

Traveler Guidelines

stay responsibly



Guideline for Travelers

Status July 2021

YEEAH! Welcome to the socialbnb community. With your booking, you are making an impactful contribution to environmental and social projects and are part of the vision of a sustainable tourism that benefits everyone.

A stay in a socialbnb is a unique experience and offers you unforgettable adventures and cultural exchange, with a social and ecological added value. However, as the concept is still relatively new, there are a few things to keep in mind. With this guideline, we want to provide you with some helpful tips on how your stay in a socialbnb can really benefit everyone involved. You'll also find tips for an all-around sustainable travel experience. Regarding standards, there can be country and organization specific differences. Some of the partner organizations, for example, have not yet had the opportunity to gain any tourism experiences and may therefore still be unsure of how to serve travelers, despite further training by the socialbnb team.

Table of Contents

1. Voluntourism	1
2. Protection and safety	2
2.1 Child Protection.....	2
2.2 Human rights and intercultural exchange	4
2.3 Animal and Species Protection.....	5
2.4 Environmental Protection.....	7
3.5 Traveller Safety.....	9
3. Activities	10
3.2 Food.....	11
3.3 Souvenirs.....	12
4. Part of the community	13

Trigger Warning: This guideline addresses issues including child protection and animal welfare, which some readers may find troubling.

If you have any questions about the guideline, please contact us at support@socialbnb.de and we will be happy to help you.

1. Voluntourism

Definition: Voluntourism describes a form of tourism in which travelers volunteer in local projects. This volunteer work includes areas such as farming, health and education. Within this traveler guideline, the term voluntourism is defined as volunteer work that extends over a period of a few hours up to six months.

- **Do not work as a short-term volunteer in the project.**
 - **Problem:** Short-term voluntourism (less than 6 months) abroad has largely developed into a commercialized product. As a result, the mentality to accommodate firstly the needs of the volunteers, rather than the needs of the project's target group has been established in many projects. This is particularly evident in the short periods of stay, maximum flexibility, negligent selection processes, insufficient preparation of volunteers and attractive tasks on site. Long-term developmental work, which starts with changes in politics and society, is hardly usable for tourism. Voluntourism thus conveys an outdated image of development cooperation. Furthermore, frequently changing and insufficiently qualified caregivers do not meet the needs of the different project target groups on site. In addition, competition between volunteers and local workers is caused by the performance of unpaid work, which represents another critical aspect.
 - **Recommendation:** By booking your accommodation via socialbnb, you make an effective contribution to an alternative method of financing the respective project. In the best case, qualified local workers can be employed in the long term, which in turn has a positive impact on their families, the communities, and the local value creation. Hiring permanent staff also reduces the need for short-term volunteers and the project target groups can rely on permanent caregivers who are appropriately qualified. If you would like to get further involved in addition to your booked overnight stay, why not share the project and their work on social media and recommend them to others? Our partner organizations are also happy about donations in general and especially due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

2. Protection and safety

Travel is a great experience in many ways. However, there are also problems caused by tourism that we want to change together with you! Therefore, we would like to give you an overview of different protection aspects that are important when visiting a project. Through our variety of preventive protection measures, which include for example the careful selection and education of our project partners, we contribute to keeping these risks as low as possible. However, as any aspect of protection relies on good cooperation between the various stakeholders involved in tourism, we ask you to take the following advice to heart and travel with your eyes and ears open.

2.1 Child Protection

Children and adolescents are among the most vulnerable groups in our society and are therefore particularly worthy of protection. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, we consider all people under the age of 18 to be children. We would like to draw your attention to some risks for children and adolescents in the context of tourism and increase your sensitivity for correct behavior.

