

Tandem Travel is an inbound tour operator specialising in receptive tourism to **Bulgaria and the Balkans**.

We started in 1997 with the presumption to be a small company with personal care for our client's needs. The incoming services we provide are very different from 'standard package tours'. In contrast, we are aware of the many different needs of our clients and meet them through our attention to detail and the personalisation of all incoming services. Therefore, our aim is to offer a highly personalised service – the kind that only a small, dedicated company like ours can provide.

We believe that Tandem Travel is not just a reliable receptive tour operator in the view of the professionals and tourism businesses which experience the feeling of being in safe hands. Our clients also see us as an approachable company which develops its **Personalised Incoming Services** with sensitivity.

Our Tours & Programms

	<p>Cultural & Study Tours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNESCO Heritage • Orthodox Churches & Monasteries • The Thracian Gold • Opera & Music • Wine & Food • etc.
	<p>The Balkans Tours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Golden Byzantium: Bulgaria & Turkey • Trans – Balkan Cultural Route: Bulgaria & Romania • Via Diagonalis: Serbia, Bulgaria & Turkey • etc.
	<p>Active & Adventure Tours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking Tour – The highest Peaks • The Danube Bike Path • Cultural, traditional and riding experience • Adventure along the Rhodope Railway • etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Railway Tours • One day excursions • SPA & Wellness • Events & Incentive programs • etc.

We are aware how important the sustainability of our services for both clients and business is. Therefore, an orientation of our management into the sustainability presents an important competitive advantage, increasing the satisfaction of our customers.

The essence of the services we offer demands a very high level of quality. *Our mission consists of offering a high level range of services taking into account the environmental, socio-cultural, economic aspects and reducing their negative impacts in the areas of our activity.*

Before the elaboration of our Sustainability Policy we started working on the engagement of the company. A Sustainable Coordinator has been appointed with the function to act as a focal point of all sustainability related activities, and will also be the contact person for the tour operator association on sustainability issues. The coordinator has successfully completed the **Travelife** Training and passed the exam. In the future, the whole staff will also have to take the exam.

Our sustainability policy includes the following aspects of our activity:



Internal social/environmental management

An important aspect of our mission consists of *minimising the environmental effects of the office operations and activities by acting in a socially responsible way.*

In terms of social management, proper labour conditions are offered to all staff members.

The company complies in all respects with the current labour legislation.

Workers and employers can associate to negotiate work relations.

Prohibition of child and forced labour, as elementary human rights as non-discrimination must be respected.

Employees receive appropriate earnings for their performance at work, and are entitled to a fixed number of paid holidays each year.

In order to motivate the personal, the company offers training programs to the employees.

The other aspect of the internal management is regarding the environmental impacts in the office of the company. The aim in this case is *to reduce significantly the negative impact of our daily activity focusing on consumption of paper, energy, water and waste.*

Purchasing

What do we do?

We give preference to products with a *recognised environmental or sustainability certificate* or proved sustainability qualities.

We prefer products which have been *locally produced*.

We buy from *local suppliers* when possible.

What next?

Our next steps regarding the purchasing are related mostly to the cleaning materials in our office. The aim consists of buying products with the lowest possible impact on the natural environment. Thus, a list of cleaning companies that work sustainable has to be carried out.

Paper

What do we do?

We do not print a paper brochure, working *online* and mostly via *e-mail*.

Most of our work flow is *digitally archived*.

We use *double site printing* where possible.

We *recycle* the paper.

What next?

Our future tasks aim to reduce the environmental impact of paper introducing more environmentally friendly paper, and by a reduction of paper use in the office and in promotional materials. Therefore, an effective evaluation system has to be implemented in order to measure the progress in the reduction of paper use.

Waste

What do we do?

We **recycle** all paper used in the office, as well as the glass and plastic.

We replaced all **recycling bins** to one place at the office in order to centralise and reduce the waste points.

We use recyclable and refillable products and **avoid excessive packaging** (e.g. double packaging).

We bring the **collected batteries** to the nearest store for electronics, which discards old batteries and recycles them.

We bring all printer cartridges to our supplier in order to **refill and reuse** them.

What next?

