

Earthstompers Sustainability Policy

Last updated: January 2026

Purpose

The purpose of this sustainability policy is to make our business operations as sustainable as possible. At Earthstompers, sustainability has always been a core value; it's built into who we are. In 2025, we are making efforts to both document what we currently do to operate sustainably and create goals to make improvements in our operations. It is a company value that we love our country and want to do our part to protect its natural resources, contribute positively to its people, and show off the beautiful place we call home.

Scope of the policy

This policy takes international ideas about sustainability and translates them to the South African context. We do things a little differently in South Africa, and we believe that we have some unique advantages as well as some unique challenges. The way many Africans live is sustainable out of necessity: not being wasteful with resources, sourcing food locally, getting around by walking and using public transport. We aim to look to this wisdom when thinking about our sustainability policy.



*No takeaway container required –
mielies cooked on the braai.*

The scope of this policy includes Earthstompers' owners, employees, agents who book our services, suppliers we purchase from, and the guests who travel with us.

Policy statements

1. Sustainability management & legal compliance

We commit to meeting all basic legal requirements of South Africa, including but not limited to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, The National Road Transport Act, and the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA).

As a family-owned tour operator, we take our responsibility to protect children seriously. We fully comply with South African laws on child labour and child protection and do not allow any form of child exploitation in our business or activities. We do not employ children, and we will never support or tolerate child sexual exploitation, abuse, or trafficking in any way. Our team, partners, and suppliers are expected to share these values and to speak up if they see anything that could put a child at risk. By working responsibly and respectfully in the communities we visit, we aim to create a safe environment for everyone, especially children.

We do not support or allow the purchase of souvenirs made from threatened plants or animals, illegally obtained historical or archaeological items, drugs, or any other illegal substances. We follow all local and international laws designed to protect wildlife, heritage, and communities, and expect our guests and partners to do the same.

We see the legal requirements to operate as a minimum. To address sustainability of our operations, we will work in the following areas:

- In-office and on-tour environmental management
- Supplier relationships, product development & procurement
- Conservation and social investments

2. Internal management: social policy & human rights

As a small family business, we approach “human resources” differently. Many of the people on our team have worked with us for 5 or even 10 years; we look at our business as more meaningful than just a way to earn an income. We are hiring with the idea of people joining our community and strive to support our team as well as we can within the bounds of the business.

We aim to pay industry-leading wages; we comply with legal standards such as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act; we have contracts in place with each employee; and we do not tolerate any form of discrimination, exploitation or abuse.

We offer benefits like remote work, flexitime, and flexible work locations, when possible and appropriate to the role as well as great opportunities to participate in educationals. It is our goal that every member of the team can take advantage of these from time to time. It is not only great product training from our suppliers but also inspires and energizes our team with the great experiences we are able to offer our guests. We also conduct a trainee guide program to new guides entering the industry – they are invited to join a few training tours learning from the experienced guides until they are ready to go solo.

In 2025, we began adding a “community support contribution” to each of our travel products. This is a small fee, that each of our guests contributes to local charitable causes. We believe this is a tangible way that our guests can positively contribute to the communities they visit on tour. We have chosen beneficiary organizations that work on alleviating poverty, supporting child education and nutrition, and support wildlife and nature conservation. Our current list of beneficiaries is found [here](#).

3. Internal management: environment

In office

- **Transportation & commuting:** Our entire office team works from home, which we believe is a sustainable option in and of itself. Prior to COVID, we all commuted to the office 5 days a week, resulting in a lot of unnecessary emissions, wasted time spent commuting, and environmental impact of purchasing meals and drinks in takeaway containers. Now, we only have a small office space & vehicle depot, available for occasional in-person meetings as needed.
- **Office facilities:** Our depot is solar-powered; has recycling and composting facilities; dual-flush toilet; and uses green cleaners. We use real, washable cups, mugs, and plates in office, not only for a better user experience, but better for the environment too.

Fortunately, the South African climate is generally mild, and we do not have built-in heating or cooling, other than fans.

