

INTERNATIONAL ADVENTURE TRAVEL

# Guide Qualifications & Performance Standard



**ADVENTURE TRAVEL**  
TRADE ASSOCIATION  
[www.adventuretravel.biz](http://www.adventuretravel.biz)

# [Contents]

3	INTRODUCTION
5	APPLICATION OF STANDARD
6	CORE COMPETENCIES
7	TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES
9	WILDERNESS MEDICINE & FIRST AID
10	CUSTOMER SERVICE & GROUP MANAGEMENT SKILLS
12	NATURAL & CULTURAL HISTORY INTERPRETATION
14	SUSTAINABILITY
16	IMPLEMENTING THE STANDARD
18	DEFINITIONS
22	GOVERNANCE
23	BOARD STRUCTURE, POSITIONS & TERM
24	GEOGRAPHIC MEMBERSHIP GOALS



Pichincha, Ecuador © ATTA

## [Introduction]

The Adventure Travel sector has grown steadily in recent decades – an estimated 65% from 2009 to 2012 – the most recent year for which data is available. Additionally it is estimated that four out of ten international travelers incorporate adventure activities into their travel plans.<sup>1</sup> With such rapid growth, greater numbers of businesses and guests are entering the marketplace, and the industry needs clear guidance with respect to adventure travel guide qualifications and performance.

1 ADVENTURE TRAVEL TRADE ASSOCIATION & GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY. (2013) *Adventure Tourism Market Study* [Online] August 2013 Available from: <http://files.adventuretravel.biz/docs/research/adventure-tourism-market-study-2013-web.pdf>

Adventure travel guides and tour leaders are at the crux of the adventure travel experience. They provide for the safety of adventure travelers, provide valuable and interesting information and stories about the landscapes where adventure activities take place, ensure the overall quality of the guest experience, and ultimately deliver and safeguard an adventure travel company's reputation. Still further, an excellent guide in one destination can raise the bar for the industry, while a less competent guide in another can just as easily set the industry back.

## [INTRODUCTION]

Despite the value and importance of quality adventure travel guiding, recent research confirms the absence of a global standard specifically for adventure travel guides. Although numerous types of standards and quality assurance systems with relevance to adventure tourism exist, none directly address the range of qualifications and experience necessary for excellent adventure travel guiding. For example, many people in the industry may be familiar with standards and quality assurance systems such as those listed in the table to the right.

From this list, only the ISO safety standard for adventure tourism (ISO 21101 and ISO/TR 21102)<sup>2</sup> addresses adventure travel specifically, and none of these standards or quality assurance systems cover all the aspects necessary for excellent adventure travel guiding.

In the absence of a global qualification and performance standard, a variety of approaches to managing adventure travel guiding can be found around the world. While in some countries there are no active standards at all, in other countries there are detailed government regulations specifying training requirements in order to receive a national adventure guide certification. Many destinations also have guide associations, which may establish their own training and operating standards. In addition, the commercial sector has over time established its own codes of operating, requiring that guides at a minimum receive specialized certifications for technical activities such as rafting, kayaking and climbing. However, these certifications are not

### Standard Quality Assurance Systems

- Technical standards for specific activities such as white water rafting, rock climbing or mountaineering
- Hospitality and guest service standards
- Quality systems to regulate attractions and venues
- Quality guidelines for interpretation provided by guides
- State and national training requirements for guides
- ISO Safety Standards for Adventure Tourism

well publicized, or understood by travelers and not enforced, except by companies through their individual hiring practices.

In an effort to support the industry as it continues to expand and professionalize, the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) has initiated this Adventure Travel Guide Qualification and Performance Standard. The standard was developed between the months of November 2014 and July 2015, by a group of 17 sector professionals organized by the ATTA. Working group participants came from 15 countries and included guides, business owners, and industry partners. The full list of participants can be found [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> ISO (2014) ISO 21101: Adventure Tourism, Safety Management Systems Requirements [Online] January 2014. Available from: <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:21101:ed-1:v1:en>



Chile © ATTA

## [Application of the Standard]

This standard is not enforced or regulated in any way by the ATTA or any other organization. Governments, destination managers, and company owners may refer to this standard when evaluating the quality and performance of their own guides and determining appropriate training programs. Governments may choose to create their own regulations based upon this standard, but this document is not intended, nor should be used, to supersede local or national laws. Both new and experienced

guides may refer to the standard as benchmark for evaluating their own performance and determining the course of their training. This Standard has been written to specifically apply to Adventure Travel Guides. It may prove applicable to adventure activity providers, or instructors, but has a greater focus on the needs and requirements of a guide within the Adventure Travel sector (see definitions).

