

Company Profile: “forum anders reisen e.V.” - Business Association for Sustainable Tourism

The Association

Forum anders reisen (far) is a business association of small and medium-sized tour operators. The association promotes gentle forms of tourism based on sustainable development. For this purpose its members have committed to comply with a comprehensive set of criteria, which is monitored through a CSR process. The umbrella organisation is organised as a registered association (e.V.). It was founded in 1998 by 12 tour operators and comprises 124 members by now (January 2012). In 2010 far's member tour operators achieved a total turnover of approximately € 117 million catering to about 94,000 customers.

Mission Statement

Forum anders reisen and its members strive for a form of tourism which is ecologically maintainable, economically viable and ethically and socially just in the long-term. The association supports its members with the implementation of this through basic groundwork, the coordination and channelization of communication as well as marketing their travel and tourism products. The association increases public awareness of the ecological, economic and cultural impacts of tourism and provides incentives for gentle and responsible tourism through specific offers and programmes.

Set of Criteria

The members of forum anders reisen commit to comply with a comprehensive set of criteria for environmentally and socially sustainable tourism. The most important ecological criterion is an environmentally-friendly journey to the destination. This means that no flights will be offered for distances of less than 700 km. If air travel is offered for distances ranging from 700 to 2,000 km, the duration of stay must be at least one week, if flights cover a distance of more than 2,000 km, it must last at least 14 days. Economic criteria ensure, for example, that as much money as possible remains in and thus benefits the destination. More precisely, this means that accommodation, which is typical for the region, family-run and managed by the owner is being preferred. Other criteria have been defined regarding social aspects. These include respect for the society, culture and needs of the local population at the destinations. In practice, this means, for example, that cultural mediators accompany the groups and local people are being involved to a large extent in the development and implementation of tourism activities.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Tourism

The CSR reporting system is ground-breaking in the travel and tourism industry: in cooperation with the Center for Ecology and Development (KATE e.V.), forum anders reisen has developed and introduced a standardised and compulsory CSR process for its members. CSR stands for Corporate Social Responsibility and refers to the contribution of businesses to a sustainable development. By means of this CSR process all business units are being audited for their level of sustainability ranging from the paper consumption in the office to the accommodation at the destinations. Hence, for the first time it is now possible to audit and measure the sustainability of individual tourism businesses. The CSR reports truthfully provide information about the tour operators' strengths and weaknesses and thus assist in the

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continuous improvement of a company's performance regarding sustainability. They are being audited by an independent certification council. If a tour operator achieves all required benchmarks, the CSR certification is being issued.

The far members' tourism products

The tourism products of far's members stand for a special quality in two respects: when planning and conducting tours, the operators take environmental and social aspects into account. Furthermore, their tourism products are characterised by a high experiential and recreational value. The set of criteria strongly encourages these aspects: for example, by using slow means of transportation at the destination, travelling in small groups, using public transport, consuming food that is typical of the country or region, and by using family-owned accommodation. The travellers get to know other people and themselves better. By getting inspired to take responsibility and get active themselves, they can enhance their own personal development.

Products of forum anders reisen

www.forumandersreisen.de

Most of the member tour operators present their tourism products on the association's internet platform. The tours can be booked online or booking requests can be made. In addition, the portal provides comprehensive background information about the association, a media lounge, customers' travel reports and an online job market.

Shared trade fair stand of forum anders reisen

The association and its members present themselves with a joint stand at about 10 German and Austrian tourism trade fairs each year. The special feature of the stand: tour operators can choose how to present themselves ranging from catalogue displays to own floor space within the joint stand. The association thus takes the different capacities of its small, medium-sized and large member companies into account.

Reisepерlen (joint travel catalogue)

About 60 tour operators with approximately 200 sustainable, worldwide travel ideas participate in far's joint travel catalogue. This product, which has been reissued annually since 2006, is of special significance in the tourism industry as it offers exclusively environmentally and socially responsible tour packages. Furthermore, the varied offers come from small, specialised tour operators, who are real experts in their regions.

Projects of forum anders reisen

nachdenken • klimabewusst reisen

atmosfair



atmosfair – travelling with the climate in mind

The climate initiative was jointly launched by forum anders reisen and Germanwatch. Far's motive for this was to raise awareness among the travellers regarding their impact on the environment and climate and to create a possibility to mitigate the damage.



Visiting WWF Projects

Special trips have been developed to visit WWF projects worldwide. Since 2007, they have been offered in a cooperation between WWF and forum anders reisen. These trips link tourism and nature conservation in a unique manner. Tourists get first-hand opportunities to gain insights into the groundwork of the world's largest nature conservation organisation, and in addition they financially support these projects through a share of their travel expenditures.

Unique tours



Unique tours are being developed time and again in cooperation with various member tour operators. They illustrate the exemplary collaboration within far and our tour operator's creative ideas.

For example, in 2008 we brought into being a 175-day bicycle tour from Athens to Beijing in cooperation with six of our members. For customers demanding a higher level of comfort the tour was additionally run as a 70-day bus tour. Following this first continuous bus tour from Germany to China, already in 2010 a tour from Hamburg to the World Expo host city Shanghai took place.

Another unique tour had been organised by forum anders reisen on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the German reunification. A 109-day bicycle tour lead across Europe following the former "Iron Curtain".

Further information: www.athen-peking.de and www.radreise-gruenesband.de

Awards



Green Palm 2008, awarded by GeoSaison magazine for achievements in the field of sustainable tourism.



Golden Palm 2008, awarded by GeoSaison magazine for the bicycle tour "Halfway around the world in 175 days" from Athens to Beijing.



Touristik Preis 2008, awarded by Sonntag Aktuell newspaper for the bicycle tour „Halfway around the world in 175 days from Athens to Beijing.



TRAVEL INDUSTRY CLUB

Best Practice Award 2008 (third prize) awarded by Travel Industry Club for the project "CSR reporting system in tourism".



A national special award of the European Corporate Responsibility Awards 2009 was handed over by Prof. Dr. Töpfer for the CSR certification process of forum anders reisen.