



Absolute Escapes

Climate Action Plan

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“There is a love of wild nature in everybody.”
John Muir

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Introduction

[The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) emphasises the immediate and ongoing necessity to significantly cut greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors throughout this decade. The tourism industry faces a significant vulnerability to climate change while simultaneously being a contributor to these carbon emissions.

In order to restrict global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, emissions must decrease, aiming for an almost 50% reduction by 2030 – less than seven years from now. Our efforts to contribute to these reduction goals are detailed in this document.

Who are we?



Absolute Escapes provides award-winning [walking holidays](#) and [self-drive tours](#) across the UK & Ireland. Through meticulous planning and our first-hand knowledge of the best travel experiences, we offer our clients imaginative, unique, and unforgettable holidays, free from the daunting task of planning it themselves.

Our vision and values

The health of the environment is of concern to everyone and we at Absolute Escapes take our responsibilities seriously with a commitment to sustainable tourism that does its best to conserve and protect the world's resources.

From humble beginnings in a spare bedroom in Edinburgh in 2004, our co-founders, Andy Gabe and Sheila Tulloch, have transformed Absolute Escapes into a multi-award-winning tour operator based in the heart of Edinburgh's Old Town. As we have grown and evolved, we have taken pride in staying true to our founding principles:

- Integrity
- Team
- Love Wild Places
- Effectiveness
- Expertise
- Determination
- Creativity

Everyone in the tourism sector has a role to play in accelerating climate action. Our team, their expertise, and our shared love of wild places help guide us in our commitment to the objectives detailed in this Climate Action Plan.

Our Climate Action Plan

We recognise the urgent threat that climate change poses to the natural areas we cherish and the need to preserve them for future generations, both for tourists and locals.

To live up to this commitment, we are taking concrete actions to reduce our business's impact on the environment. These actions are detailed in this document within the framework of the [Glasgow Declaration's](#) five shared pathways to ensure climate action is consistent across the whole tourism industry.



Glasgow Declaration

What is the Glasgow Declaration?

We have committed to being more environmentally conscious and reducing our impact as a tour operator by signing the [Glasgow Declaration](#).

The Glasgow Declaration was created after the [UN Climate Change Conference COP 26](#), held in Glasgow in 2021, to secure strong actions and commitment from the tourism sector, to cut tourism emissions by at least 50% over the next decade and achieve net zero emissions before 2050.

Being a signatory involves implementing a climate action plan aligned with specific commitments, reporting progress annually, and collaborating with other organisations for effective climate action in tourism. As part of the climate action plan we are working on, we are aligning our plan with five shared pathways ([measure](#), [decarbonise](#), [regenerate](#), [collaborate](#), [finance](#)) to ensure climate action is consistent across the whole tourism industry.

Our commitment and scope

Our climate action objectives will apply to all employees of Absolute Escapes. Staff are expected to uphold the actions under this plan to the fullest extent daily within prevailing budgets. Management is to be informed of any barriers to achieving these goals (i.e. financial or other) and this policy should be referred to as a guidance framework to make decisions that have the best possible effect on us, the environment, and our customers.

We acknowledge we have limited influence over third parties with whom we work, such as accommodation providers and transport companies. While we cannot control the decisions of these parties, we commit to educating them on our policy and encouraging them to align operating practices with policy objectives.

Our attention to environmental, social, and economic responsibility includes working within the law and voluntarily exceeding the legal requirements to be innovative and demonstrate leadership on the issues that are important to us and our customers. As we design holidays, work with suppliers, and evaluate our success, we are able to choose every day, in big and small ways, how our actions and words build a better quality of life for our employees, customers, and suppliers.

Objectives

Five Pathways of Climate Action

1

Measure

Track and disclose all travel-related emissions using transparent tools aligned with UNFCCC guidelines.

2

Decarbonise

Set and achieve science-based targets for carbon reduction in transport, infrastructure, accommodation, activities, food, and waste management. Prioritise real reductions over offsets.

4

Collaborate

Share risk and solution evidence with stakeholders and guests. Foster collaboration for effective and coordinated climate action at all levels.

3

Regenerate

Restore ecosystems to enhance carbon absorption, safeguard biodiversity, food security, and water supply. Support vulnerable communities in adapting to climate change impacts.

5

Finance

Allocate resources to meet climate plan objectives, including financing training, research, and effective fiscal policies. Ensure organisational capacity aligns with climate goals.

Measure

Measure and disclose all travel and tourism-related emissions. Ensure our methodologies and tools are aligned to [UNFCCC](#)-relevant guidelines on measurement, reporting, and verification, and that they are transparent and accessible.