# [Core Competencies]

Adventure Travel is an extremely diverse sector. Diverse in terms of geography, with adventure travel businesses located all around the world, and diverse in terms of activities, with a constantly evolving list of new activities and products for adventure travel guides to introduce to guests. This diversity has resulted in a multitude of approaches to measuring adventure travel guide performance as well as numerous approaches for incorporating standards into training schemes. Government involvement, through laws and regulations, also impacts the enactment of standards.

Despite this diversity, universal qualifications have emerged for Adventure Travel Guides, regardless of the activity or destination. Through debate, discussion, research, and the application of the group's own extensive experience in adventure travel guiding, the following five competencies are deemed essential for adventure travel guides regardless of geography or activities:

- 1 TECHNICAL COMPETENCY
- 2 WILDERNESS MEDICINE & FIRST AID
- 3 CUSTOMER SERVICE & GROUP MANAGEMENT SKILLS
- 4 NATURAL & CULTURAL HISTORY INTERPRETATION
- 5 SUSTAINABILITY

The following pages describe and provide examples that illustrate each of these core competencies.

These competencies align with and expand on ISO 21101 and ISO/TR 21102 which defines the role of an adventure travel guide as follows:

**The role of the leader, regardless of the adventure tourism activity being undertaken, usually includes:**

1. Participant assistance
2. Safety management and care of participants and the leadership team in accordance with the operator's safety management system, including provision of appropriate information, instruction, supervision and training
3. Application of emergency procedures
4. Information sharing

## 1 TECHNICAL COMPETENCY

Where standards and protocol currently exist for adventure travel guides, most pertain to sport-specific skills, such as white water rafting, rock climbing, or mountaineering, for example. Numerous certifications and certifying bodies exist, as do training resources for many activities. The technical skills portion of the Adventure Travel Guide Qualification and Performance Standard is directed to the technical skills and abilities guides must possess regardless of what activity they are leading. ISO 21101 has been referenced for alignment.

**Guides must possess technical ability, including current, available sport-specific certifications, to safely carry out activities offered in the commercial trip**

**In cases where an activity is regulated by a local or national governing body, all rules must be observed.**

- a. Example: British Canoe Union (BCU)<sup>3</sup> certifications would be required throughout the UK for canoe and kayak guides.

- b. Example: the International Rafting Federation (IRF)<sup>4</sup> provides certifications for white water rafting in different crafts.

**When no certification is required/ available, activity protocol must be determined and documented.**

- a. Example: Coast walking provider references existing protocol for hiking or hill walking.
- b. Protocol must incorporate relevant existing standards.
  - i. Example: snowshoe hiking incorporates avalanche protocol.

**Some technical skills apply regardless of geography and activity and must always be present:**

- a. Orientation and navigation
- b. Managing emergency situations, risks, and hazards

3 BRITISH CANOE UNION [Online] Available from: <http://www.bcu.org.uk/tests-and-awards/> [Accessed: add date]

4 INTERNATIONAL RAFTING FEDERATION [Online] Available from: <http://www.internationalrafting.com/gte/gte-scheme/> [Accessed: add date]

**Guides must observe relevant safety protocols specific to the company, location, current conditions and activities**

**Guides must adhere to the protocol or standard that is more strict or specific to the activity or location, especially when dictated by law.**

- a. Example: A company may have a maximum group size protocol that is greater than regulations for the destination they will guide in. The smaller group size dictated by the local regulation supersedes the company protocol.

**Safety protocols include, but are not limited to:**

- a. Emergency response procedures
- b. Required certifications for leading activity
- c. Duty to act (administering care to participants)
- d. Guide to guest ratio
- e. Appropriate operating procedures and risk assessments

**Guides must have received current training and licenses (if applicable) specific to equipment and vehicles used**

Certifications and licenses as determined by local customs and/or laws, industry standards, or company protocol. In some cases, licenses to operate are granted through traditional customs such as verbal agreements or ceremonies.