Electronics that are no longer functional are either taken to the community e-waste day for proper disposal; or if in working condition, are donated to a local charity.

To save energy, all computers will be set to automatically go into “sleep” mode after no more than 15 minutes of inactivity.

Our filtered drinking water comes from a nearby mountain range in large containers delivered to the depot, supporting local sustainable business.

We have a thorough waste management system at the depot where waste can be recycled or composted when possible.

Recycling in South Africa plays a vital role in reducing waste, conserving resources, and creating livelihoods. The country has a well-developed recycling industry, with materials such as paper, glass, metal, and plastics being collected, sorted, and processed for reuse. However, much of this success is driven by the informal waste sector, particularly waste pickers—individuals who collect recyclable materials from streets, landfills, and bins to sell to recycling companies.

Informal waste pickers are estimated to recover up to 80–90% of post-consumer packaging materials that enter the recycling chain in South Africa. Despite their major contribution to the circular economy, many waste pickers work under challenging conditions—without formal recognition, protective gear, or stable income.

In recent years, municipalities and organizations such as the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA) have advocated for the integration of waste pickers into formal waste management systems. This includes providing training, access to sorting facilities, and fairer compensation. Recognizing their work not only improves livelihoods but also strengthens South Africa’s efforts toward sustainable waste management and a greener economy.

As part of our Travelife journey, we will develop guidelines for office staff working from home, to encourage responsible environmental management at home, such as energy conservation and waste reduction.

- **Printing:** We made the conscious choice not to print business brochures or flyers; we feel that the best way to offer information to potential clients is online.

When we need to print office-related materials (indemnity forms, passenger lists, etc); we will do so on recycled or FSC-certified paper. We will print double sided when possible. We will look to support printers with environmental management systems in place.

We have a digital-first policy for tour paperwork, such as guide invoices, tour cash ups, and receipts; all of these are submitted and stored digitally rather than in hard copy.

- **Client gifting:** We take an unusual approach to client and agent gifting, from a sustainability perspective. We purposely choose not to make lots of giveaways (pens, buttons, t-shirts, caps, printed bags, etc); as we believe that each of us has a huge cupboard of these items at home and probably is not in need of another! By making these items, we are using resources unnecessarily and wastefully. We focus on gifts that support local businesses and highlight South Africa's exceptional food & wine, which can be consumed and enjoyed (local chocolates, bottle of locally produced wine, locally grown Rooibos tea), rather than another corporate "gift" item that lays in the cupboard. We are printing client gift cards on seed paper, which is locally made from recycled scrap paper; and if planted in soil, grows into flowers.

On Tour

All Earthstompers guests will receive information regarding how to be a responsible traveller. This guidance covers:

- Protecting & supporting local people and communities
- Saving water
- Reducing, reusing, and recycling waste
- Supporting conservation and South African National Parks
- Minimizing carbon footprint and protecting air quality
- Seeing wildlife responsibly

In addition, Earthstompers guides, and staff members will support responsible environmental management by:

- **Choosing greener fuels:** On tour, diesel vehicles will be fuelled with 50ppm, rather than 500ppm diesel. This offers cleaner tailpipe emissions.
- **Saving water:** our tour buses are only fully washed once per tour. (Don't worry, windows will be cleaned daily!) Our preferred car wash uses 100% recycled water and is run from solar power.

For our private tours we include a bottle of mineral water a day per guest and buy in bulk from a local company, providing excellent locally sourced water in glass bottles.

- **Minimizing waste:** Guides will have reusable shopping bags available for guests to use in shops whilst on tour.

We will encourage guides to purchase large containers of drinking water (at company expense) to have available for guests to use to fill their own water bottles. Reusable water bottles will be available for purchase.

Guests will be strongly encouraged to recycle waste generated on tour; guides will be trained to be knowledgeable about where recycling facilities exist, to make a point to stop there when available.

After tour, when buses are cleaned out, staff is expected to recycle any leftover waste if possible (water bottles, park brochures, etc).

