



Safety in the Field

Guidelines

Introduction

Intrepid's core business of operating adventurous trips around the world carries with it inherent risks for both its group leaders and travellers. Some reasons for these risks are:

- laxity of laws and regulations in some countries governing transport, accommodation, infrastructure and the travel industry in general, when compared to what we would accept back home
- potentially volatile political environment of the countries in which we operate
- the nature of the itineraries that we run, which are adventurous in nature and often travel to remote locations

With these factors in mind, Intrepid has a responsibility to ensure that all reasonable precautions are taken to provide trips that are safe.

The aim of this document is to give our travellers an insight into the safety standards that we endeavour to achieve when on an Intrepid trip. Please contact customerservice@intrepidtravel.com if you have any comments about this document, or the application of it in the field.

No set of guidelines can anticipate all possible conditions that may arise. We ask our staff to put sound judgement ahead of hard and fast rules and to judge each situation as it arises. Our staff are employed because they demonstrate sound operational judgement, and this extends to the application of safe travel practices.

Safety guidelines

1. Transport

Intrepid does not permit riding on the roof of any form of transport we use, such as trains, boats or buses.

We accept that seat belts are not readily available on all of the transport we take, on either charter or public vehicles. Where available, we expect our travellers to use them.

Licensed motorbike taxis (riding as a passenger with a licensed local driver) may be an available form of optional transport in some regions. Group members should consider the risk of such a means of transport and check the terms of their travel insurance before taking a motorbike taxi, as many will exclude motorbike injuries unless they are licensed riders.

1.1 Buses

Public buses

Public buses are a common method of transport on Intrepid trips, and on occasion local buses can be very crowded, with people standing in the aisles. On rare occasions, Intrepid travellers may not have access to a seat and will need to stand, but this period should not be excessive and other transport arrangements will be made if there simply is no room on the bus.

We rely on public transport providers to maintain the vehicles we use in a roadworthy condition, but we do not perform independent tests on public vehicles. If, in the group leaders opinion, the vehicle is unsafe then alternative transport arrangements will be made.

Travelling on a local bus in some countries can be a different experience to back home. If your leader believes a bus driver is driving dangerously, they will ask the driver to slow down and, if required, arrange for the group to get off the bus at the next opportunity. An alternative means of transport will then be arranged.

Charter buses

Privately chartered bus operators/drivers are required to comply with local licence and vehicle servicing standards.

1.2 Boats and ferries

We endeavour to provide, or ensure availability of, lifejackets for all boat and ferry journeys included on our itineraries. We rely on the boat operators to judge local conditions and determine whether the conditions are safe for travel. You may encounter public ferries that are crowded, and where the leader deems any risk unacceptable, they may arrange alternative transport. On smaller craft, where the risk of capsizing is higher, you may be asked to wear lifejackets rather than just having them available to put on.

1.3 Bicycles

In many countries bicycle helmets are not a legal requirement. However, where local regulations mandate that all cyclists must wear a helmet (regardless of the duration or type of the cycling activity), the provision of helmets will be facilitated or, alternatively, you may be advised to bring your own.

Where off-road cycling is the predominant activity of the trip, regardless of local legal requirements, we will provide helmets. Or in regions where helmets are not able to be confidently provided, you will be advised to bring your own and you will be requested to wear them at all times while cycling. Our staff will always wear a helmet while riding a bicycle.

2. Accommodation

Government regulations on safety standards in the hotels and guesthouses we use in many regions are less stringent than those that our travellers may be used to in their home countries.

However, we do endeavour to select accommodation that in the case of 'closed' hotels (with corridors, multi-stories etc.), they do have a second exit point in case of fire in the main exit. Please be aware that not all hotels we currently stay in comply with this standard.

On your itinerary you may be staying in simple accommodation such as a homestay or a hill tribe hut that is built on an elevated platform. Such accommodation is an Intrepid highlight experience, and naturally subject to a different safety environment. Your leader will outline any potential safety concerns for you to be aware of, but if such experiences concern you, please take this into consideration when choosing your trip.

3. Activities

We ask that you inform your travel agent of any pre-existing medical conditions before travelling.

If your leader is of the opinion that a group member is unsuitable for an activity on the trip, he/she has the discretion and authority to refuse that person from participating in the activity - for the safety of themselves, the rest of the group and the leader.

Prior to an activity commencing, our staff will conduct a short safety briefing.

3.1 Trekking

Many of our trips include a trekking component, whether it is overnight or a strenuous 10-day walk. Trekking is a highlight of such trips, but naturally you will be in remote areas so it is important that you have carefully considered your capability to join such a trip before booking.

All travellers should have the correct footwear and equipment for the trek.

When walking, the group must always stay between the designated scout and sweep. The scout and sweep will either be two guides, a guide and a leader, or a guide and a passenger. Group members should leave their packs on the trail if going into the bushes for a toilet stop so they are not unknowingly passed by the sweep.

The group can walk in pairs or small groups, but should meet up together in its entirety a minimum of every couple of hours to ensure that all members are accounted for. The group should meet up at all major trail intersections to make sure everyone takes the correct fork. Travellers can walk at their own pace in between group meets.

If local conditions such as weather or landslides etc. become an issue, your leader will seek the opinion of our local guides on the safety of the conditions and risks involved in continuing. The ultimate decision on whether to continue rests with the group leader.

3.2 Flat water canoeing/kayaking

When canoeing or kayaking is part of a scheduled itinerary, the group will be given basic instruction as to paddling techniques and what to do in the case of a capsized by the local guides operating the trip.

Lifejackets must be worn by all group members and leaders when doing organised canoeing, kayaking or rafting as part of the group. Helmets are not essential for flat-water paddling. Group members should wear trainers or sandals to protect their feet from rocks, but not to interfere with their ability to swim.

Group members should not go canoeing or rafting if they cannot swim confidently when in water above head height.

A scout and sweep system will be used when doing flat-water kayaking or rafting. The group should not separate more than 200 metres; the lead paddlers should raft up and wait for the tailenders on a regular basis.

3.4 Animals

When riding donkeys or camels during our trips, helmets are not available to travellers. In conjunction with the local supplier, we endeavour to ensure that only calm and well-behaved animals are provided by the operator.

3.5 Snorkelling

For any included snorkelling activity, your leader will brief you on safety procedures prior to departure. Travellers should, however, carefully consider their experience and capability in snorkelling and swimming before joining such an activity.

4. First aid kits

Each leader has a medical kit and will carry it with him/her during all activities such as a trek, cycle ride, canoe trip etc. This medical kit contains basic first aid supplies. Our legal responsibilities dictate that we cannot distribute drugs of any kind to any traveller.