

Yangphel Adventure Travel & The Road to Sustainable Tourism

The Inspiration

Founded by the Yangphel Company, Yangphel Adventure Travel has become a vital part of the tourism industry in Bhutan. Considered by many to be one of the most progressive and innovative leaders in Bhutan's tourism sector, Yangphel began as an adventure travel tour operator in 1988 and has built a strong reputation as one of the best at providing authentic, personal and inspiring journeys throughout Bhutan. In 2005, building on these core values, the company opened the first fully Bhutanese-owned 5-star hotel in Paro: Hotel Zhiwa Ling. While its roots remain in the tourism and hospitality industries, our founders are now expanding into other businesses. In all of its endeavours, however, Yangphel has remained true to its original commitment to uphold the kingdom's traditions and values and apply the uniquely Bhutanese principles of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in all its affairs. While sustainable business practices have been widely implemented around the world during the past 15 years, never before has the concept of GNH been applied in a business context. Aware of the importance of its role as an industry leader, Yangphel continues to demonstrate its courageous and visionary philosophy and place the welfare of personnel, other stakeholders and the Bhutanese people, before profits.

The Journey

Now Yangphel Adventure Travel has embarked on a ground-breaking quest to bring sustainability into its day-to-day operation of the tour company so that we are at par with international standards for 'green' tour operators and the aspirations of our guests. What differentiates Yangphel Adventure Travel's sustainable tourism program from any others in the world, however, is that we aspire to incorporate GNH not just into the way we do business, but the way we treat our staff, and the way we take care of our guests.

The Bhutanese development model of Gross National Happiness has been amply analysed and researched over the past forty years and there are now many exciting initiatives in progress throughout Bhutan to demonstrate GNH as a way of life (more information on GNH may be found [here](#)). Yangphel Adventure Travel is aiming not only to make the tour company's approach to the environment 'greener' but to bring the aspirations of a GNH society a little closer to reality by working with, and listening to, the people we deal with and rely on daily. We know it will be a long, slow road, but we are excited to have taken the first steps on what will be a three-year journey that, hopefully step by step, will lead us to our goal.

Vision, Mission & Values

Yangphel Adventure Travel and its founder Yangphel recently summarised our company philosophy and ethos in vision and mission statements and a set of core values that reflect how we feel all of us – owners, managers and staff – should make decisions and conduct ourselves in our interactions with stakeholders, guests, and one another.

VISION

To lead the way to happiness with world-class services and our commitment to Bhutanese values.

MISSION

To be the most innovative Bhutanese company in our commitment to excellence, providing genuine and authentic service with a personal touch.

CORE VALUES

- Teamwork
- Integrity
- Excellence
- Innovation
- Sustainability

The Signposts

Teamwork

We believe in our team and recognise that it is the backbone of our organization. We train and empower our staff to communicate and support one another in their pursuit of excellence in everything we do. Together we deliver extraordinary experiences and exceptional service to our guests and everyone we do business with. We aim for balance and harmony among our team members in an environment where no one is over-burdened and no one is over-powering.

Integrity

We are committed to conducting our business dealings with our team, business partners, customers, guests and stakeholders with the utmost professionalism, honesty and fairness. We believe in solving challenges in a compassionate way that respects the wellbeing of all involved parties and embodies true Bhutanese values.

Excellence

We are committed to always delivering excellence in everything we do, with sincere concern and personal attention to every individual. We provide world-class services and experiences that are the foundations of our success.

Innovation

We are natural innovators and our continuous search for new ideas, better solutions and more efficient ways to do things keeps our organisation vibrant and full of energy. We empower our team to think and act like leaders, innovating and growing in some small way every day.

Sustainability

We are committed to maintaining our business as an enduring entity that is financially viable and providing secure employment for our team, reducing and mitigating our environmental impact, and not just ensuring but enhancing the sustainability and conservation of our culture and communities.

The Roadmap

We have identified areas of action and planned initiatives to assure that each objective is met in the course of the three-year period from 2011 through 2013. At the end of each year, we will be reporting on our progress through a 'Sustainability and GNH Report' the first of which will be released in January 2012.