## 2 WILDERNESS MEDICINE AND FIRST AID

The often remote nature of adventure travel experiences, combined with the presence of various degrees of physical activity, means the likelihood is high that an adventure travel guide will need to respond to some form of a medical emergency at various times throughout their career.

Guides must possess a medical certification based on recognized protocol for the amount of time to reach definitive care

**Examples include: Standard First Aid & CPR, Wilderness First Aid & CPR, Wilderness First Responder, and Wilderness EMT.**

- a. The exact training requirement will vary by region and activity.

**Accepted protocol comes from the Wilderness Medical Society<sup>5</sup> and the International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies<sup>6</sup>.**

- a. Other standards exist but must align with these protocols.

5 WILDERNESS MEDICAL SOCIETY (2015) Wilderness Medical Society [Online] Available from: <http://www.wms.org/>

6 INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES. (2011) International First Aid & Resuscitation Guidelines . [Online] February 2011. Available from: <http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/53459/IFRC%20International%20first%20aid%20and%20resuscitation%20guideline%202011.pdf>

### 3 CUSTOMER SERVICE & GROUP MANAGEMENT SKILLS

A greater focus on customer service differentiates Adventure Travel Guides from Adventure *Educators* and Adventure *Recreation* providers. Customer service techniques for an adventure travel guide balance service with a safety protocol required for adventure activities and / or remote locations.

Additionally, a guide is responsible for relationship management with both guests and local people, monitoring impacts on the environment, must be able to communicate in the relevant local language(s) or through interpreters, and possess intercultural communication and interpersonal skills.

**Guides must be trained with an emphasis on customer service**

**Specific standards depend on company protocol but must include the following:**

- a. Guide shows interest in the ideas, views and principles of participants and others concerned, in a respectful and tolerant manner.
- b. During the tour and execution of the itinerary the guide takes into account varying ability levels, physical limitations, and expectations of the group, and assesses them in relation to the possibilities within the itinerary and monitors their safety and the possibilities within the itinerary and monitors their safety and well-being.
- c. Guide must be able to identify complaints and handle conflicts, in solving, mediating or compromising ways, provide aftercare and create opportunities for feedback.
- d. Guide establishes contacts and maintains relationships with local partners such as tour guides, drivers, and suppliers. During problems such as disputes or conflicts of interest the guide acts as an intermediary and works towards achieving a solution that is acceptable for all concerned.
- e. In case of illness, accidents or other calamities the guide must be able to deal with the situation and act as trained for, according to general procedures, safety regulations and company instructions.

**Additional customer service considerations exist in adventure travel settings, and must be incorporated into guide practices:**

- a. Monitoring the health and well being of the guest or participant
  - i. Hydration and food
  - ii. Body temperature and overall comfort
  - iii. Mood and spirit
- b. Managing for varying ability levels
- c. Understanding guest expectations of the experience
- d. Creating conditions for effective, positive group management

**Guides must possess strong abilities in verbal and non-verbal communication**

**Communication includes the ability to give clear direction and is an integral component to conducting a safe activity.**

Expectations for experience must be clearly communicated with guests at the onset.

- i. Questioning techniques must be employed to ascertain specific expectations of guests.
- ii. Guides must strive to exceed guests' expectations - both physical and emotional.

**Guides must be perceptive to non-verbal communication methods in an attempt to read guest needs and desires prior to being told or before accidents or conflicts occur.**

## 4 NATURAL & CULTURAL HISTORY INTERPRETATION (CONTENT DELIVERY)

An Adventure Travel guide is expected to be an expert in subject matter presented on outings or tours including, but not limited to, natural and cultural history and current events in the location where the adventure activity is carried out. Knowing facts and statistics is not enough; the ability to communicate effectively must also be present. Guides must possess both knowledge and skill in communicating to cover a potentially wide variety of contexts for both the culture and place, as well as the interests of the audience. Content delivery techniques are applied in both formal educational settings as well as in informal communications such as during meals and casual conversation.

Guides share content in a manner that is approachable and digestible for guests. This technique is called “interpretation” or “thematic interpretation”.