Objective	Indicator	Target	Why
Measure the carbon footprint of our top walking holidays and self-drive itineraries.	We will measure the carbon footprint of our most popular walking and self-drive holidays.	To have calculated the estimated carbon emissions of a typical booking for the following holidays: West Highland Way (7-night itinerary), and Great Glen Way (8-night itinerary). Shetland & Orkney: Escape to The Edge, Hebridean Island Hopping using this calculator .	To deepen our comprehension of the carbon footprint associated with our top holidays. Our future objective is to disseminate this information to clients, empowering them to make informed and sustainable choices when planning their holidays.
Reduce the carbon footprint of our research trips.	We aim to assess the carbon footprint of three research trips undertaken in 2023 and compare these findings with the expected emissions from three trips planned for 2024.	We will have computed the estimated carbon emissions for two walking research trips and one self-drive research trip in 2023, intending to contrast these figures with the carbon footprint projections for three of our 2024 research trips, using this calculator .	To enhance our awareness of the carbon footprint stemming from our annual research trips, we aim to proactively integrate the assessment of the likely environmental impact into the planning and preparation stages. This forward-thinking approach will guide us in making more sustainable choices for our future research endeavours.
Measure the carbon footprint of our information packs.	We plan to quantify the carbon footprint associated with both a typical walking and self-drive information pack, to contrast these findings with the environmental impact of our newly introduced paper-lite packs.	To have calculated the estimated carbon emissions of one walking information pack, one self-drive information pack, and one paper-lite pack using this calculator .	To start gaining a better understanding of the carbon footprint associated with our information packs and, ideally, discern the advantages of transitioning to paper-lite or fully digital alternatives. This newfound insight can eventually be shared with our clients.

Decarbonise

Set and deliver targets aligned with climate science to accelerate tourism's decarbonisation. This includes transport, infrastructure, accommodation, activities, food & drink, and waste management. While offsetting may have a subsidiary role, it must be complementary to real reductions.

Objective	Indicator	Target	Why
Introduce paper-lite information packs.	Quantify the anticipated carbon footprint of our recently introduced Paper-lite packs.	To achieve a 50% reduction in the carbon footprint associated with our information packs.	As we send hundreds of information packs annually, we must embark on the transition to paper-lite and fully digital, where possible. This shift entails delivering the same valuable information in a digital format. Our primary objectives are twofold: to significantly diminish our carbon footprint and to empower our clients to make environmentally responsible choices.
Review of our information pack packaging to maximise its reusability or recyclability.	Conduct a thorough assessment of all items included in our information packs to ascertain their potential for effective reuse or recycling by our clients.	To be able to confidently say that every item incorporated into our information packs is designed for both reuse and recyclability.	We are committed to embodying our principles through the delivery of sustainable, high-quality products to our clients.
To ensure that at least 90% of the office supplies that we buy are circular or fair-trade.	Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of our stock list to guarantee that our purchases align with sustainable practices.	Ensure that a minimum of 90% of the items purchased on a weekly or monthly basis meet our sustainable criteria.	This commitment aligns with our dedication to sustainability, ethical sourcing, and responsible business practices.

Regenerate

Restore and protect ecosystems, supporting nature's ability to draw down carbon, as well as safeguarding biodiversity, food security, and water supply. As much of tourism is based in regions most immediately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, ensure the sector can support affected and at-risk communities in resilience building, adaptation, and disaster response. Help visitors and host communities experience a better balance with nature.

Objective	Indicator	Target	Why
We will send members of our team to John Muir Trust's Glenlude site in the Scottish Borders on a volunteer day.	We will measure the success of this objective by how many team members went on a volunteer day.	We aim to have 20 team members spend a day volunteering for the John Muir Trust within 12 months.	Volunteers play an essential part at the John Muir Trust. By volunteering at Glenlude, we can help make a difference for the wild places we love and support the trust's 20-year plan to restore the former sheep farm and conifer plantation to a mosaic of native habitats at the Glenlude site.
We will encourage our clients to donate to organisations that care for the walking trails after they return from that trail.	We will measure how many donation links we send in our feedback emails to clients after their holidays.	We aim to include a donation link in 50% of our feedback emails.	Many walking trail organisations invest significant time and resources each year to maintain the route. By encouraging donations we are contributing towards the upkeep and maintenance of the trails we offer. It's our way of giving back to and supporting the walking trails our team and our clients love.
We will organise regular litter-picking sessions at lunchtime for our team to join.	We will measure how many litter-picking sessions we've done.	Our target is to have a litter-picking session every 6 weeks (approximately 12 a year).	Litter picking is a great way for us to play our part in tackling the pollution crisis on a local level and making a difference in our community. Any litter removed from a natural ecosystem saves wildlife from being harmed by it, prevents plastics from breaking down and entering the food chain as microplastics, and ultimately creates a nicer space for the community.
We will encourage our company's existing Professional Development Allowance to be used for more environmental or outdoor-related pursuits.	We will measure this by how many team members have used their allowances for something related to the environment or the outdoors.	We aim for 50% of allowances to be used with a sustainable focus.	The Professional Development Allowance is available to all employees to use for courses, activities, or volunteer work that relate to the business of Absolute Escapes and that are taken in an employee's time. By encouraging our team to make a more environmental choice for this allowance, developing our love of wild places, and sustainability education.

