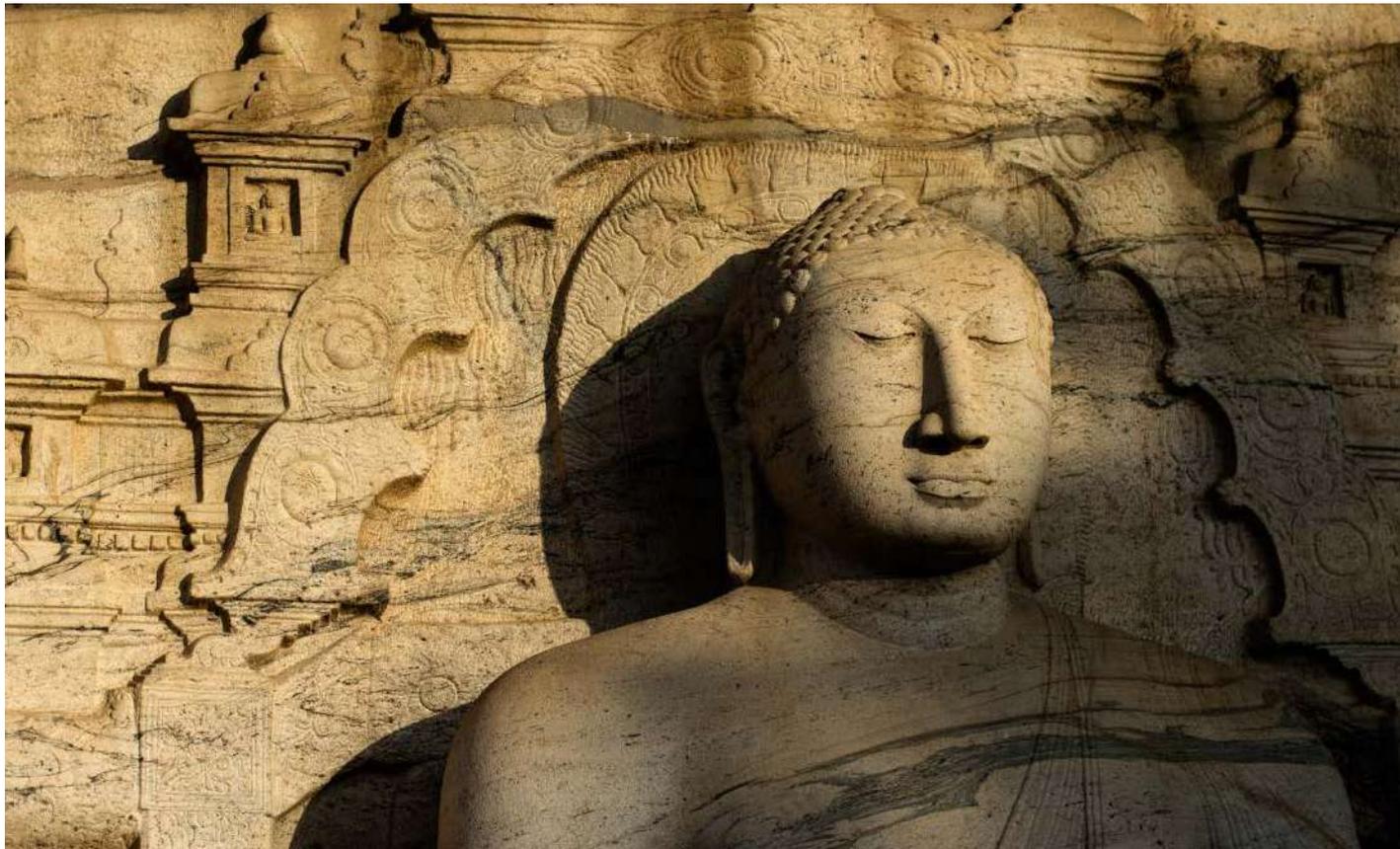




PRINCIPLE 09

Preservation and Celebration of Culture



Culture is the identity of who we are, our history, our past and our present. At the very heart of all we do, the differences we celebrate and way we live is shaped by culture. While the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do not have a direct goal towards preserving culture, understanding that all SDGs are interconnected, it is interesting to note how culture fits into it. Reflected across most of the goals and their underlying targets, culture is tied to many including sustainable cities (SDG 11), decent work (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), climate action (SDG 13), gender equality (SDG 5), innovation (SDG 9), and peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16).