**Guides must be knowledgeable about relevant local history and cultures and present accurate information**

**Guides must be familiar with the local culture/s of the regions in which they operate.**

- a. When incorporating local people, guides must do so in authentic and respectful ways.
- b. It is the guide’s responsibility to ensure that guests are informed of, and follow, respectful practices when interacting with local communities.
- c. Appropriate language must be used when interacting with and referring to local communities.

**Guides must be knowledgeable and aware of relevant local history and current events and be prepared to present this information in an unbiased manner.**

Guides must be knowledgeable about relevant natural history in the environments what they visit

- a. Basic flora and fauna, ecosystems, and general ecology are important for all guides as a minimum.
- b. Knowledge level must match the specializations declared by both company and guides.

Educational techniques must be used to share this information in an engaging manner with guests

- a. Delivery must be provocative, engaging, inspiring and participatory.
- b. Content must be relevant to the audience.
  - i. Effort must be made to learn interests, objectives, and knowledge level of participants, and to match content to these interests.
  - ii. Guide is responsible for ensuring that the information presented is being understood by participants.
- c. Content must be organized in a thematic manner.
  - i. Must have a clear “Topic” and “Theme” which fits with the majority of the presented material.
  - ii. The purpose, how it fits into the overarching story, must be clear to the audience.

## 5 SUSTAINABILITY

A core value of the Adventure Travel sector is sustainability, including environmental, economic and social sustainability. How guides interact with local partners, and share local cultures and history is central to ensuring the positive impact adventure travel can have in communities is realized and to the delivery of an excellent guest experience. Guides contribute to sustainability by operating in such a way that environmental and cultural impacts are minimized and sustainability practices are modeled to guests.

### Principles of Low Impact Adventure Travel Guiding

**Guides must be trained in the principles and application of Leave No Trace, appropriate to the location:**

- a. As determined by The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics<sup>7</sup>:
  - i. Plan Ahead and Prepare.
  - ii. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces (USA, Canada, Australia) OR Travel and Camp on Durable Ground (Ireland, New Zealand, UK).
  - iii. Dispose of Waste Properly.
  - iv. Leave What You Find.
  - v. Minimize Campfire Impacts.
  - vi. Respect Wildlife (USA, Canada, Australia) OR Respect Farm Animals & Wildlife (New Zealand, Ireland, UK)

vii. Be Considerate of Other Visitors (USA, Canada) OR Be Considerate of Your Hosts & Other Visitors (Australia) OR Be Considerate of Others (Ireland, New Zealand, UK).

- b. Training must be geographically appropriate to the location in which the guide is leading.
- c. Emphasis on this application of principals must include efforts to stop poaching and trading of illegal wildlife products.

**Additional principles exist and must be adhered to, as designated by Simon & Alagona (2009) in “Beyond Leave No Trace”<sup>8</sup>:**

- a. Educate yourself and others about the places you visit.
- b. Purchase only the equipment and clothing you need.
- c. Take care of the equipment and clothing you have.
- d. Make conscientious food, equipment, and clothing consumption choices.

<sup>7</sup> <https://Int.org/>

<sup>8</sup> LEAVE NO TRACE CENTER FOR OUTDOOR ETHICS (2015) Leave No Trace Center For Outdoor Ethics [Online] Available from: <https://Int.org/>

## [CORE COMPETENCIES] 5. SUSTAINABILITY

- e. Minimize waste production.
- f. Reduce energy consumption.
- g. Get involved by conserving and restoring the places you visit.

**Guides must be aware of and, where applicable, incorporate into their guiding the following principles outlined by The International Ecotourism Society<sup>9</sup>:**

- a. Minimize physical, social, behavioral, and psychological impacts.
- b. Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- c. Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- d. Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
- e. Deliver memorable interpretative experiences to visitors that help raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates.
- f. Recognize the rights and spiritual beliefs of the Indigenous People in your community and work in partnership with them to create empowerment.

**Guides must be aware of and, where applicable, incorporate into their guiding the following principles outlined by The Adventure Travel Trade Association's "Values Statement"<sup>10</sup> including:**

- a. Maximizing social and economic benefits to the local community and minimizing negative impacts.

- b. Maximizing benefits to cultural heritage and minimizing negative impacts.
- c. Maximizing benefits to the environment and minimizing negative impacts.
- d. Protection of children from harmful effects of tourism as represented by the organization: TheCode.org<sup>11</sup>.