Priority	Area Covered	Objectives
Business Conduct We will conduct our business with integrity while embodying and honouring Bhutanese values.	Responsibility for our impact Corporate Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To take responsibility for measuring and mitigating our impact on the Bhutanese culture, society and environment and effectively managing our sustainability performanceTo maintain a high standard of honest, ethical and legal business behaviour in accordance with our Core Values, Mission and Vision, GNH values, local and international laws
Our team – Our people We will educate and empower our staff to	Education & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To increase awareness of GNH values and how to apply them to daily living at home and at work

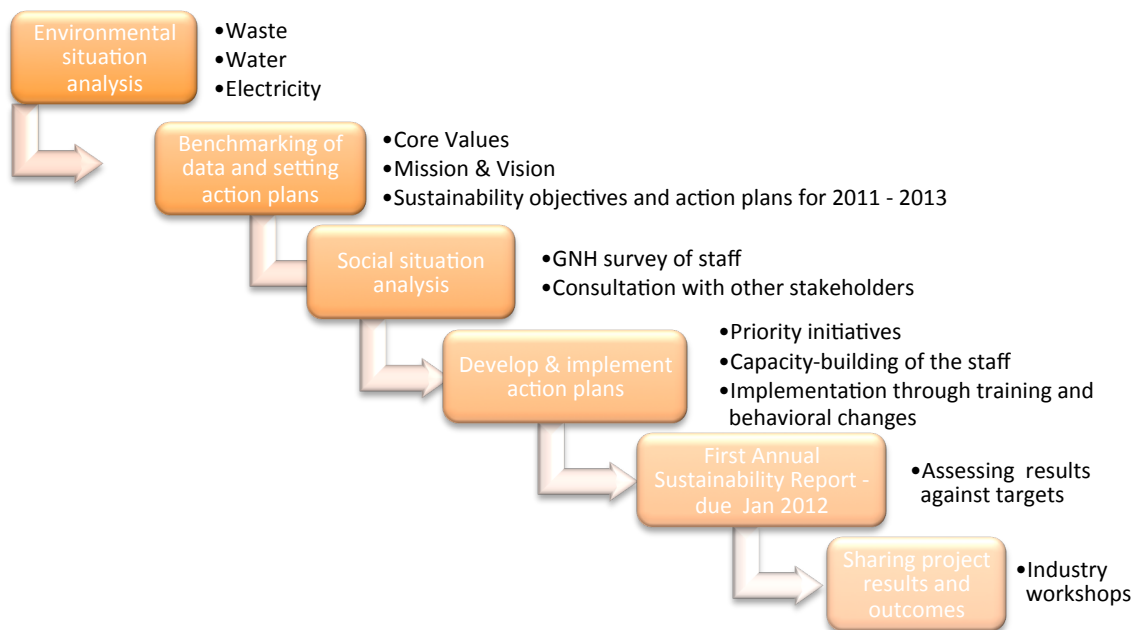
<p>make conscious sustainability and GNH decisions in their work and private lives.</p>	<p>Work-Life Balance</p> <p>Health, Well-Being & Safety at Work</p> <p>Living Standards</p> <p>Incentives & Rewards</p> <p>Leading the Way to Happiness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide education & development opportunities in areas identified by the team that conform to our Core Values, Mission and Vision • To ensure that our staff have fair and balanced working hours • To offer events and activities that allow staff to pursue traditions that they consider an important part of their Bhutanese identity • To ensure the health and safety of our team at work. • To provide educational opportunities and activities that increase the health & wellbeing of the team • To provide access to education on managing salaries sensibly through budgeting, savings strategies and an understanding the ramifications of bank loans • To provide our team with incentives and rewards for making positive sustainability and GNH decisions at work and at home • To conduct a bi-annual GNH survey with our staff to monitor levels of happiness vis-à-vis the national average and use the results to develop initiatives and actions for staff that reflect our Core Values, Mission, Vision and sustainability priorities
<p>Our Customers We will involve, inform and invite our guests & customers to participate in our sustainability and GNH initiatives.</p>	<p>Raising Awareness</p> <p>Guests & Customers Participation</p> <p>Guest Experience & Customer Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase guest & customer awareness of our sustainability and GNH initiatives • To provide opportunities for guests to learn about GNH and how it is applied in Bhutan • To offer sustainability and GNH activities that are easy for guests & customers to participate in and encourage them to apply these at home • To listen to our customers and offer opportunities to give us feedback • To provide a healthy environment and encourage a healthy lifestyle among our guests/customers • To deliver authentic experiences and services that provide the opportunity for transformation for our guests/customers
<p>Our Suppliers & Partners We will aim to purchase products and equipment that have a minimal environmental impact and encourage our partners to make a commitment to sustainable practices.</p>	<p>Green Purchasing Policy</p> <p>Raising Awareness of Suppliers & Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the number of purchases sourced from local suppliers within a 100km radius of the company • To establish purchasing policies that reduce the amount of packaging brought into the company • To always consider products and equipment that have minimal environmental impact and if the ROI period falls within an acceptable range choose the 'green' option • To raise awareness of sustainable practices and GNH values among our suppliers