General Suppliers Policy

4. Inbound and Outbound partner agencies

We work with a variety of partner agencies, including online travel agents, foreign travel agents, and local travel agents.

Encouraged by our Travelife journey, we will add a clause in our agent contract for any new agents that sign up to sell our products, saying: “Earthstompers Travel aims to operate our tours and packages with sustainability at the forefront. By booking clients with Earthstompers, (insert company name) certify that I either have a sustainability plan in place that I promote with my clients; or I will make clients aware of Earthstompers sustainability plan and responsible traveller advice.”

A very important and under-addressed topic in the travel industry is the role of foreign booking sites and online travel agents when booking travel. Many guests do not realise when booking through these sites, as much as 25-30% of the product price stays in Europe or America as sales commission. When you book directly with an operator, hotel or a guest house in South Africa, 100% of the amount paid comes to South Africa. Same amount paid by the client with either booking method, but by booking directly, as much as a quarter of the product price comes to Africa rather than staying in Europe or America. Think of what that can mean in terms of local employment and poverty alleviation in Africa!

The most responsible thing you can do for sustainability as a traveller is to book as locally and directly as possible.

5. Transport

Our tours are conducted using largely our own fleet of vehicles. This is advantageous, because we can take control of making sure vehicles are serviced regularly, that vehicles are properly maintained, that they are legally licensed, and we regularly replace old vehicles with new, which have the latest air pollution control technologies.

When we need to rent in vehicles, we are firstly choosing for safely, proper operating licenses (which is a huge challenge in South Africa), cleanliness and newness of vehicles, and backup / support from the supplier should issues arise. Our transport suppliers are nearly all locally owned small businesses.

By booking a group tour with Earthstompers, guests are already making the most sustainable transport choice: to combine with other travellers, and all travel in one vehicle, rather than 5 or 10 separate vehicles travelling the same route individually.

When booking a private tour with Earthstompers, we are choosing the most appropriate vehicle size for your group – this makes both business and sustainability sense.

The public transport system in South Africa is limited, and what exists largely isn't suited for tourists. Walking and cycling are recreational activities that are part of our tours, but don't form a substantial portion of the available transport options in the areas we operate.

Electric vehicles and charging infrastructure are not yet widely available in South Africa in the vehicle classes we operate.

By engaging with Travelife, we intend to communicate with our regular transport suppliers, to explore if there are areas where we could operate more sustainably.

6. Accommodation

Our preferences for selecting accommodation included in our packages are small businesses; family-or owner-run; unique; well-located; clean; and great value for money. By engaging with Travelife, we will be getting in touch with each of our regular accommodation suppliers, to indicate our interest in improving the sustainability of our tours and seeing what could be done to support their sustainability efforts. As part of our sustainability efforts, we will be prioritizing suppliers with sustainability plans, programs, or certifications. We want to be clear that this may be formal certification programs, or informal efforts.

Many of our suppliers are small businesses who don't have the resources for formal sustainability planning, but the way they operate is sustainable because it is part of their core values - hiring locally, serving locally sourced food, or operating in remote locations that require self-sufficiency, like water conservation and solar energy.

At Earthstompers, we are in the unique position of working across markets, offering budget-friendly group tours, all the way across the spectrum to high-end luxury safaris. We do this on purpose, because we believe that amazing experiences are available at any price point. A good example is whale watching tours. We work with range of different accommodation suppliers along the whale coast, from basic guest houses to farm stays, to luxury coastal retreats, each of which offers great experiences, albeit at very different price points. We purposefully offer this range of accommodation so that guests can decide what is right for them and their budget.

7. Food

We are giving food its own special section, as it's a topic that is important to us, and a topic that is key for sustainability. Feeding ourselves is our most basic human activity; where we source our food, how we package or serve it, and the culture around eating are interesting topics to explore in travels and culture.

In Earthstompers Travel products, we strive to highlight the incredible local food available in South Africa. We will especially highlight the things that make our country uniquely wonderful: braai, potjiekos, Gatsbys, slap chips, rooibos, boerewors, biltong, pap, bunny chow, chakalaka, melktart, vetkoek, rusks, samoosas...