### **Gender and child protection**

- a. An Adventure Travel Guide has a responsibility to document and report the use of illegal and unethical activity in the areas that he / she is guiding in, including vendors and partners engaging in such acts. This includes child and human trafficking, illegal prostitution, and uncompensated/under-compensated labor.
- i. Who the guide reports such behavior to depends on company protocol, and the specific jurisdiction in which he/ she is guiding.

9 THE INTERNATIONAL ECOTOURISM SOCIETY (2015) The International Ecotourism Society [Online] Available from: <http://www.ecotourism.org/>  
10 ADVENTURE TRAVEL TRADE ASSOCIATION. (2013) ATTA Values Statement [Online] February 2013 Available from: <http://cdn.adventuretravel.biz/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Values-Statement-Trade-English.pdf>

11 THE CODE.ORG. (2015) Protect Children from Sex Tourism [Online] August 2015 Available from: [http://www.thecode.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/The-Code-Brochure\\_Protect-Children\\_LR.pdf](http://www.thecode.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/The-Code-Brochure_Protect-Children_LR.pdf)



Brasil © Magdalena Paluchowska / Shutterstock

## [Implementing The Standard]

Each destination and company will find its own way forward in bringing its adventure travel guides up to the levels described by this standard. Not all companies will have the same access to training resources and it is expected that there are numerous ways guides might reach this level of expert performance. This section includes suggestions for implementing specific aspects of this standard.

### **Suggestions for implementing the technical competency:**

- a. Required certifications can vary by region and should be compared for parity, frequently evaluated and updated. Periodic certification events should be organized and made available to guides.
- b. Governing or certifying bodies can be sourced to create programs where a regional governing body does not exist.

- i. Skills and requirements should be compared for compatibility before application.

**Suggestions for implementing the wilderness medicine and first aid competency:**

- a. International standards<sup>12</sup> have been created by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) for the administration of first aid and CPR.
  - i. If training resources exist within your destination, make sure they align with these standards.
  - ii. If no resources exist, or if they do not meet standards, work with IFRC to create a pool of trainers to meet these standards for guides.
- b. International standards have been created by the Wilderness Medical Society (WMS) for situations which are further from definitive care.
  - i. If training resources exist within your destination, make sure they align with these standards.
  - ii. If no resources exist, or if they do not meet standards, work with WMS to develop a plan to either import certified trainers or build infrastructure to accommodate training needs locally.

12 INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES. (2011) International First Aid & Resuscitation Guidelines . [Online] February 2011. Available from: <http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/53459/IFRC%20International%20first%20aid%20and%20resuscitation%20guideline%202011.pdf>



Balkans, Macedonia © ATTA

## [Definitions]

### Adventure Travel

Adventure travel is a type of tourism, involving exploration or travel with perceived (and possibly actual) risk, and potentially requiring specialized skills and physical exertion. Adventure tourism has grown in recent decades, as tourists seek different kinds of vacations, but measurement of market size and growth is hampered by the lack of a clear operational definition. According to the U.S.-based Adventure Travel Trade Association, adventure travel may be any tourist activity, including at least

two of the following three components: a physical activity, a cultural exchange or interaction and engagement with nature.

### Adventure Travel Guide

A guide with a general knowledge of a variety of skill competencies (i.e. interpretive, medical and sustainability) required to facilitate a group of guests through a variety of terrains, environments and locales in a safe, manageable and respectable manner.

## [DEFINITIONS]

Guides work for adventure tourism companies, resorts, parks, lodges or campgrounds, or they operate their own small businesses. They facilitate the opportunity to experience a diverse range of activities, depending on the season and on their skills. An adventure travel guide must have a tolerance for adversity and uncertainty. They should possess a strong sense of self-awareness and be able to exercise sound judgment and decision making. An adventure travel guide is highly flexible and has strong communication skills (sometimes involving multiple languages).

Key differences between an Adventure Travel Guide and an Adventure Activity Provider include the Guide's need to have equal attention to technical, medical, customer service, content delivery, and sustainability competencies, versus the activity provider's main requirement is a mastery in technical competency.