Regenerative tourism practices that value both natural and cultural heritage are changing how people travel – wanting to leave behind a place better than when they arrived and preservation and celebration of culture is the first step.

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Importance and impact to business in the short and long term

The cultural heritage of a country defines how businesses operate in that country. It is both the tangible and intangible evidence of humans, how we have evolved and grown within our communities to deliver social significance.

With economic growth comes globalization. As the line between cultures blur and merge, and with it the individuality of generations passed, these cultures are at risk of disappearing altogether. Despite the world getting 'smaller' we still hold our innate cultural differences in terms of how we think and the way we act which translates into multiple perspectives and a diverse idea pool.

For tourism, culture plays a particularly important role as tourism is how the world is given an insight into a country's identity.

How you can live up to this principle

01 What can we do as an SME?

The connection SMEs in the tourism industry have to local communities and cultures are incomparable to larger organisations. This gives SMEs the unique opportunity to be the 'torchbearers' of upholding Sri Lanka's rich and diverse cultural heritage.

02 Study your local cultures and traditions

Depending on where you are based in the island, the cultural differences are bound to vary. From cuisine to traditions to sites. Study your local cultures and traditions by engaging with communities in the area to understand the social significance of it as represented by its people.

03 Educate your teams and your guests

Translate these learnings to your teams and guests. Teams need to be aware of the diverse cultural offerings of Sri Lanka so that they may in turn provide an unforgettable opportunity to guests. Through learning and experience is how we understand and respect cultures that differ from our own. The new age conscious traveller looks to learn more about cultures and individuality. As an SME in the tourism industry, providing guests with this opportunity, would not only create a unique experience offering for your business but would also give your guests a local, conscious insight into the country's multi-cultural heritage.

04 Respect local cultures

Cultural preservation and celebration through tourism is a significant way of promoting peace and tolerance between cultures and communities. Use this opportunity to build lasting relationships with local communities. This will result in communities that are proud of their cultural heritage and willing to share these cultures to celebrate with guests.

05

Collaborate with local communities to celebrate culture

Often, cultural experiences are commercialized and altered to suit the tourist's palate. This false notion of 'what the guest wants' has detrimental effects as it not only takes away from the authenticity of the experience for the tourist but negatively impacts the local community who may lose pride in their cultural identity as a result.

Intangible cultural aspects such as cuisine, traditional celebrations, performing arts are those that have been passed down through generations. By collaborating with local communities, who are the rightful stewards of these cultural aspects, tourists are given an authentic experience while contributing the upliftment of those local communities.

06

Avoid cultural appropriation

Cultural appropriation is the use of elements of another's culture without their acknowledgement or in an inappropriate manner. Cultural traditions are more than just unique celebrations, clothing and aesthetics. It is important that when undertaking tourist operations aimed at celebrating culture, it is done so respectfully and where necessary, with the permission of the community from which the particular cultural element is borrowed.

07

Balancing celebration and preservation

How do we sustainably celebrate our cultures without placing undue pressure on these heritage sites and local communities? While tourism is a gateway to cultural celebration, it could also have negative impacts on local communities and heritage sites through overexploitation either by not sharing proceeds of cultural tourism with local communities who drive it or by over visitation of sites of historical significance. Ensure that your cultural experiences offered to guests do not interfere with the lives of the local communities involved or result in large overcrowding at more popular heritage sites. By doing your own research and engaging with local communities to gain first hand information, you may be able to find alternate cultural attractions that provide guests with a more memorable experience than battling crowds at mainstream sites.