<p>Community We will take an active role in supporting and enhancing the vitality of the community in Bhutan.</p>	<p>Raising Awareness</p> <p>Volunteering & Donations</p> <p>Community Participation</p> <p>Local Employment & Income Generation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise awareness of GNH values within the local communities in which we operate • To lead by example by encouraging volunteering as well as donating time and resources to the communities in which we operate • To listen to the local communities that we affect and engage in projects that support community cohesion • To recruit the majority of our staff from local areas • To assist communities with developing sustainable income-generating activities
<p>Culture We will promote the Bhutanese cultural identity and diversity with dignity and integrity.</p>	<p>Arts, Crafts & Dance</p> <p>Rituals & Meditation</p> <p>Traditional Games & Sports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To preserve the traditional arts, crafts, folklore and dance of Bhutan • To support the development of new and diverse arts • To provide opportunities to interested staff, guests and stakeholders to learn and practice the traditional Buddhist rituals, prayers and meditations • To engage with local communities through participation in traditional sports, social and cultural events
<p>Environment We will continuously improve our environmental awareness and performance and mitigate any negative impact to the extent possible.</p>	<p>Sustainability Reporting</p> <p>Energy Conservation</p> <p>Waste Reduction</p> <p>Water Conservation</p> <p>Nature Conservation</p> <p>Vehicle Fuel</p> <p>Carbon Footprint</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue the monitoring and internal reporting of our key environmental indicators and effectively manage our sustainability performance • To reduce our energy consumption and become more energy-efficient in every area of operation without diminishing the guest/customer experience and comfort • To continually decrease the amount of waste generated and increase the amount that is recycled • To conserve water whenever possible without diminishing guest/customer comfort • To discharge clean water from on-site wastewater treatments for reuse in gardens • To contribute to the conservation of Bhutan's natural ecosystems, particularly forests and wetlands • To improve vehicle fuel efficiency and seek out cleaner vehicle alternatives without compromising the guest experience and comfort • To continually monitor and reduce our carbon footprint as much as possible and explore the possibility of becoming carbon-neutral
<p>Tourism Industry of Bhutan</p>	<p>Raising Awareness of Sustainability &</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To contribute to advancing the sustainability of the tourism industry in Bhutan

We will freely share the methods, tools and insights from this project to foster a sustainable tourism industry in Bhutan.	GNH Practices Building Capacity of Local Experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To share the methods used and results obtained through this project with relevant tourism stakeholders • To build the capacity of local Bhutanese staff to become experts in the application of sustainability and GNH principles to tourism and hospitality
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Steps Toward Sustainable Tourism & GNH

The journey that began in June 2010 will unfold over the next three years, and the illustration below shows the path that we are taking. As of January 2011 we are at Step 3: the Social Situation Analysis.



More information

For more information on the Sustainable Tourism & GNH project for Yangphel Adventure Travel and Hotel Zhiwa Ling, please contact our Sustainable Tourism Advisor, Isabel Sebastian at sustainability@zhiwaling.com .