On our scheduled departures, our partners serve local and traditional food, which includes "potjie" (stew cooked in a black cast iron pot on the fire), braai (meat / veg grilled on the fire; but really, much more important culturally than just the food); and bobotie, a dish influenced by the local Cape Malay population. This is traditional, healthy, hearty, South African food.

We offer a Foodie Day Tour in Cape Town where our guides take guests on a culinary feast of all locally sourced and made food & beverages.

8. Activities

We work with activity providers that we believe offer an enriching experience to our guests. Activities choices are driven by guest demand, but we put forward choices that tend to be nature-based, educational, cultural, or adventure-orientated.

A very important topic specific to our location is wildlife-based activities. The African safari is iconic and is the reason that many visitors choose our country. There are a huge variety of suppliers for these activities, operating across the ethical scale. We follow [SATSA's Captive](#)

[Wildlife Guidelines](#), and are against unnatural animal interactions such as riding or petting of wild animals. When we receive requests from guests for these types of activities, we do our best to educate guests (without alienating them) on why it is better to see wildlife in its natural environment, which South Africa has such a wealth of available experiences for. For example, if we receive a request to go to the wildlife park with captive elephants available for petting and photos, we rather encourage guests to visit the nearby National Park and see the huge herds of elephant in the wild.



Watching elephants in their natural environment at Addo Elephant National Park

We only work with excursion providers who operate responsibly and do not offer activities that harm people, animals, plants, or natural resources such as water and energy, or that are socially or culturally inappropriate. We do not support activities involving captive wildlife unless they are properly regulated and fully compliant with local, national, and international laws. Any wildlife experiences we offer follow recognised codes of conduct, and care is taken to keep disturbance to natural environments to an absolute minimum.

By engaging with Travelife, we plan to engage with each of our activity providers, to indicate our commitment to sustainability, learn about their efforts to operate sustainably, and see if there are areas where we can support their sustainability efforts.

9. Tour leaders, local representatives, and guides

Tour guides are the key to a successful tour and happy guests. They are everything: your driver, your problem solver, your activities director, and sometimes feel like your life coach and friend! This person is very important to guest experience, and therefore, we are very picky about who we hire as guides. When selecting guides, there are basic legal boxes to tick, such as valid professional drivers permit, valid guiding credentials, etc; but what we are really looking for is a person who has the x-factors of being curious, knowledgeable, open, patient, enthusiastic, aware of people's needs, fun to be around, and proudly South African.

In our industry, it is common for tour operators to hire guides on a “freelance” contract basis; this structure works well, because of course, guests don't book tours that run from the traditional office hours of 8-5 Monday to Friday. This is a job that happens according to the demand of our clients, which tends to be holidays, weekends, and seasonal.

From day 1, we have made sure that we are pay industry-leading wages to our freelance tour guides; have fair working conditions; and are compliant with the laws of South Africa. Our guides typically go on one or more training trips with a more senior member of the team, so that they can learn “the Earthstompers way”, which is different from the standard, basic tours that other operators offer.

We have both a Safety Management System (SMS), and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for guides, which each guide must review and sign before conducting a tour. We update these from time to time, to make sure company expectations around safety, sustainability, and guest services, is clear.

Our tour guides are also our eyes on the road; we commit to regularly listening and creating a forum for them to make suggestions related to operating more sustainably. We will integrate sustainability and environmental best practices into our guide Standard Operating Procedures.

10. Destinations

Choosing travel destinations is a subject of much importance to us as tour operators and as people who love to travel. South Africa is a country with so many incredible destinations, and we like to encourage guests to use our expertise to help them plan “off the beaten track” holidays. South Africa is sometimes just seen as Cape Town and Kruger, and while these destinations are great, there are so many awesome rural, small town, and off-the-beaten track places to visit. Many times, these ‘off grid’ places are what foreigners enjoy the most – stopping for a coffee and a pastry at small bakery or “padstal”, seemingly in the middle of nowhere. Here you can experience real South Africa, real culture, and something different from your daily life back home. In case it wasn’t clear already, we are very proud of what South Africa has to offer!



