

The following document gives the general Adventure Alternative policy on the terms of employment on which porters are employed by us. It also acts as a memorandum of agreement between the UK office and our in-country offices or in-country providers.

1. Relationship between UK tour operator and destination country ground agent.

On the vast majority of Adventure Alternative treks, climbs and expeditions the staff will be employed directly by our own in-country company. This ensures that we have direct and unambiguous control and responsibility over the working conditions of all staff associated with the trip.

In the cases where a third party ground-handler is used for all or part of the trip, a working partnership will have been established through which the third party is given clear and unambiguous guidance as to the working conditions that must be established for all staff, including porters. This guidance is delivered in person and also via this document, which is considered a memorandum of understanding.

Multiple subcontracting, which may dilute knowledge and responsibility, shall not be adopted.

2. Relationship with head porters / sirdars / guides.

In almost all situations, a full-time representative of our in-country or UK office will be present on the trip and will hence act to coordinate and monitor the management of staff and porters on the trip. All in-country staff who are placed in a position of responsibility over other staff members have established a good working relationship with staff and have a proven track record or fair and responsible leadership.

In-country representatives / head porters / sirdars / guides are authorized to use specific funds to pay for porters to be evacuated and treated in case of sickness or accident without their own remuneration being affected. Insurance policies for the coverage of staff and porters are in place where appropriate and practicable.

3. Communication with porters' groups

Direct channels of communication are established with porters, porters' organisations and the communities from which the porters come. This is often via our in-country offices and directors or, on occasion via our in-country contacts. Porters, or their representatives are involved in decision-making processes where relevant.

4. Terms of employment and special provisions

Porters are hired through formal verbal or written contracts, setting out the terms of employment as well as the rights and responsibilities of porters on a short-term (trek-by-trek / seasonal) or longer-term basis. Porters or their resident community collectively witness and approve the content of their contract.

The minimum age for porters shall be 16 years of age unless specific mitigating circumstances are identified and approved by the UK office.

Where in-country provision makes it feasible, Adventure Alternative have insurance policies in place that cover all staff, guides and porters. In locations where this is not practicable the trip leader has at their disposal sufficient funds and authority to be able to fund any necessary evacuation and healthcare provision for staff, guides and porters.

5. Wages

Porters shall be paid a stable and fair basic wage that does not rely on tips to make it economically viable. This figure is based on research into the local economic situation and average wages in the country, as well as consultation with porters groups and local NGOs. This also takes into account the particular aspects of each trek. This may include season, experience needed, distance from porters' homes etc.

Provision shall be made for porters' food and accommodation so that they do not have to provide for this out of their wages.

Tips shall be considered an optional contribution by clients and must not be relied upon to make employment for the porters economically viable. This must be explained to both porters and clients. All tips given shall be collected into a general 'pot' and then distributed openly and fairly by the head porter / sirdar / guide according to local customs. The giving of personal tips must not be adopted as it can create unfair payments and resentment through the porter team and can sometimes encourage cynical false-friendliness by porters keen to encourage larger personal tips. Guidance on tipping amounts can be found on our website or from the head porter / sirdar / guide.

6. Training

Where relevant, porters' training covers basic safety issues, in order to safeguard both porters' own health and that of other staff and clients. For example this will include symptoms of altitude sickness, dehydration etc.

Opportunities for training are provided to those porters who wish to further their education, career and personal development.

7. Equipment

Equipment appropriate to each stage of each particular trek shall be provided to porters, including, for example; sleeping tents, protective clothing, carrying equipment and kerosene for their own use.

8. Loads

A maximum load is set and porters shall not be asked to carry more than this under normal circumstances:-

Mt Kilimanjaro/Meru = 20kg, Mount Kenya = 20kg, Nepal (Trekking) = 30kg, Nepal (Climbing) = 20kg, Morocco (Trekking) = 25kg, Peru = 25kg, Pakistan = 25kg, In all cases = 30kg.

The amount of trekkers' luggage and equipment that porters are expected to carry shall take the weight of porters' own personal loads into account.

Where younger workers are employed as porters, the maximum weight of their loads shall be adjusted accordingly.

9. Client awareness and behaviour

Clients are provided with detailed pre-trek information on porters via our website and in-country representatives upon arrival. This will enable them to understand the issues confronting porters, be aware of the conditions that porters should be working under and to adopt responsible behaviour in their own practice.

Porters and clients are introduced by name at the start of a trek. Where appropriate, each porter is personally assigned to specific client(s) on a trek. However, personal tipping is not to be made as this can create difficult and unfair net gross wages for individual porters. (see section 5)

10. Monitoring

All clients are given a post-trek feedback form to complete, to include specific questions on porters' working conditions. Representatives from the UK or in-country offices make regular unannounced visits to the ground agent to ensure that all contractual agreements are being met. They also regularly take part on treks to monitor policies on porters on the ground.

Porters' representatives are consulted during post-trek debriefing sessions and through subsequent correspondence.