Collaborate

Share evidence of risks and solutions with all stakeholders and our guests, and work together to ensure our plans are as effective and coordinated as possible. Strengthen governance and capacity for action at all levels, including national and sub-national authorities, civil society, large companies and SMEs, vulnerable groups, local communities, and visitors.

Objective	Indicator	Target	Why
We will organise and participate in fundraising events to support the local charity, Venture Scotland.	We will measure how much money we fundraise for Venture Scotland every year.	Our target is to raise £500 a year for the charity.	Venture Scotland is a registered charity and Scotland's only provider of long-term, outdoor-based, personal development for young adults. Absolute Escapes believes in the benefits that natural, outdoor spaces have on an individual's mental health and wellbeing. We want to support this charity to empower young adults, who are struggling to cope with life, first to understand and then improve their mental health and emotions and in doing so, change the course of their lives.
We will provide staff with training on responsible tourism and our sustainability policy.	We will measure how many sessions we run and how often we train staff on sustainability.	We aim to run Sustainability Policy training for every new team member and give quarterly training/updates to the wider team.	To successfully make a meaningful difference, we need our whole team on board. The implementation of training and regular updates will increase the team's environmental awareness and knowledge. It will also promote a collaborative approach to our climate action plan and ensure everyone understands our objectives so that they can provide suggestions, and feedback and implement sustainable work practices.
We will update our client information sheets in our information packs to include further information on responsible tourism.	We will measure the success of this objective by checking every information sheet that clearly mentions responsible travel.	We aim to mention responsible travel on every information sheet we send to clients.	Providing tourists with reliable and relevant information about sustainable tourism principles and practices before they embark on their journey can be a highly effective way of educating and engaging them. This helps them make sustainable choices during their travels and beyond.
We will regularly promote responsible tourism across all of our social media platforms.	We will measure how often we post about responsible tourism.	We will aim to post a responsible travel-related post on our social media accounts once a month.	Promoting ecotourism and green practices by sharing our own efforts or advice on social media can inspire and educate our clients toward more responsible travel choices.

Finance

Ensure organisational resources and capacity are sufficient to meet objectives set out in climate plans, including the financing of training, research, and implementation of effective fiscal and policy tools where appropriate to accelerate the transition.

Objective	Indicator	Target	Why
Commit to the Glasgow Declaration.	We will sign the Glasgow Declaration and as part of our ongoing commitment to responsible practices, we will promptly update the information on our responsible travel page on our website.	Ensure all relevant information on the Glasgow Declaration and our company's sustainability objectives are accurately updated on our website in 2024.	Aligning our plan with five shared pathways ensures climate action is consistent across the whole tourism industry. It is important to us that we show the users of our website our commitment to sustainability and continue to provide updates on our success and progress.
Have three employees working on our Climate Action Plan.	We will calculate the hours dedicated to working on our Climate Action Plan.	Dedicate at least 6 hours a month to working towards our sustainability objectives.	A dedicated team of employees working on sustainability initiatives ensures that our goals are consistently worked towards. Moreover, this provides an opportunity for our employees to develop their knowledge and expertise in sustainability, which in turn contributes to our overall commitment to environmental responsibility.
Create and publish our Climate Action Plan on our website.	We will endeavour to create a Climate Action Plan document and link to it on our website.	To have our finalised Climate Action Plan publicly on our website by the end of February 2024.	Sharing our climate action progress and publishing our plan on our website allows our clients and suppliers to see that we are committed to making a real impact and holds us accountable.
Have a sustainability policy in place that is updated annually.	An up-to-date policy within internal documents and on our website.	Update our sustainability yearly to record our progress and set new goals.	Regularly updating a sustainability policy is important to keep up with changes in how we take care of the environment and society, making sure we stay on track and are aiming closer and closer to achieving net zero emissions before 2050 with each update.

Implementations, Monitoring, and Reporting

Our commitment to climate change and sustainability is stronger than ever, and we are determined to make a real impact by developing a comprehensive climate action plan that aligns with the requirements of the [Glasgow Declaration](#). As we work on this plan, we are actively reviewing and updating our existing Sustainability Policy, encouraging more clients to choose paper-lite or fully digital information packs, and maintaining our support for Venture Scotland and the John Muir Trust.

Our company's future actions hold significance, and to uphold our commitment to the broader tourism industry, we will persist in actively participating in the [AITO Sustainable Tourism Committee](#). This committee offers guidance, motivation, and support to its members, addressing both overarching and specific aspects of sustainable tourism.

Embracing the measures outlined in this action plan allows us to contribute to the worldwide effort to cut emissions by 50% by 2030 and attain Net Zero well in advance of 2050. We will aim to provide annual public reports detailing advancements made toward both interim and long-term objectives, along with updates on ongoing projects. These reports serve as valuable tools, enabling us to stay on course, evaluate our performance, and communicate effectively within our team and with the broader tourism industry.

Each member of the tourism sector bears a responsibility to expedite climate action. Our team, with their expertise and mutual passion for wild places, serves as a guiding force in our unwavering commitment to the goals outlined in this Climate Action Plan.

The Absolute Escapes team