

# Sustainability Policy

## VisitGeorgia



The sustainability policy was developed in alignment with the Travelife criteria

Georgia, Tbilisi  
2023

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## Our Sustainability Mission

Travel Agency VisitGeorgia is committed to strengthening local communities, keeping traditions alive, minimizing our environmental footprint, and ensuring a healthy working environment for our staff by implementing sustainable practices and procedures.

This policy applies to VisitGeorgia's senior management, employees, and the local service providers. Its impact will be experienced by families living in rural areas within the scope of our cooperation, as well as the company's workforce.

## Chapter 1: Sustainability Management & Legal compliance

### Sustainability Coordinator and Sustainability Team

VisitGeorgia has appointed a Sustainability Coordinator to enhance our commitment to addressing sustainability issues. The primary responsibility of the Sustainability Coordinator is to streamline the implementation of our company's sustainability initiatives and policies, and oversee the completion of Travelife reporting.

Moreover, to comply with Travelife criteria and foster a shared understanding of sustainability issues, VisitGeorgia has established a Sustainability Team. This team actively participates in management processes and proactively undergoes Travelife training programs.

### Sustainability Policy

VisitGeorgia has developed its sustainability policy in accordance with Travelife criteria. The document is easily accessible for both our staff and partners. This policy clearly outlines our mission, objectives, and strategies toward sustainability. It aims to minimize the negative social, cultural, economic, and environmental impacts of the company's activities, incorporating considerations for employee-related health and safety aspects.

### Action Plan

VisitGeorgia has created a sustainability action plan complete with well-defined targets, actions, measures, responsibilities, and a timeline. Specific tasks are allocated to staff members. This proactive approach guarantees the active involvement of all company members in the sustainability processes.

### Monitoring and evaluation

VisitGeorgia has established documented procedures for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of our sustainability policy, objectives, and targets. In this process, we utilize the Travelife Monitoring and Evaluation tool, which aids us in collecting data on various topics such as energy consumption, paper usage, waste management, staff training, accommodations, excursions, and more. Assigned staff members are responsible for gathering and entering data into an Excel document. This mechanism enables us to identify our baseline and assess whether we have achieved our annual goals.

## Chapter 2: Internal Management: Social Policy & Human Rights

### Freedom of Association

VisitGeorgia does not to hinder trade union membership, collective labor negotiations and representation of members by trade unions.

### Health and Safety Policy

VisitGeorgia adheres to all relevant national laws and regulations aimed at safeguarding the well-being of both visitors and employees. We expect all our employees to demonstrate a proactive and positive approach in upholding health, safety, and environmental protection standards. See the list of requirement below:

- Make the workplace safe
- Prevent risks to your employees' health
- Ensure safe working practices are documented and implemented
- Make sure that all materials are handled, stored, and used safely
- Provide adequate first aid facilities
- Inform employees about any potential hazards of the job and provide adequate information, instructions, training, and supervision to safely perform the job
- Set up emergency plans
- Ensure that ventilation, temperature, lighting, toilet, washing and rest facilities all meet health, safety, and welfare requirements
- Regularly check that equipment is being used as intended and is well-maintained
- Prevent or control exposure to substances that may be a health hazard
- Avoid potentially dangerous work involving manual handling (and when this work is absolutely necessary, take precautions to reduce the risk of injury)
- Provide health supervision as needed
- Display warning and health and safety posters appropriately
- Report and record accidents, injuries, diseases, and dangerous occurrences
- Making sure premises are properly ventilated with clean and fresh air
- Keeping temperatures at a comfortable level (e.g., a minimum of 13°C (55°F) where the work involves physical activity)
- Making sure facilities are well lit
- Keeping the workplace and equipment clean and well-maintained
- Ensuring that areas are big enough to allow easy movement (at least 11m<sup>3</sup>/388ft<sup>3</sup> per person)
- Providing workstations suitable for the employees and their tasks
- Keeping floors, walkways, stairs, roadways safe to use
- Protecting people from falling from high levels or into dangerous substances
- Storing things properly to avoid injuries
- Fitting windows, doors, and gates with safety devices
- Providing suitable washing facilities and clean drinking water
- Allowing employees proper breaks and leave
- Assuring safety of employees who work alone, or off-site

## Chapter 3: Internal Management: Environment and Community Relations

### Sustainable Purchase Policy

As part of our commitment to sustainability, VisitGeorgia have developed this Sustainable Purchase Policy to guide our procurement practices. This policy outlines our principles and objectives for sourcing products and services in a manner that minimizes our environmental impact and supports socially responsible initiatives. We assess the necessity of a purchase by considering the following questions:

- Do we really need this product?
- Can it be rent/leased/borrowed instead of purchased?
- Will this product last or is it single-use and/or breakable?
- Does it create superfluous waste or harm to the planet?
- Can we purchase from locally owned reputable companies (sustainably certified)?
- Can we combine orders or purchase in refill/ bulk to reduce their carbon footprint?

