



## **Sensitive Sites & Guide Protocol**

ACME Voyages is committed to responsible, respectful, and sustainable tourism in all excursions, especially those involving culturally sensitive, heritage, and ecologically fragile destinations. This protocol provides detailed guidance to ensure that visits protect local communities, cultural heritage, and natural ecosystems, while offering travelers an educational and immersive experience.

### **1. Scope and Applicability**

This protocol applies to all ACME Voyages excursions that involve:

- Indigenous or tribal villages
- Cultural and historical heritage sites (forts, temples, palaces, monuments, sacred spaces)
- Ecologically sensitive destinations (national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, alpine areas, wetlands, rivers, lakes)
- Excursions that involve interaction with local communities or ecosystems where visitor behavior could have social, cultural, or environmental impacts.

### **2. Guide Qualifications and Competencies**

#### **1. Professional Expertise:**

- Guides must be trained in cultural interpretation, history, ecology, or environmental management.
- Must hold local, national, or internationally recognized certifications, where applicable.

## **2. Practical Competencies:**

- Managing small and diverse groups without disturbing local residents or ecosystems.
- Providing risk awareness and safety guidance for all visitors.
- Communicating sustainability messages effectively, including Do's and Don'ts at the site.

## **3. Cultural and Ethical Sensitivity:**

- Knowledgeable about local customs, religious practices, and social norms.
- Able to teach travelers appropriate behavior, including respecting sacred spaces, privacy, and community interactions.
- Ensures equitable engagement with local communities, particularly in terms of economic benefits.

## **3. Visitor Conduct and Group Management**

- **Group Size:** Excursions to sensitive sites are limited to small, manageable groups, typically not exceeding 15-20 participants, to reduce impact.
- **Behavioral Guidelines:** Visitors are instructed to:
  - Avoid disturbing wildlife or local residents
  - Refrain from collecting natural or cultural artifacts
  - Follow photography guidelines and refrain from flash photography in sacred spaces
  - Use designated pathways and areas, especially in fragile ecosystems or historical sites
- **Interactive Learning:** Guides provide interpretive sessions that include:
  - Historical and cultural context

- Environmental awareness and conservation messages
- Local social practices and community engagement

#### **4. Environmental Guidelines for Sensitive Ecological Sites**

- **Minimizing Impact:** Excursions follow strict environmental protection principles, such as:
  - Using designated trails and limiting off-trail walking
  - Avoiding noise, litter, and pollution
  - Educating guests about the importance of local biodiversity and ecosystems
  - Carry-in / carry-out waste policies for trekkers and campers
- **Wildlife Interaction:**
  - Activities are limited to observation only, with no feeding, touching, or disturbing animals
  - Wildlife excursions adhere to codes of conduct and regulatory permits
  - Guides monitor guest behavior to prevent accidental harm to habitats or species

#### **5. Cultural and Heritage Site Protocols**

- **Guides ensure that:**
  - Sacred sites, monuments, and heritage properties are respected
  - Visitor numbers and timing are managed to prevent overcrowding
  - Communities are consulted and benefit economically from tourism activities

- **Economic and Social Equity:** Fair fees, compensation for local guides, performers, or artisans, and opportunities for community-led initiatives are prioritized.

## **6. Training and Continuous Improvement for Guides**

- ACME Voyages provides regular training modules for guides, covering:
  - Environmental and ecological stewardship
  - Heritage interpretation and cultural sensitivity
  - Visitor management and risk mitigation
  - First aid, emergency procedures, and group safety
- Guides are encouraged to report site conditions, visitor impact, and community feedback for continuous improvement.

## **7. Supplier and Operator Requirements**

- Suppliers providing excursions at sensitive sites must:
  - Ensure trained and certified guides accompany all tours
  - Maintain compliance with local, national, and international regulations
  - Provide evidence of sustainability practices, including resource management, waste reduction, and ethical community engagement
- Non-compliance can result in corrective actions, warnings, or termination of collaboration.

## 8. Examples of Sensitive Sites in North India

Excursion / Site	Location	Sensitivity Type	Guideline Highlights
Amber Fort & City Palace	Jaipur, Rajasthan	Cultural / Heritage	Small group, guided interpretation, respect architectural pathways
Taj Mahal & Fatehpur Sikri	Agra, Uttar Pradesh	Cultural / Heritage	Limit visitors in peak areas, educate on conservation
Indigenous Village Visit	Himachal Pradesh / Uttarakhand	Cultural / Indigenous	Small respectful groups, fair compensation, guide-led interactions
Ranthambore National Park Safari	Rajasthan	Ecological / Wildlife	Certified eco-vehicles, no feeding animals, educational briefing
Triund Trek	Himachal Pradesh	Ecological / Nature	Marked trails, pack-in/pack-out, limit group size
Ganga River Eco-Walk	Rishikesh / Haridwar	Ecological / Cultural	Minimize pollution, respect river ecology, guided interpretation
Spiti Valley Cultural Tour	Himachal Pradesh	Cultural / Indigenous	Respect local customs, guide interprets traditions, limit visitor intrusion
Jim Corbett National Park Safari	Uttarakhand	Ecological / Wildlife	Regulated safari operators, minimal disturbance, educational content
Jaipur Heritage Walk	Jaipur, Rajasthan	Cultural / Historic	Guide explains historical context, maintain respectful behavior
Kangra Valley Tea Estate Walk	Himachal Pradesh	Cultural / Environmental	Local guide, small groups, eco-friendly practices

## **9. Monitoring and Evaluation**

- ACME Voyages continuously monitors sensitive excursions via:
  - Site visits by sustainability officers
  - Observations and reports from guides
  - Traveler feedback surveys
- Reports are reviewed to identify gaps and implement corrective measures or training.

## **10. Conclusion**

By ensuring that all excursions to sensitive cultural, heritage, or ecological destinations are accompanied by skilled, trained, and certified guides, ACME Voyages:

- Protects fragile ecosystems and biodiversity
- Preserves cultural heritage and indigenous traditions
- Supports local communities through responsible tourism
- Provides safe, educational, and enriching experiences for travelers