

Rams Travel Agency (LLC Rams Explorer) – Responsible Policy

OUR MISSION: We aim to develop the region where we live and work and make better conditions for life in close cooperation with the local population, communities, Government and NGOs. As a pioneer in this field, from the beginning, we respect the principles of sustainable and responsible development.

Travel Agency Rams have managed, to a substantial degree, to arise a conscience of a local population about the importance of inclusion in the development of tourism. That is seen through direct contact of tourists with local people, where the tourists can buy local products and to influence on rising of the life standard for local people.

OUR PHILOSOPHY: Our philosophy is very simple, to be a steady and reliable partner, and to satisfy the needs of our clients.

OUR POLICY: As a company that starts to work in an undeveloped region, we had an opportunity to create criteria and standards in this field.

The *main rules* which have to be respected in our company are:

- To be aware of the importance of protecting the environment, communities and culture in the region where we live and work.
- To cooperate with legal business, and respect the legislation.
- To inspire all partners and staff to appreciate principles of sustainable and responsible tourism.
- To carefully choose the new staff and new partners.
- To have a sense of the needs of partners and staff.
- To become a good example in all levels of business.

Environment

Being aware of the climate crisis, already for a couple of years, we have not printed catalogues or brochures, and we are increasingly advertising on our web site. We insist on reducing the use of paper in the office, too.

We provide suggestions for destination visits to relevant local projects with direct or indirect environmental benefits because, in our region, many NGOs work on environment protection and its improvement. By now, a lot of projects have been realised, the results of which we can show to tourists if they would be interested. We cooperate with these organisations, regarding mutual interest and benefits.

We are trying to protect the local environment and available facilities, which were provided by the community. We encourage employees to adopt a healthy lifestyle, for instance, to walk or cycle to work as much as possible.

Bearing in mind that our clients (foreigners) are highly educated when it comes to preserving the environment, it is not a problem for us when it comes to the use of plastic. This allows us to transfer the same experience to domestic guests, to reduce the use of disposable plastic and wherever possible we use paper instead of plastic packaging.

All our clients can inform us about any restrictions about food when they confirm a trip. Our service providers offer meals for gluten-free, lactose-free as well as vegetarian/vegan options, including information on any kind of allergies.

Our programs are based on outdoor activities, like hiking, biking, cave exploring, rafting, farm stay, wildlife etc., meaning that all our trips have a low carbon print.

As a member of the International Slow Food Network, we support and encourage local producers to get involved in the tourist offer, with an offer of agricultural and domestic products, but also to teach tourists how to grow and produce food. In general, we are looking for anything above and beyond 3R (reduce, reuse, recycle). We are actively taking part in all activities relevant to environmental protection at the local level.

Environmental accountability during the tours including waste management during and after tours plays important role in organising and management of the tours. Special focus is given to proper disposing of the waste collected during tours. Almost all of the clients have a highly developed sense for nature preservation and refined eco-consciousness and our guides are trained to manage tours in ecological manners. During our work, we had an opportunity to learn more from our guests, and what is most important we share experiences with our local partners as well as with the community.

Our goal is to leave all places without a trace, cleaner than before, and bring all waste with us and leave it in the proper place. Several times we organised cleaning actions with our guests.

Since 2014, we have had Travelife Certificate for our company as well as our Product Manager Sabina Ramovic personally.

Economic

According to the relevant national legislation in tourism, tourist agencies must hire local guides during the city tours or visits to the local amenities.

As stated above, we are a member of the International Slow Food Network. It requires dedication and support to the locals, their production capacity, and services. We promote local production and food.

We are a member of associations that take part in local events, and we help in the realisation of certain events, like:

- Organic food festivals.
- Education for rural households, teaching them how to start and develop rural tourism
- Farm Stay Montenegro
- Spring cleaning actions
- Organising Camps in nature for children and students.

All our programs are based on local resources that means local transport companies, hotels, local restaurants, householders, local guides etc. Assuming that we are working with local and foreign guests, we can relate to the ones who can't fully pay for our services (local population/children/students), and we give them special discounts.

We have two vans for transportation (16+1, 8+1) and we often support small sports clubs from our city when they need transportation.

Usually, at the end of the tours, we give a small gift to our guests. That is mostly a souvenir made by hand by local people or organisations, to additionally support the local economy.

Since our establishment, we are focused on promoting and protecting local heritage (culture, customs, food) and through Slow food activities, we've done so much in that field.

Also, we initiated many different projects on the development and education of our region. The most important project is the education of local guides (Nord Montenegro 2012/2013) when 40 guides got a license. This and other similar projects we completed in close cooperation with local tourism organisations.

Social

We regularly provide our guests with accurate information on the social and political situation before the trip.

The travel escort must inform tourists how to adapt when visiting religious premises, related locations, informing them when is allowed to take photos and under what conditions. As we are keen on protecting our environment and decreasing the travel carbon print, we always take care to leave the place in better conditions than we found it.

Assuming that our tours are based on rural tourism and local experiences, we always engage the local population. That means if we organise lunch/dinner in the local households, where family members share their knowledge in crafts, field works, local music, plays etc. Usually, the guests want to try to do something alone or to learn how to do it. In our opinion, it makes a special experience for guests and makes their trip unforgettable.

Community

Clients

Since we work inbound and outbound, we always put focus on the desires of clients and try to be flexible as much as possible. We want travellers to relax and to explore new destinations. They don't need additional stress.

Taking in mind that we have cross-border products, for our company, it is very important to have a local partner in every destination we work, as it makes our company safer for our clients.

Partners

Since we started our business 16 years ago, back in the period when our city was unknown on the travel map, we've carefully chosen our partners. For us, the quality of service is the most important, not the price. During our development, we created a trace for all similar businesses, as the first travel agency in our city, setting criteria. We have very close cooperation with local schools, local tourism organisations, Governmental and Non-Governmental organisations and we can say that we are the pioneers of rural development in Montenegro.

We were chosen as a good example of practice in the following documents:

- Case Study at the Conference "Sustainable Tourism for Rural Development", STRD 2017, held in Bergamo from 15 to 17 February 2017,
- Participant in the Conference "The Present and Future of Sustainable and Responsible Tourism" - Zagreb 24/25. April 2017,

- Participant in the 6th European Congress of Rural Tourism / (ECRT) Druskininkai, Lithuania 3-5 October 2018, as an example in Europe, an enterprise that incorporates rural areas into its business and encourages its development.
- 11th Congress of Women's Entrepreneurship of Adriatic and Ionian Area 16-18.October 2019, Arta. Greece

Slow food community

We have been running the slow food community in Montenegro since 2016, helping small local producers to promote their products, network and educate themselves. In 2017 we founded NGO to connect tourism and agriculture in the north of Montenegro. We organised various events for our members in the country as well as abroad. At the moment we have over 40 members from all of Montenegro. In the future, we will put focus to develop slow food travel.

Volunteering & charity

Since our start, we have had a clear view of responsibility in business. Many times, we organised events/trips without financial benefit, as we just wanted to send a message to clients and partners about the importance to have content in our community and the benefits we could share.

Besides, we have a huge network, and this helps us to be at the source of information that we share with our partners.