We repair or reuse	We give preference to	We purchase in bulk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- before purchasing new and try to find a new purpose to objects before discarding them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Products &amp; services that have been produced with respect for people and the planet. For example, local, fair-trade, organic or recycled goods</li> <li>- Suppliers locally owned that are sustainably certified or have implemented a sustainability policy</li> <li>- suppliers that abide by all local, national, and international labor laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to reduce packaging and add the following sentence to every supplier we contract with: <i>"Please deliver our order without unnecessary or plastic wrapping, we prefer if you can provide reusable or no wrapping at all"</i></li> </ul>

**NOTE:** We refuse to purchase archeological/historical artifacts and or/products that threaten flora and fauna as indicated in the CITES treaty and the IUCN Red list.

Our purchasing criteria for specific products	
<b>Paper</b>	we buy environmentally certified paper
<b>Light-bulbs</b>	We buy LED lights and consider their energy use (in Watt) and light production (in Lumen). Standard: The more lumen per watt
<b>Electronic Devices</b>	We buy new, innovative, durable and energy efficient devices
<b>Tea and coffee</b>	we buy directly from producer or fair trade certified in bulk
<b>Cleaning materials</b>	we buy natural products less harmful to our environment and train our housekeeping personnel to use eco-friendly cleaning techniques
<b>Office supplies</b>	We look for sustainable options
<b>Paint</b>	we purchase lead-free and water-based paint for our offices to provide a healthy working environment for our employees.

## Reduction of Disposable and Consumable goods

VisitGeorgia acknowledges that the consumption of disposable goods is directly correlated with greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. To address this issue, we commit to promoting a company culture that encourages mindful consumption of disposable and consumable goods.

Our goal is to actively reduce consumption, especially of disposable products, and in doing so, lessen our environmental impact and resource usage. VisitGeorgia will adhere to the principle of 5R

**Refuse:** We will ask ourselves if we truly need a disposable item before acquiring it

**Reduce:** We will assess whether we can minimize our usage or opt for more sustainable alternatives

**Reuse:** We will explore opportunities to use items multiple times, extending their lifespan

**Repurpose:** We will consider whether disposable items can serve a different purpose after their original use

**Recycle:** We will aim to send materials back for processing to a previous stage in their life cycle

## Energy Reduction Policy

VisitGeorgia is dedicated to reducing energy consumption and, in turn, minimizing our environmental impact. To achieve this goal, we have developed a comprehensive policy. Our key objectives are following:

- Reduce energy consumption in our operations, from transportation to office facilities
- Optimize energy usage in all aspects of our business to minimize waste and associated costs
- educate our staff and partners about energy-efficient practices and their impact on our environment

**our energy reduction policy is focused on the four main principles:**

1. VisitGeorgia staff is aware of efficient heating and cooling practices, implement procedures to minimize energy use during non-operational hours, and optimize temperature settings
2. We utilize energy efficient LED light Bulbs and implement SWITCH OFF policy
3. We utilize energy-efficient computers and printers, and set equipment to energy-saving modes.
4. We will promote concise email communication, encourage the use of links instead of heavy attachments, and ensure that our mailing lists are up to date

VisitGeorgia will regularly monitor our energy consumption and assess the effectiveness of our energy reduction efforts. Any feedback or suggestions from our staff, partners, or clients will be considered and integrated into our energy management strategy. We are committed to continually improving our energy performance.

Every member of the VisitGeorgia team shares the responsibility for energy reduction. Compliance with this policy is mandatory. This policy will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in technology, regulations, and best practices.

## Sustainable Energy

VisitGeorgia currently utilizes renewable hydropower energy. However, we remain vigilant regarding technological advancements and are open to adopting sustainable green energy sources when feasible

## Switch Off Policy

In 2021, VisitGeorgia introduced a robust "Switch Off" policy aimed at promoting energy conservation and sustainable practices. This policy encompasses several key guidelines that employees are expected to follow:

- Computers: employees are required to power off their computers completely instead of leaving them in sleep mode when they finish their work or during lunch time;
- Air Conditioner: employees must switch off the air conditioner when leaving a room. Additionally, it is important to close the door when the air conditioner is in use to maintain efficient cooling;
- Heating System: During colder months, employees are responsible for closing balcony doors when the heating system is active;
- Ventilation and Heating: In rooms that require ventilation for fresh air circulation, employees are advised to turn off the heating radiators;
- Appliances and Equipment: Employees are encouraged to power off any non-essential appliances and equipment when not in use.

## Low Energy Equipment

In our commitment to environmental sustainability, VisitGeorgia actively promotes responsible energy consumption practices when procuring new equipment, prioritizing energy-efficient options guided by EU energy labels or the Energy Star symbol.

## Waste Reduction Policy

VisitGeorgia's Waste Reduction Policy is founded on the principles of the 5R rule for achieving zero waste: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, and Recycle. Our policy includes the following guidelines:

- Use recyclable and refillable products
- Use bulk packaging instead of many small packages
- Avoid excessive packaging
- Use high quality, long lasting, and easily repairable products;
- Use single-use products in your possession as much as you can before be tossing;
- Avoid harmful or hazardous products or products which need careful storage and handling, and give preference to environmentally friendly alternatives;
- Use food materials with environmentally friendly packaging such as refillable bottles, paper/cardboard packaging, etc.;
- Avoid drinks in paper cups, bottles, and cans, and give preference to (refillable) bottles, mugs etc.;
- Sell old furniture or equipment at discounted rates and/or donate them to charitable organizations with recycling programmes in place;
- Donate waste to eco organizations
- Avoid single use plastic water bottles by encouraging guests to use refillable bottles at water stations.

