

BWH Hotels:

Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Heritage and Local Communities

Introduction

Welcome to BWH Hotels! We are delighted to host you and share the beauty and diversity of Australasia's landscapes, cultures, and communities. As part of our commitment to sustainable and respectful tourism, we invite you to follow this guide to ensure your visit supports local traditions, protects the environment, and fosters meaningful connections with the people and places you encounter.

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1. Understanding Local Cultures

Australia and New Zealand are home to a rich blend of cultures, including the world's oldest continuous culture – that of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the Māori people of Aotearoa New Zealand. Respect local customs and traditions, and take time to learn about local etiquette, greetings, and behaviors.

2. Respecting Sacred and Indigenous Sites

Australia and New Zealand are home to sacred sites with deep cultural and spiritual meaning. Please follow all posted signs and guidelines, stay on designated paths, avoid restricted areas, do not feed or approach wildlife, and help protect the region's rich biodiversity.

3. Supporting Local Communities

Your travel choices can positively impact local economies and help preserve cultural traditions.

- **Buy Local:** Support Indigenous artists and local businesses by purchasing authentic, locally made products.
- **Eat Local:** Choose locally owned cafés and restaurants to enjoy regional flavors and support small businesses.
- **Engage Respectfully:** Always ask before taking photos of people, especially in Indigenous communities.

4. Preserving Cultural Heritage

Historic sites and cultural landmarks are irreplaceable. Help preserve them for future generations by:

- Avoiding Physical Contact: Refrain from touching artifacts, statues, or walls in heritage sites.
- Not Removing Items: Don't take anything from historical sites, including rocks, plants, or artifacts.
- Following Signage: Stay within designated areas and avoid crossing barriers that protect fragile sites.

5. Responsible Environmental Practices

Many destinations have unique ecosystems that can be easily harmed. To minimise your environmental impact:

- Stay on Paths: Stick to designated trails when visiting natural and cultural heritage sites.
- Avoid Littering: Always use designated waste bins or take your rubbish with you.
- Conserve Water and Energy: Reduce your water usage and switch off lights and electronics when not needed, especially in areas with limited resources.

6. Ethical Photography and Media Sharing

Ask First: Some cultures or individuals may not be comfortable with being photographed. Always ask for permission before taking pictures of people, sacred sites, or during cultural events.

Share Respectfully: When posting on social media, ensure that you portray the culture respectfully. Avoid making cultural or religious practices seem like "entertainment."

7. Shopping for Souvenirs

Choose authentic, locally made products. Avoid items made from endangered species or cultural artifacts that are illegal to export.

8. Following Local Laws

Respect Local Regulations: Different countries have different laws regarding behavior in public, the protection of heritage sites, and environmental conservation. Be sure to:

- **Respect Wildlife:** Do not feed or disturb native animals.
- **Follow Park Rules:** These are in place to protect both visitors and the environment.
- **Be Aware of Alcohol and Smoking Laws:** These vary by state and territory, and some Indigenous communities are alcohol-free zones.

9. Engaging in Responsible Tourism

Choose Sustainable Operators: When booking tours or excursions, select companies that promote sustainable tourism and respect for the local culture and environment.

Support Conservation Efforts: Consider participating in eco-tourism activities or contributing to local conservation projects.

10. Conclusion

By following these guidelines, you will not only enrich your own travel experience but also contribute to the preservation of cultural and environmental heritage for generations to come. BWH Hotels thank you for being a responsible traveler and helping us in our commitment to sustainable and respectful tourism.

Final Reminders for Your Journey:

- Be curious and open-minded, but always respectful.
- Engage with the local community in a positive and ethical way.
- Leave the places you visit as you find them, if not better.

Thank you for traveling with respect and responsibility.

This booklet is provided by **BWH Hotels** as part of our dedication to sustainable travel and preserving the world's diverse cultures and environments.