### **Authentic (tourism)**

A tourism experience, which provides a genuine perspective and interaction with natural and cultural locations and contexts. Guests may also derive a sense of personal authenticity through their experiences.

### **Competency**

In this standard, the term 'competency' is used to refer to a combination of knowledge, skill, behavior, personal traits, and motives of the individual. The ISO Adventure Travel Safety standard defines competency as follows: "The ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve expected results (results of performed activities in provision of service)."

### **CPR**

CPR is the abbreviation for cardiopulmonary resuscitation. An emergency procedure consisting of external cardiac massage and artificial respiration; the first treatment for a person who has collapsed and has no pulse and has stopped breathing; attempts to restore circulation of the blood and prevent death or brain damage due to lack of oxygen. This may happen after an electric shock, heart attack, or drowning. CPR combines rescue breathing and chest compressions.

### **Cultural History**

Cultural history combines the approaches of anthropology and history in examining popular cultural traditions and cultural interpretations of historical experience. It examines the records and narrative descriptions of past knowledge, customs, and arts of a group of people.

### **Customer Service**

Customer service is the integration of a guide's technical and social skills in such a manner each customer feels recognized and acknowledged in his/her personal needs.

### **Duty to Act**

Duty to act refers to duty of a party to take necessary action to prevent harm to another party or the general public.

### **Ecosystem**

An ecosystem is a community of living organisms (plants, animals and microbes) in

## [DEFINITIONS]

conjunction with the nonliving components of their environment (things like air, water and mineral soil), interacting as a system.

### Ecology

Ecology is the interdisciplinary scientific study of the distribution and abundance of organisms and their interactions with their environment. It also deals with the growth of populations and species in an ecosystem and when/how resources in that ecosystem are used by organisms within it.

### Ethnobotany

Ethnobotany is the scientific study of the relationships that exist between peoples and plants.

### Folklore

Folklore is the traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, passed through the generations by word of mouth. A body of popular myths or beliefs relating to a particular place, activity, or group of people.

### Group Management

The process by which a guide provides a safe and high quality experience, supporting a range of client motivations, interests and skill levels. The art of providing individualized experience for all within a group.

### Indigenous People

Indigenous people are genetically, historically, and culturally from or linked to the original or first nations of the land before colonization. They normally preserve

a degree of cultural and political separation from the mainstream culture and political system of the nation state within the border of which the indigenous group is located.

### Interpretation

“Interpretation is a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource.”

—The National Association for Interpretation<sup>13</sup>

“Interpretation enriches our lives through engaging emotions, enhancing experiences and deepening understanding of people, places, events and objects from past and present.”

—The Association for Heritage Interpretation<sup>14</sup>

### ISO

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is an independent, non-governmental membership organization and the world’s largest developer of voluntary International Standards.

### Natural History

Natural history is the research and study of organisms including plants or animals in their environment. Natural history is the systematic study of any category of natural objects or organisms.

13 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR INTERPRETATION (2015) National Association For Interpretation [Online] Available from: <http://www.interpnet.com/>  
14 ASSOCIATION FOR HERITAGE INTERPRETATION (2015) Association For Heritage Interpretation [Online] Available from: <http://www.ahi.org.uk/>

## Standard

A document that provides requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose. Standards can range in enforceability from something that is mandated by an authority or government, to an approved model within an industry, to something that is a “norm”. This Standard is intended to carry the weight of industry approval, but is voluntary / market-based.

## Sustainability

Sustainability is the endurance of natural and cultural systems and processes. The organizing principle for sustainability is sustainable development, which includes the four interconnected domains: ecology, economics, politics and culture. From a sustainable tourism business perspective sustainability can be thought of as a balance of ‘people, planet, profit.’

## Technical Abilities

Personal experience, training, and capabilities to execute the technical skills.

## Technical skills

A set of competencies necessary to guide a group safely through varying areas and climates. These competencies must be trained and assessed by certified professionals.

## Theme

A succinct, central message about a topic of interest that a guide uses to communicate to their audience. Themes help to narrow vast amounts of content into a digestible thread, easily followed by participants.

## Thematic interpretation

In the thematic approach, a guide relies on a central theme (i.e., a major point or message) to guide the process of communication. The guide develops the theme in such a way that it will be highly relevant to an audience.