08

Create and offer experiences that coincide with Sri Lanka's cultural calendar

Sri Lanka's multicultural population means that the year's calendar is filled with unique cultural celebrations. Engage with local communities to identify how you can create a respectful and joyful experience for your guests be it enjoying traditional food during the Sinhala and Tamil New Year, breaking fast during Ramadan or a traditional Christmas dinner in the tropics. By exploring the diverse cultures and associated customs and rituals enables guests to tell their own stories and celebrate these cultures in all its authenticities.

What can we do as an industry?

Fair compensation

As an industry, work together with business associations to establish ways of giving back to local communities. By creating a tourist experience of a local community and their daily life and customs, you are utilizing their services and knowledge to provide this experience for which the locals should be fairly compensated. Likewise, support communities to be able to continue to make a living of their unique culture be it through souvenirs, artefacts or traditional handicrafts. By ensuring fair compensation, a sense of pride is created among the community where they continue to engage with guests without feeling exploited.

Abide by local laws and regulations in place to protect historical and archaeological artefacts

Our cultural heritage is rich in history and the story of our ancestors. Laws and regulations are placed so that this is preserved for future generations. Educate yourself and others in the industry of the prevailing local laws and ensure this information is conveyed to guests.

Support the preservation of culture through effective Public-Private Partnerships

As an industry that depends on the uniqueness of Sri Lanka's cultural diversity, while it is the right thing to do, it also makes business sense. Work with local government, NGOs and cultural experts to identify how cultures at risk of dying out can be revived. Additionally, support efforts to preserve existing cultural sites by respectful use and maintenance support of heritage sites.

How can you influence others?

Communicate authentically and respectfully

Share experiences with local communities and cultures on social media and relevant platforms. Authentic storytelling is what persuades people to travel and explore lesser-known cultures. Keeping this in mind, be respectful to how the message is communicated by highlighting local customs as relayed by the communities.

Advocate for lesser-known cultural heritage sites

By offering lesser-travelled cultural experiences to guests, the pressure on existing sites is minimized while newer experiences are shared. By exploring local cultures and creating tailored experiences you would be in a position to advocate for policy changes to reduce visitation to destinations that are regularly promoted through communications channels and create curiosity among conscious travellers for a novel experience.

Advocate for respect of all cultures

Tourism is a tool for peace and tolerance as people experience cultures different from their own. Advocate for respect of all cultures and call out disrespect when you see it or hear it. The diversity of culture and traditions is what defines us and should be celebrated as that – a multicultural Sri Lanka.

Global best practices

Interreg Europe

Collection of the Good Practice Examples in Cultural Heritage Sustainability and Durability. This compendium highlights best practices of both tangible and intangible cultural preservation across Europe that can be adopted worldwide.

Read more on these best practices here:

https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/tx_tevprojects/library/file_1580999494.pdf

Beyond Green

A platform of leading hotels that highlight the future of tourism through the preservation of cultural and natural heritage.

Read more on their goals and member best practices here:

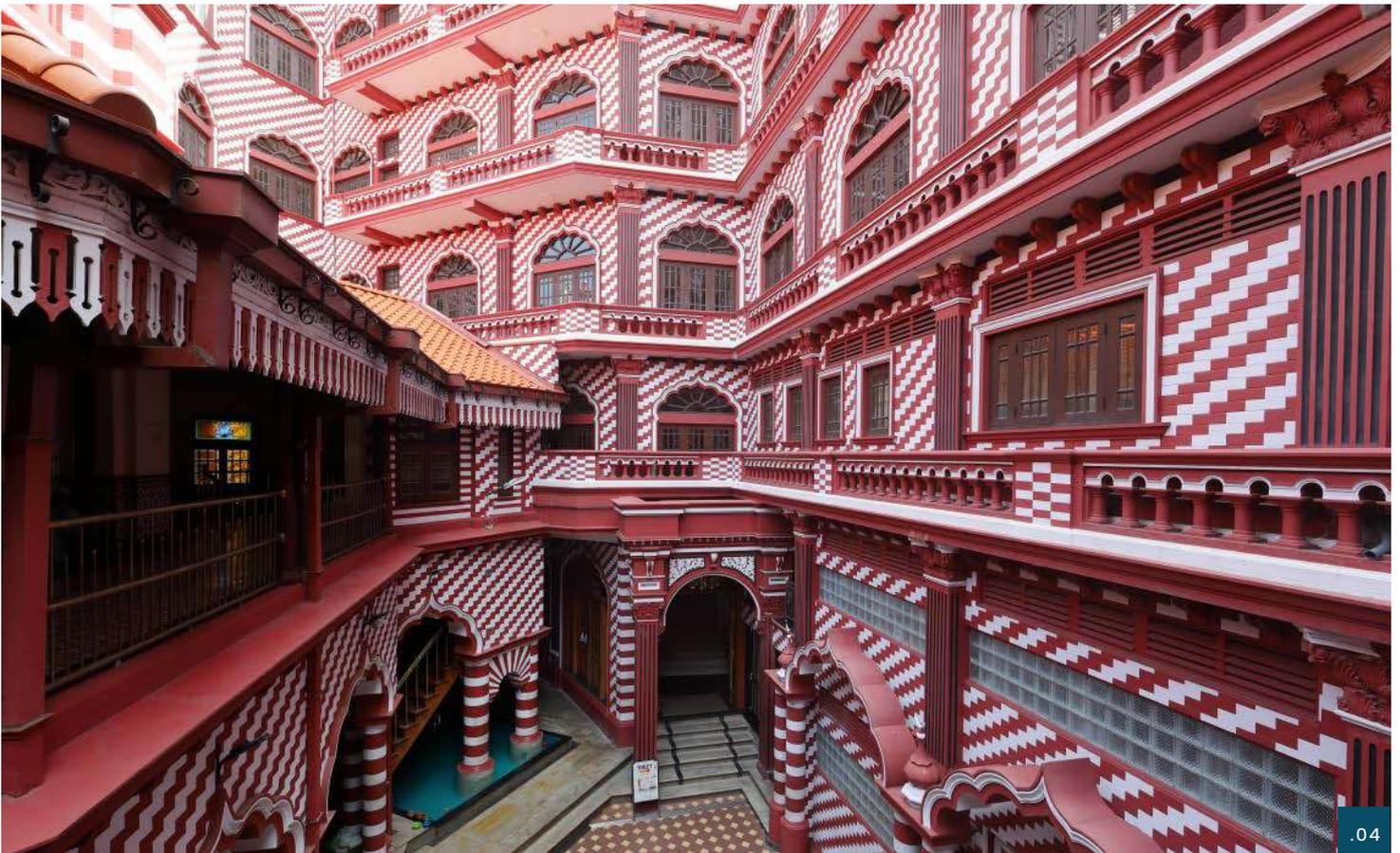
<https://staybeyondgreen.com/>

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Sustainable Travel Pledge

this Pledge aims to encourage sustainable travel and cultural celebration and preservation around the world. Signatories are encouraged to learn from others and share best practices to drive positive change.

Read more and sign the Pledge here:

<https://unescosustainable.travel/en/about-the-pledge>



Organizations and institutions that can help you on your journey

[Tourism for SDGs](#)

Provides recommendations on how tourism stakeholders can increase diversity through the SDGs by ensuring substantial female participation and local community upliftment through employment and training opportunities.

Read more on these recommendations here:

<https://tourism4sdgs.org/act/companies/>

[UNESCO World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Toolkit](#)

This toolkit developed by UNESCO provides a 'how to' guide for tourism operators in world heritage site communities in order to sustainably manage these sites.

The toolkit can be accessed here:

<http://whc.unesco.org/sustainabletourismtoolkit/how-use-guide>

[UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism](#)

The United Nations World Tourism Organization provides a set of Ten Articles which outline responsible tourism practices across culture, environment and economy among others. This guiding document can be found here:

<https://www.unwto.org/global-code-of-ethics-for-tourism>



Sustainability
Principles

**For more information about the
Alliance and our projects**

please visit : <https://www.srilankatourismalliance.com>
email us at : welcome@srilankatourismalliance.com