

## **Tandem Travel Sustainability Policy and Action Plan 2025–2026**

### **Company Overview**

Founded in 1997, Tandem Travel is an inbound tour operator based in Bulgaria, specializing in personalized cultural, nature, and adventure tours across Bulgaria and the Balkans. Our mission is to provide high-quality, authentic travel experiences while promoting sustainable tourism practices that benefit local communities, protect the environment, and preserve cultural heritage.

### **1. Introduction**

Tandem Travel has consistently focused on providing tailored, small-scale travel services that meet the diverse needs of our clients. As part of our commitment to sustainability, this document presents our Sustainability Policy and Action Plan for 2025–2026, outlining our principles, practices, and measurable objectives. It serves both as a guide for internal management and as a report for external stakeholders, including Travelife certification bodies.

### **2. Sustainability Vision & Principles**

Our vision is to be recognized as a leading sustainable Destination Management Company in Bulgaria, delivering meaningful travel experiences that respect the environment, local communities, and cultural heritage. We adhere to the following principles:

- Minimize environmental impact of all operations and services.
- Support social and economic development of local communities.
- Ensure fair labor practices and safe working conditions.
- Engage partners and suppliers who share our sustainability values.
- Promote cultural heritage and biodiversity conservation.
- Continuously monitor, report, and improve sustainability performance.

### **3. Sustainability Management Structure**

Sustainability activities are coordinated by a dedicated Sustainability Coordinator, who acts as the focal point for all related initiatives. The Coordinator is in the same time the general manager and ensures integration of sustainability considerations into strategic and operational decisions. All staff participate in training programs and are encouraged to contribute to the development and implementation of sustainable practices. Annual evaluations and meetings support continuous improvement.

### **4. Key Policy Areas**

#### **4.1 Internal Management**

Tandem Travel minimizes the environmental effects of office operations by acting responsibly with regard to energy, water, and waste management. Proper labor conditions are offered to all staff members, ensuring fair compensation, paid holidays, training

opportunities, and the right to associate for work negotiations. Child and forced labor, discrimination, and any violations of human rights are strictly prohibited.

#### **4.2 Purchasing**

We give preference to products with recognized environmental or sustainability certification and local origin where possible. Future initiatives focus on adopting sustainable cleaning materials and further reducing the environmental impact of purchased goods.

#### **4.3 Paper**

Most workflows are digitally archived, and paper printing is minimized and recycled. Double-sided printing is standard. Future objectives include further reducing paper use in both administrative and promotional materials.

#### **4.4 Waste**

We recycle paper, glass, and plastic. Batteries and printer cartridges are collected for recycling or refilling. We centralize recycling bins, minimize packaging, and encourage staff to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Future goals include bulk purchasing to further reduce waste generation.

#### **4.5 Energy**

Office lighting has been replaced with energy-efficient LEDs. Computers and lights are switched off during nights and weekends. Air-conditioning is not used due to efficient building insulation. Future steps include prioritizing low-energy equipment.

#### **4.6 Water**

Water-saving devices are installed, and plastic bottle use is minimized by providing large shared bottles. Future objectives include staff awareness programs and regular monitoring to ensure responsible consumption.

#### **4.7 Mobility**

We facilitate work from home, promote cycling through bike parking, encourage public transportation, and implement car-sharing for staff. Future actions focus on measuring staff business travel distances and carbon emissions.

#### **4.8 Transport**

Transportation has the largest environmental impact in our tours. We select providers that meet European Emission Standards, prefer newer coaches, and optimize group sizes. Routes are planned to minimize travel distance and maximize walking opportunities. We provided our suppliers with sustainable driving guidance and including sustainability clauses in contracts.

#### **4.9 Accommodations & Restaurants**

We carefully select hotels and restaurants, emphasizing family-owned and small-scale establishments, local food sourcing, and traditional cuisine. Employment of local staff is prioritized. We are increasing the number of sustainability-certified accommodations and communicate sustainability guidelines to our partners.

#### **4.10 Tour Guides**

Local official licensed guides are employed whenever possible and are members of the Register of Bulgarian Tour Guides. Regular meetings ensure continuous feedback and communication about policies, products, and sustainability objectives.

#### **4.11 Destinations & Activities**

Sustainability is considered when selecting destinations, focusing on rural and natural environments, traffic-free areas, waste management infrastructure, and community participation. Customers are informed about responsible practices. Activities avoid harming humans, animals, plants, or cultural heritage, and any wildlife interactions comply with relevant codes of conduct.

## 5. 2024 Achievements

In 2024, Tandem Travel continued to advance its sustainability commitments through several key initiatives:

- **New Sustainable Train Routes:** We developed and launched additional train-based itineraries across Bulgaria, offering environmentally-friendly travel options that reduce car dependency and support rail tourism.
- **Support for Local Initiatives:** We integrated lesser-known cultural heritage sites, such as the churches in the village of Boboshevo, into our programs. This provided a meaningful source of income for their restoration and maintenance while offering tourists alternative experiences outside heavily visited attractions.
- **Environmental Protection Projects – Beehive Adoption:** As part of our commitment to biodiversity and sustainable agriculture, Tandem Travel adopted a beehive in 2024. This initiative reflects our ongoing support for nature-friendly practices and ecological stewardship.
- **Sustainability Management & Operational Actions:** We expanded our supplier assessments, actively communicated our sustainability policies, conducted staff health and safety training, adopted environmentally certified cleaning products, and implemented systematic monitoring of energy and water consumption.
- **Other Environmental Initiatives:** Digitization of administrative processes, participation in recycling campaigns, and donations for reforestation projects further contributed to minimizing our ecological footprint.

## 6. Action Plan 2025–2026

The following action plan outlines key objectives and measurable initiatives for 2025–2026:

- **Enhance supplier sustainability assessment:** Expand the number of assessed suppliers and include sustainability clauses in contracts. (2025)
- **Keep reduced office resource consumption:** Implement a fully digital filing system, introduce smart energy monitoring, and further reduce paper and water use. (2025)
- **Promote sustainable transport:** Expand train-based itineraries and encourage public transport and low-emission travel options. (2025–2026)
- **Increase staff engagement:** Organize annual sustainability workshops, refresher training, and awareness campaigns. (2025–2026)
- **Support local communities:** Include new rural heritage sites and local suppliers in programs, promoting cultural preservation and local economic benefit. (2026)

## 7. Monitoring & Evaluation

Sustainability performance is continuously monitored through internal indicators covering energy, water, waste, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, staff training, and supplier compliance. Annual reviews,

reports, and updates ensure that objectives are met and continuous improvement is achieved.

## **8. Conclusion**

Through the implementation of this Sustainability Policy and Action Plan, Tandem Travel reinforces its dedication to responsible tourism. We remain committed to minimizing environmental impacts, supporting local communities, promoting cultural heritage, and providing high-quality, meaningful travel experiences aligned with Travelife Certified standards and global best practices.