- **Protect the privacy of children**

- **Problem:** Protecting children's privacy and maintaining daily routines plays a critical role especially in the context of many of the overnight accommodations offered by socialbnb. For example, some projects offer overnight accommodations in homestays or in close proximity to the project. This form of accommodation carries the risk of an intrusion into the privacy and daily routines of the children and their families. The aforementioned aspects also play a crucial role in connection with on-site activities in the context of children's well-being. For example, when a school or other social institution is visited, it can have a negative impact on the quality of children's learning and recreational activities. Particularly critical are visits during school hours, as these are a distraction and children may not be able to concentrate on school activities or change their behavior due to the presence of unknown visitors. Photos of and with the children and especially the publication of these images, for example on social media, also constitute an invasion of the children's privacy.
- **Recommendation:** Please pay attention to the privacy and daily routines of the children and their relatives, especially in homestays and in accommodations on the project site, in order to disturb them as little as possible. Visit schools and other social institutions only in the company of and after prior consultation with trained staff and only when it can be expected that the visit will not negatively affect the privacy and daily routines. In the context of an intercultural exchange, a visit can of course

be enriching for both sides and provide wonderful added value. If a visit is not possible due to privacy, local routines, or other reasons, we ask you to respect this decision. Please avoid taking photos of and with the children to protect their privacy.

- **Do not give money, food and gifts to (begging) children in the project and outside of it**
 - **Problem:** Some of the accommodations that can be booked through socialbnb are located in countries or regions that are characterized by poverty and a lack of prospects, which can lead to children being encouraged by their families to beg or being pressured to do so due to a lack of alternatives. Moreover, begging children are sometimes backed by criminal groups to whom the money or gifts must be given. When you give begging children money, food, gifts, or buy something from them, you encourage them to continue begging or give third parties a reason to continue sending them to beg. This prevents them from going to school, and so they are kept in the cycle of poverty. In addition, there are the health risks that must be considered when distributing sweets, for example.
 - **Recommendation:** Do not give money, food, or gifts to begging children and instead use businesses that have a positive impact on the local community (e.g., educational, and social enterprises) throughout your trip. If you want to take action beyond that, you can donate to organizations that support children and their families. You might even spend the night at one of these organizations and see the impressive work they do on the ground.
- **Report child labor**
 - **Problem:** The global number of children in labor currently stands at 160 million, showing a significant increase in recent years. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could push nine million more children into child labor by 2022. In some regions, children sell goods, work as tour guides or in tourist businesses such as hotels or restaurants, which is particularly problematic if it harms their education or if they are structurally exploited.
 - **Recommendation:** Do not buy goods or use services offered by children. If you believe a business employs underage children, call a child protection hotline (ChildSafe - Report Child Abuse, [thinkchildsafe.org](https://www.thinkchildsafe.org)), contact a local organization, or contact the police. The appropriate people will review the child's situation. (Many children only help their parents after school, but some may be exploited.)

- **Report suspected sexual exploitation of children**

- **Problem:** Tourism activities put children at particular risk of sexual exploitation (see our Child Protection Policy). For example, they are forced to offer themselves to travelers, are forced to prostitute themselves or are sexually abused by travelers in exchange for gifts, new technologies or money. These risks are amplified by poverty, lack of protection and social security systems, and income disparities. The sexual abuse of children and young people is punishable by law - even abroad. We take a clear position against the sexual exploitation of minors and investigate or, if necessary, report any suspected cases that come to our attention.
- **Recommendation:** Be alert and travel with your eyes and ears open. As part of the "Don't look away" campaign of the non-profit organization ECPAT e.V., civil society, the tourism industry, policymakers, and the police are working closely together to better protect children from sexual exploitation. You can make an important contribution by reporting suspected sexual exploitation of children (also anonymously) to a reporting form "Don't look away" (<https://dontlookaway.report>)

- **Act as a role model for children**

- **Problem:** Children often imitate the behavior of adults and are usually not yet able to assess the consequences.
- **Recommendation:** Be sure to follow the house rules on site. Even if the consumption of cigarettes, alcohol and drugs is not forbidden in your accommodation, it is important to make sure that the children do not come into contact with this consumption or are negatively affected by it in any other way (e.g., cigarette butts, empty beer bottles, broken glass). Setting an example to children is also relevant in other contexts and outside the accommodation.