Our future goals consist of trying to produce as little waste as possible, for example by purchasing all supplies in bulk. On other hand, we constantly encourage the staff members to keep reducing, reusing and recycling.

Energy

What do we do?

We **switch lights** and computers off at night and at weekends.

We use **central heating system** and do not use air-conditioning during the summer due to the good isolation of our building.

What next?

For the next year we are planning to replace all the light bulbs with **energy-efficient lighting** such as LEDs.

Water

What do we do?

We reduce the water consumption by installing *water saving devices*.

In our office the *tapwater* is drinkable and we reduce the use of plastic water bottles which are purchased in large bottles (10 liter).

What next?

Our next goals are focused on making staff members aware to the sustainable use of water and on the other hand to carry out a regularly monitoring of our water in order to avoid an irresponsible use.

Mobility

What do we do?

We facilitate *work from home*.

We encourage *using bikes* by offering bike parking.

We encourage the use of *public transportation*. The location of the office allows a perfect use of public transportation.

The employees *share cars* where possible.

What next?

Our next step regarding the sustainable mobility is related to the staff business travel and aims to measure its type and the distance in order to reduce the carbon gas emissions. A data base has to be created where basic information of the travels has to be collected: reason for the journey, length of the trip, mode of transport, distance, calculation of CO₂, etc.

Transport

We are aware, that the transport is responsible for the largest environmental impact of a holiday package. As a DMC we are not responsible for transport mode decisions on transfers between countries or air transfers between destinations within a country. On the other hand, we are responsible for the transport in our destinations and

make sure to limit the environmental impact of this type of transport.

What do we do?

We choose our transportation partners according to the *European Emission Standards*.

We give preference to companies with the *newest coaches'* capacity in order to reduce the environmental impacts.

We consider the *right size* of our groups with the aim to reach an optimal occupancy level.

We take into account the distance between the accommodations and the tourist sites/restaurants visited in order to ensure a *walking distance* between them.

What next?

Our next aim is to provide our transport suppliers with codes of conduct and guidance regarding sustainable driving technique.

On the other hand, we are planning to negotiate with our local transport providers to include sustainability clauses in the contracting phase.

Accommodations and Restaurants

The selection of hotels and restaurant is an important item of our activity and we take into consideration its impact on our sustainability policy.

Our mission regarding is to increase the number of 'sustainable' hotels and restaurants.

What do we do?

We have established an *inventory* of the accommodation suppliers and the restaurants we work with.

On one hand the company works with *high standard hotels* especially for large groups. For smaller groups the company uses normally *family-owned hotels*.

Most of the restaurants used are family-owned and run *small scale businesses*, in order to maximize the local experience and leave the generated wealth within the community.

We carefully choose the meals, as well as recommended restaurants for independent dining, serve *traditional cuisine* made with *locally produced* products.

To create employment in the area visited, *local people* are employed whenever and wherever possible.

What next?

Online questionnaire via email in order to measure the grade of sustainability of our suppliers.

In order to stimulate accommodations to work more sustainably we will communicate our guidelines and targets regarding sustainability of accommodations via email and personal meetings.

We will give preference to sustainability certified accommodations where possible.

Tour guides

An important key element of our activity is our tour guides. The employment conditions of local representatives, tour leaders and guides are based on local legislation and international best practice standards.

We are implementing the following actions in order to ensure the sustainability within our collaboration with tour guides.

We give preference to employ local tour guides where possible.

Our tour guides are members of the Bulgarian Association of Tour Guides.

We have regular meetings with our guides with the aim to get information from first-hand about the tours and to inform them about new policies, products, etc.

Destinations

Taking into account that the most of our tours are in rural and nature environment we have established a simple system of actions in order to minimise the negative impact in these areas.

We consider sustainability aspects within destinations in the selection process of new destinations (e.g. traffic-free areas, sustainable city planning, and proper waste management infrastructure and community participation).

We inform our customers about the environment aspects in the destination and encourage them to contribute to the local economy, buying local produced food, souvenirs, etc.

Tandem Travel and our direct service providers do not promote souvenirs which contain threatened flora and fauna species as indicated in the CITES treaty and the IUCN 'Red List; historic and archaeological artefacts.