## Topic

The subject matter discussed or interpreted. Topics are generally broad subject that could be investigated with numerous approaches.

## Tour Leader

Tour Leaders ensure that a tour runs smoothly. Tour leaders are often chosen for their travel experience and interpersonal skills and should be thoroughly trained and eager to educate people on a variety of natural and cultural skills. Basic duties of a tour leader include providing comprehensive briefings at the start and throughout the tour, and ensure that health and safety principles are adhered to. A tour leader position can be filled by a professional guide, however, these roles are not interchangeable.



Baja Sur, Mexico © ATTA / Hassen Salum

## [Governance]

The Adventure Travel Guide Qualifications & Performance Standard is governed by a volunteer group made up of guides and industry professionals. Its purpose is to ensure and oversee the ongoing maintenance of the Standard. The responsibilities of the governance board include: conducting outreach throughout the world informing businesses and governments about the standard, assisting in efforts to implement the standard, and accepting, documenting and incorporating relevant feedback and suggestions.

## BOARD STRUCTURE, POSITIONS & TERM

In an effort to incorporate both geographic and industry sector diversity to the governing board the following structure, positions and term have been decided.

### Structure

The Adventure Travel Trade Association shall serve as the board's administrator and Secretary. There are no other titled board positions at this time.

### Voting

Decisions about the standard are made by consensus. Each member has one vote, all votes carry the same weight.

### Board Composition

There should be at least one guide and one ground operator for each large geographic sector (as detailed below). Outbound tour operators that operate in a specific part of the world, even if they are not based in that location, can be accepted.

### Membership

Board membership is open to all industry participants. Members may nominate themselves or be nominated by another person and are accepted to the group on a rolling basis until each position is filled. Once all the positions for a region are filled, new applicants will be accepted on an annual basis. Nominations are taken online [here](#).

### Term

Each representative agrees to serve a maximum of three years. Members of the existing working group which drafted the first iteration of the standard are automatically appointed to the first three year term. The participation of these individuals as founding board members shall not be counted towards the regional member goal.

### Board Meetings

In the first three years, the board will meet two times each year.

At the end of the first three years, and then every five years after that, the board will meet to consider revisions, additions, and changes to the Standard.

During the first three years the Adventure Travel Trade Association will carry out administration needs for the board and take a lead role in the coordination of the group. After the three years, the group will put into place self governance and financing.

## GEOGRAPHIC MEMBERSHIP GOALS

### North and Central America

*Minimum 1 position / Maximum 3 positions per region*

- Canada and United States
- Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean

### South America

*Minimum 1 position / Maximum 3 positions per region*

- Northern South America (Brazil, Columbia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana)
- Western and Southern South America (Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay)

### Europe

*Minimum 1 position / Maximum 2 positions per region*

- UK and Ireland
- Scandinavia and the Baltic (Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Greenland, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)
- Western Europe (Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Andorra)
- Eastern Europe (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Balkans, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Hungary, Turkey, Moldavia, Belarus, Ukraine)

### Africa

*Minimum 1 position / Maximum 2 positions per region*

- Northern Africa (Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Mali, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt)
- West and Central Africa (Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo, DR Congo, Central African Republic, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe).
- East Africa (Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Rwanda, Burundi)
- Southern Africa (South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, Angola, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros)

### Asia

*Minimum 1 position / Maximum 2 positions per region*

- Middle East (Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Kurdistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, UAE)
- Northern Asia (Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan)
- Central and Southern Asia (Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan,

## [GOVERNANCE] GEOGRAPHIC MEMBERSHIP GOALS

Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, India,  
Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka)

- East Asia (North Korea, South Korea,  
Japan, Taiwan, China)
- Southeast Asia (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand,  
Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia,  
Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia)

### **Oceania**

*Minimum 1 position / Maximum 2 positions per region*

- Australia and Papua New Guinea
- New Zealand, Antarctica and Polynesia

# [Declaration of Support]

The following companies have reviewed and agree with this standard. By signing this document they demonstrate their commitment to its principles and dedication to implementing its requirements.



**NJORD Sea Kayak & Wilderness Adventures**

Ervin Mejja  
*Head Guide, Instructor & Expeditions Manager*



**Wilderness Collective:  
Wilderness Scotland & Wilderness Ireland**

Myles Farnbank  
*Head of Guides & Training*