2.2 Human rights and intercultural exchange

By Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." This principle plays a special role in the context of tourism activities, as people are the center of tourism. They perform services in the context of mobility, hospitality, gastronomy, events, and many other areas and are therefore the valuable basis of this industry. By following the recommendations below, you as a traveler will make an important contribution to the respect of human rights in tourism and promote intercultural exchange on an equal footing.

- **Learn about the local culture and human rights situation**

In some cases, the local situation can be very different from what you are used to at home, which is why good preparation is essential for an enriching travel experience. You might also want to learn a few phrases in the local language, which may encourage interaction on the spot and will certainly bring you some special moments.

As there are also big differences in the human rights situation in different countries and certain groups are discriminated, it is important to be informed about this in order to travel safely. As socialbnb we reject any kind of discrimination based on origin, religion, or sexual orientation. Nevertheless, we have no influence on the local legal or social reality.

- **Respect the local people and their culture**

Traveling allows for a variety of daily interactions. Always make sure that you meet the locals at eye level and with openness. It is also important to help protect the privacy of local people, so we ask you as a traveler to develop a sense of when interaction leads to authentic intercultural exchange and when local people's privacy is disturbed. In some regions, the local infrastructure is designed to be very open and accessible, but this should not result in a disregard for privacy. Even in socialbnb accommodations, it is important to respect the daily routines and the private space of the locals.

2.3 Animal and Species Protection

Animals are a popular part of many tourist experiences. By adhering to the following tips, you will be contributing to the protection of species in addition to animal welfare.

- **Avoid direct contact with wildlife (i.e., do not ride, feed, bathe, or pet wild animals)**
 - **Problem:** Contact with humans causes increased stress for wild animals. In addition, the dressage and husbandry conditions in many vacation countries cause animal cruelty and many of the animals used in tourism are wild caught (which means that wild animals were hunted and captured).
 - **Recommendation:** Avoid direct contact with wild animals and keep your distance from them.
- **Refrain from riding, feeding, bathing, and petting wild animals**, preferring to observe them from a reasonable distance within their natural habitat. Do not support organizations that allow direct contact between travelers or short-term volunteers and wildlife.

- **Refrain from visiting animal shows, dolphinariums, and zoos**

- **Problem:** For animal shows, dolphinariums, and zoos, (wild) animals are kept in cramped cages and unstructured enclosures, which can cause them to develop behavioral problems, such as repetitive movement patterns. In addition, many of the animals on display are wild caught, potentially jeopardizing their overall conservation.
- **Recommendation:** By refraining from visiting animal shows, dolphinariums, and zoos, you contribute to the decreasing profitability, which in the long run will lead to a reduction of these inappropriate offers. Thus, you contribute to more animal protection and biodiversity.

- **Do not use wild animals as photo models in proximity (e.g., selfies).**

- **Problem:** Wild animals are offered as models for vacation photos in many countries. The direct contact and the passing around mean pure stress for wild animals. Often the animals are wild-caught or separated from their mothers at an early age. Also, the immobilization of dangerous animals such as tigers and lions with the help of drugs is common.
- **Recommendation:** In general, do not use a flash when taking photos in order not to irritate the animals even more. Show wildlife in photos in their natural habitat if possible. This is authentic, contributes to species conservation and possibly inspires other travelers to do the same.

- **Refrain from jet skiing**

- **Problem:** Wildlife is often very sensitive to noise and loud noises can therefore cause wildlife to leave their territories and breeding grounds.
- **Recommendation:** Do not engage in recreational sports that are noisy to wildlife, such as jet skiing, for example.

- **Refrain from attending bullfights and other animal fights**

- **Problem:** Animal fights are still held in many places under the guise of "tradition" and for and because of the profits. Animal fighting poses a high risk of injury and distress to both the humans and animals involved.
- **Recommendation:** Your refraining from visiting an animal fighting arena will lead to the reduction of the associated revenues and thus also contribute to the fact that these practices will eventually no longer be profitable.

