no'
- **Follow the law:**
 - Landmarks, natural scenery, or of crowds in public spaces such as markets or streets are generally fair game. However, always check local laws (For example, in Myanmar, it is illegal to take photos of military buildings.)
- **Be a mindful story teller:**
 - Avoid The Danger of a Single Story
 - Be true to the situation. Don't exaggerate.
- **Advocate for others when you feel their rights, privacy, or safety is in question:**

- If you see someone else taking or posting photographs unsafely or unethically, say something!
- If you see someone else taking or posting photographs unsafely or unethically, say something!
- **Acknowledge when you have messed up and use it as an opportunity for growth:**
 - If you're uncomfortable about a photo you have taken or posted, delete it or take it down.
 - If someone else questions your choice and has a legitimate reason to believe your photo is unethical, engage with the situation, be respectful, and try to learn from it. It's hard, but avoid being defensive and attaching your self-worth to one poor or thoughtless decision. We all make mistakes.

DON'T:

- **Compromise your or another person's safety for a photo or video opportunity**
- **Perpetuate prejudice, discrimination, or stereotypes**
 - Not only a terrible thing to do, but also falls against Semester at Sea Voyage Community Values and code of conduct.
- **Position yourself as having made a greater impact than you have**
 - Does your photo make it look like you have cured malaria when in actuality your group simply donated malaria medications to the village you were visiting?
- **Betray the trust of the people you photograph**
 - Don't say one thing and do another. Have honorable intentions.
- **Take a photograph as a means to ease your discomfort with a new situation**
 - If you find yourself hiding behind your phone or camera, using it to protect you from feeling vulnerable or uncomfortable, pause and rethink your motives!

Sources:

Interested in learning more? Check these out!

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