Our commitment to effective waste management begins with the proactive assessment of waste types and quantities. By establishing a baseline, we aim to prioritize initiatives, identify quick wins, and set measurable targets, ensuring a systematic approach to minimizing our environmental impact and fostering sustainability.

- Our goal is to keep 100% double sided printing;
- Reduce paper consumption by 95%
- Maintain brochure printing at zero level
- Increasing our bulk purchasing to 25%;
- 30% of all office waste is recycled;
- Reduce reliance on plastic items in the office and business by 25%



## Chapter

### 4: Accommodations

#### Child and Compulsory Labor

VisitGeorgia ensures that, through its accommodation supply chain, the rights of children are respected and safeguarded. We do not contract accommodations, directly nor indirectly that are involved in compulsory labor, or that employ children to complete work that is normally undertaken by adults. If businesses employ children, their working times and conditions must comply with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention 138.

We adhere to the definition of Child Labor provided by The International Labor Organization: “Child labor deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that: is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.”

#### Sexual Exploitation of Children

VisitGeorgia requests its suppliers to condemn the exploitation of children on the premises and facilities of subcontracted accommodations. We reserve the right to terminate the contract if the supplier fails to take adequate measures to prevent and address child sexual exploitation within the direct supply chain.

#### Local Communities Resources

If a contracted accommodation has been found to jeopardize the integrity of and the local community’s access to essential resources, essential services, access to livelihood, and access to important sites, VisitGeorgia reserves the right to terminate the contract without warning.

### 5: Activities

#### Wildlife Featuring

Excursions and attractions in which captive wildlife is held are not offered, except for activities that are properly regulated and are in compliance with local, national, and international laws. Excursions that include interactions with wildlife, comply with relevant codes of conduct. Any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimized

#### Wildlife Harvesting

Wildlife species are not harvested, consumed, displayed, sold, or traded, except as part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilization is sustainable and in compliance with local, national and international law. VisitGeorgia does not promote souvenirs or food that contain threatened flora and fauna species as indicated in the CITES treaty and the IUCN 'Red List'. Should any such criminal behavior come to light, VisitGeorgia reserves the right to terminate the contract without notice

#### Wildlife Interactions

VisitGeorgia is dedicated to the preservation of local communities and the environment while providing travelers with the opportunity to explore the wonders of Georgia. Our goal is to safeguard our natural and cultural treasures, which is why we have formulated guidelines rooted in international best practices.

- Emphasize the significance of minimizing ecological impact and educate tourists on the importance of preserving ecosystems
- Advocate for responsible wildlife viewing and discourage any activities that disrupt or harm local flora and fauna
- Encourage the use of reusable and eco-friendly products to reduce environmental litter
- Provide tourists with information highlighting the natural and cultural significance of the areas they are exploring
- Designate tour guides to conduct briefings on appropriate behavior in natural settings
- Implement measures to prevent overcrowding in delicate natural areas, such as group size limitations and reservation systems

### 6: Destinations

#### Forbidden Souvenirs

VisitGeorgia is dedicated to promoting responsible tourism and preserving the cultural and natural heritage of our beautiful country. In line with our commitment to ethical and sustainable travel, we do not allow the purchase of souvenirs containing:

- Threatened flora and fauna species
- Illegally obtained historic and archaeological artefacts
- Drugs or illegal substances

## Chapter

### 7: Customer Communication and Protection

#### Customer Privacy

VisitGeorgia is dedicated to ensuring the privacy and security of our customers' information. We have established a comprehensive customer privacy policy that not only complies with local legislation but also adheres to rigorous international standards.

Sensitive information is stored electronically within our database, which is secured and only accessible by accredited staff who follow strictly privacy procedures. If any documents containing personal data are printed for internal purposes, they are kept in a filing system in our office that is only accessible by our most trusted employees. If documents are no longer applicable, they are shredded before disposal.

- Any personal data is only collected if relevant and necessary for us to provide the services sold
- All personal data is kept for maximum 1 year
- Our customers are informed on how we store data and where. They always have the option to be deleted from our database.
- We are committed to protecting the privacy of all of our guests and users, and we would like to reassure you that all of the information you provide us with is kept strictly private and confidential
- In cases where the service necessitates the transfer of personal data to a third party, the client will be duly informed of this requirement

#### Promotion and communication

VisitGeorgia 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.

## Chapter 8: Transport

#### Selecting transport

VisitGeorgia tries to ensure that vehicles used on tours do not cause more than average pollution. We believe that transport is an important aspect of sustainable tourism, and we do our best to decrease the average pollution-level.

## Chapter 9: Activities

#### No Excessive Negative Impact Activities

VisitGeorgia offers no activities that harm humans, animals, plants, natural resources (e.g. water/energy), or which are socially/culturally unacceptable.