2.4 Environmental Protection

Mobility in particular has a high negative impact on the environment and the climate due to the increased release of CO₂. The extensive use of resources and the destruction of ecosystems also pose a threat to the ecological balance. The following tips are intended to provide inspiration for sustainable travel and can certainly be used in other areas of life as well.

Mobility

The journey to the accommodations of our project partners can vary greatly, as they are often located outside of tourist areas. However, on the profile of each accommodation there is comprehensive information on how to get there, e.g., if it is possible to travel by public transport or if there is a pick-up service. When you complete your booking, you will receive the exact address of the accommodation and the contact details of the person to contact. You have to organize the journey yourself, so we recommend you inform yourself about the exact route in time. The contact person of the project can help you with this. In addition, you should consider the check-in times of the organization and clarify with the contact person in advance what time you will arrive.

In order to pay attention to sustainability when traveling and to reduce your carbon footprint, we have put together the following tips for you.

- **Travel less often and longer instead of shorter and more often, if possible**
 - **Problem:** For some time now, the far too low airfares have been tempting travelers to travel by air more and more frequently and for shorter and shorter vacations. It is well known that air travel contributes to climate change with its high CO₂ emissions. A scheduled round-trip flight from Hamburg to Madrid in economy class, for example, releases an average of 1,000 kg of CO₂ per person. The climate-compatible annual budget of a person, by comparison, is 2,700 kg of CO₂. In the context of tourism, mobility represents the most harmful area for the environment.
 - **Recommendation:** In particular, you should undertake air travel less frequently and for longer periods instead of shorter and more frequently and make use of alternative means of transport such as the bus or train wherever possible.
- **Public transport vs. air travel**
 - **Problem:** Air travel is generally very harmful to the environment and especially during take-off and landing many emissions are released.

- **Recommendation:** A train or bus trip is the best option for distances of less than 800-1000 km. Compared to air travel, you use 40-70 percent less energy on the train. The climate is up to 85 percent less polluted and during the journey you can marvel at the changing landscapes. Especially for short distances, the train is two to three times more efficient than the airplane in many countries. If there is no possible alternative to air travel for you, prefer direct flights and use alternative means of transportation to get to the airport in question (e.g., Rail and Fly).
- **Compensation of emissions**
 - **Problem:** In part, the possibility of offsetting CO₂ emissions creates the misleading image that the release of emissions is therefore no longer a problem. Furthermore, due to financial differences, not everyone has the possibility to compensate for the caused emissions.
 - **Recommendation:** If you cannot avoid air travel or do not want to, we recommend offsetting despite the critical aspects explained above, given that you have the financial means to do so.

Save resources and protect the ecosystem

- **Avoid waste and dispose of generated waste**
 - **Waste avoidance**
 - To avoid plastic waste, it is advisable to always have a refillable water bottle with you when traveling. Apps like "Refill" or "Refillmybottle" can help you find refill stations near you where you can refill your water bottle with drinking water for free. Bringing a lunch box and a small cutlery set can also be helpful to save on trash during your daily travel routine.
 - **Waste disposal**
 - If possible and according to the local conditions, the garbage should be separated and if there is no infrastructure for this on site, you should dispose it in the residual waste.
- **Use resources responsibly**
 - In general, we recommend that you use resources such as water and electricity responsibly.
- **Be considerate of the ecosystem**
 - Inform yourself locally about what you can do to protect the ecosystem. Do not climb dunes, for example, and do not step on coral reefs. You can also make a valuable

contribution to environment protection by visiting protected areas that make use of responsible visitor management.

- **Avoid the use of environmentally harmful substances**

- If possible, use products that are compatible with the environment (e.g., reef-safe mineral sunscreen, use of hygiene products without microplastics).