“Roosterkoek,” a South African bread roll cooked on the fire

With that in mind – we design itineraries that are based on our own travels. We try to encourage guests to go beyond the leading and famous attractions. A good example would be our Sustainable “Uniquely Elgin” wine tour. The Elgin wine valley is about an hour’s drive away from Cape Town and is a beautiful apple and cool-climate wine producing area. Many guests want to see the leading destinations of Stellenbosch, Franschhoek or Paarl, but for that adventurous guest that wants something unique, we love to offer wine tours to Elgin.

We have a rule in our company, that we are not allowed to book accommodation for guests anywhere that we have not been ourselves. This is more than just a good excuse to travel lots of cool places! This knowledge allows us to support great suppliers, that might be hidden from mainstream view. We actively look for accommodation suppliers that are unique small businesses, family- or owner-run, as we believe this gives our guests the best experiences that are hard to come by in generic hotel chains.

It should go without having to be said, but we strive to be positive contributors to these areas, buy supporting local businesses and jobs, and minimizing our environmental impact.

The natural beauty of South Africa is off the charts. We make full “use” of this, by taking our visitors places where they can explore this natural beauty. There’s an awareness that in modern life, many of us are too connected to the screen and online life; we are proud to be able to offer guests offline experiences connecting with nature and connecting with each other.

We operate in this destination because this is home, this is where we are from. Earthstompers founder Hendrik Human was born and raised in Mossel Bay, on the Garden Route, and that’s where our love of place begins. In fact, our yearly managers retreat takes place near here, in Vleisbaai...we all love this place, and a swim in this sea is rooted deep in who we are!

We are participating in Travelife, because even though sustainability is core to who we are, we know that there is always room for improvement. We are hopeful that this platform gives us a framework to engage with our suppliers and communities, to improve environmental, social, and economic outcomes.

11. Customer communication and protection

Excellent communication with our customers is very important to how we operate. One of the ways we do this is being clear in our proposals, pricing, and itineraries, so that guests know exactly where they are going, what costs are involved, and what the plan is day-by-day.



Earthstompers managers meeting, Garden Route style

We communicate our sustainability commitments by having them posted publicly on our website; and by sending every guest “responsible traveller advice” in advance of every tour.

We advertise largely through word-of-mouth, online reviews, our website, and social media. We are striving for personal connections with our clients, showing them, how incredible Southern Africa is, not only in terms of landscapes and wildlife, but in terms of the friendliness, open mindedness, and kindness of its people. We see ourselves as ambassadors of our beautiful country.

We are guided by South African and foreign guest privacy requirements; our privacy policy is available [here](#). We are committed to being honest and clear in all our marketing and advertising. We don’t make promises we can’t keep, and we don’t exaggerate what we offer. Our team understands exactly what we provide and makes sure that what we promote can be delivered smoothly and as expected for our guests.

In the event of something that doesn’t meet guest expectations, we encourage guests to bring it up with their tour guide or company contact whilst travelling, as this is when we can most readily address their concerns. If this can’t be accomplished, our general manager, Cindy Schalkwyk, is available to address guest difficulties or complaints.

12. Contact / responsible person

Any questions or comments about this policy can be directed to sustainability coordinator: Terri Van Antwerpen. +27 (0)82 443 1354, info@earthstompers.com

Terri is responsible for leading implementation of this policy. Terri is uniquely positioned within the company, working both in the office and as a tour guide. This allows her to be a bridge of communication between the office team, the tour guides, and the suppliers.

Every person in our company carries responsibility for operating sustainably, from tour guides modelling sustainable behaviour, to tour consultants designing travel packages, to management setting values and direction. We will encourage our guests to carry their environmental & social responsibility too and will do our part to enshrine this as a company value when travelling with Earthstompers.