3.5 Traveller Safety

Preparation for a trip is key. To ensure a safe trip, you should consider the following:

- Inform yourself about important insurances, e.g., a travel cancellation insurance or an international health insurance.
- Inform yourself in advance about the situation in the country, region, or city, e.g., via your country's Foreign Office (here you can find current travel and safety information for all countries)
- Find out where the respective embassy is located in your destination country, as the embassy will help you in case of emergencies abroad (e.g., if you lose your passport, to get a travel document to return)
- Secure important documents by taking a (laminated) copy with you or creating a digital version (via email, Dropbox, Google Documents, etc.). In case of loss or theft, these will usually help you organize replacement documents. Important documents include:
 - Passport and/or ID card (depending on destination).
 - Insurance policies, contracts, insurance number and (international) phone number of the insurance company
 - EC and credit cards (front and back)
 - Online banking TAN lists and access data
 - National and international driver's license
 - Vaccination certificates
 - Eyeglasses and/or contact lens prescriptions
 - Important phone numbers and addresses from home (bank, travel agency, etc.)

Health

Since the accommodations are located in different regions, we recommend that you inform yourself about the local conditions and possible health risks as well as about necessary precautions to take before your trip. In some cases, the project partners also provide information in this regard on their accommodation profile in the "Packing List" section.

Getting sick on vacation is unpleasant since the medical care at your destination often differs from that in your home country. However, you should also prepare for such a case before departure.

- Therefore, inform yourself and consult your doctor in advance about the recommended vaccinations or medications (e.g., malaria prophylaxis) for your travel destination. If you are traveling to tropical areas, you can also seek advice from an institute for tropical medicine.
- A first-aid kit should always be included in your luggage, filled with utensils and medicines that you then have quickly at hand (e.g., remedies for headaches, fever, diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting; plaster and bandages; disinfectant; tweezers; mosquito repellent, ointment, sunscreen, medicines which you take regularly).
- It is advisable to arrange an international health insurance for the duration of your trip because the costs incurred by medical treatment abroad will be covered.
- Please inform yourself before your trip about the current Covid-19 regulations on site and make sure that you comply with them during your trip. Additionally, consider our tips for traveling during the pandemic.

In many regions, endangered or protected animal and plant species are common ingredients in alternative medicines. As a result, the increasing demand for herbal medicine means that in some countries, the populations of primrose, ginseng, or arnica are endangered. Forms of Traditional Asian Medicine, for example, include products of animal origin, which contribute to the decline of some animal populations. Examples include the declining populations of certain seahorses, tigers, lizards, rhinos, and turtles. Trade in said products also often takes place on the black market. If you want to try alternative healing methods on the spot, it is therefore recommended to inform yourself about the ingredients and manufacturing methods of the medicines.

3. Activities

Activities are a great way for you to immerse yourself in the culture, language and customs of your holiday destination. Many of our project partners offer sporting, artistic, culinary and handicraft experiences and present these on their accommodation profiles in the "activities" section. In addition to the activities organized directly on site by the project, there are also general recommendations from the hosts for exploring the surrounding areas.

In order for your activities to also contribute to a positive impact, it is important to consider the aspects previously explained.

3.1 Shopping

The intent to shop more sustainable is often neglected while travelling even though the awareness is as important abroad as it is at home.

Please watch the following aspects while shopping for food:

- Avoid plastic or disposable items
- Mind labels which indicate organic or free-range farming products because they guarantee environmentally friendly agriculture as well as more animal welfare. For ecological reasons it is often advisable to do the shopping at a local market. Not only can you gather a lot of various impressions of the local culture and support the local economy, but also get in touch with the locals.
- Prefer local and seasonal products. Many of those, like for example organic products, are being transported to their final destination by ship or plane. Due to this route of transportation the ecological footprint of the product increases. Regional or seasonal products reduce the carbon emissions and packaging material and are therefore a more environmentally friendly alternative. Overall, the purchase of regional products boosts the economy of the country because the profit of the purchase is invested in local businesses which can also generate more jobs.
- Reduce the amount of animal products while shopping for food because of the major impact on your environmental balance.

3.2 Food

Some of our project partners give you the opportunity to try their local cuisine. In their respective accommodation profile, it is stated which meals can be provided by the host and if they offer vegetarian or vegan dishes. If you want to follow a vegetarian or vegan diet, we advise you to check this with your host beforehand. Sometimes cooking classes are offered by our project partners to dive deep into the world of taste. If available, the information regarding the classes is listed on our website in the profile of the accommodation under the key word “activities”. Additionally, you can find numerous vegan restaurants in many different countries on “VanillaBean”.

Which food items are provided and consumed on-site, strongly depends on the local culture. Please show solidarity and understanding and view your journey as a chance to get to know a foreign culture in the most authentic way.

Even though the local meals are a great opportunity to get to know the culture of your travel destination, they are not always in accordance with the aspects of sustainability, animal welfare or the protection of species. In some countries, for example, animals are specially caught from the wild for exotic dishes to be available for human consumption. These dishes contribute to the decline of biodiversity, as the consumption of these dishes causes the existence of some animal species to be drastically reduced. Please, do your research and make sure you avoid dishes such as shark fin soup, whale meat and frog legs for conservation reasons.

Many countries have different rules regarding the consumption of food and alcoholic beverages in public. These may also vary within the country or at certain times. Please, inform yourself about the local rules before you travel.

3.3 Souvenirs

Souvenirs are a great way to take a piece of your holiday home with you and to keep your experiences and memories alive. To contribute to sustainability, please consider the following aspects.

- **Problem:** Around the world, souvenirs are made from - often endangered - wildlife, which can be a major problem for animal and species conservation. In addition, resources are wasted in the production of cheap, mass-produced souvenirs, which are then transported to the various destinations.
- **Recommendation:**
 - Buy locally produced souvenirs
 - By buying souvenirs, you support local artists and craftsmen and contribute to the sustainable and local economic growth of the region.
 - Abstain from buying souvenirs of animal origin
 - Examples: dried seahorses, corals, ivory carvings, whalebone carvings, teeth, turtle tortoise shell products, tiger wine, snake wine, medicine made from tiger bones or shark fins, fur and leather products, shrink-wrapped live animals. Bringing these souvenirs could also be a criminal offence in most countries.
 - Have as little impact as possible on local ecosystems. For example, leave corals, shells, sand, plants and especially animals where they belong and do not use them as souvenirs.

4. Part of the community

Your opinion is very important to us. Please take the time to give us **feedback** on the service of socialbnb and your stay. If there is anything you did not like or if you have suggestions for improvement or change, please do not hesitate to contact us at support@socialbnb.de. Also, feel free to give personal feedback to the host at the end of your stay, so that together we can continually improve the travel experience.

Moreover, you can **review** the accommodation you stayed at on the socialbnb profile. Please, take into consideration that most of the socialbnb accommodations are new to the tourism industry before writing your review. Also, encourage hosts to leave a review on your socialbnb profile, as it will make it easier for future hosts to get an idea of you in advance.

Nowadays social media has become an important mean of communication. For us and for the hosts, it is always nice to see when you have had a good travel experience. Ask if it is okay for the projects and the project target group to take photos or videos during your stay and post them on your **social media channel**. Please, do not take or post any photos or videos that would show the project target group and/or other participants without their **permission** and respect their **privacy**. **Also, avoid showing people in vulnerable, shameful, or pitiful situations:**

- ✓ Avoid words and photos that legitimise stereotypes of ethnic groups, cultures and countries
- ✓ Avoid words and photos that portray people as tourist attractions
- ✓ Avoid photos from vulnerable situations, e.g., in hospitals
- ✓ Ask permission to take and share photos (for children: consent of parents or guardians)
- ✓ Question your intention before uploading a photo: Why are you sharing what you are sharing? What do you want to achieve? How do you want to achieve it? Am I disrespecting other people's dignity or privacy?
- ✓ Ask local people: How do you want to be portrayed to the outside world? What do you want to share about your lives on social media? What do you have to share?

If you tag @socialbnb on Instagram, we may repost your content and share it with our community. Also, feel free to subscribe to our **newsletter** at <https://blog.socialbnb.org/newsletter> and follow us on Instagram and Facebook.

Feel free to share you travel and socialbnb experience on our **blog**. Just send us an email to blog@socialbnb.de with your ideas and suggestions.