

THE TYROL DECLARATION ON BEST PRACTICE IN MOUNTAIN SPORTS

“Stretch your limits, lift your spirits and aim for the top”

ADOPTED BY THE FUTURE OF MOUNTAIN SPORTS CONFERENCE, INNSBRUCK, SEPTEMBER 6–8, 2002

All over the world, millions of people practice mountaineering, hiking, trekking and rock climbing. In many countries mountain sports have become a significant factor of everyday life.

Hardly any other activity encompasses such a broad motivational spectrum as does mountain sports. It gives people the opportunity to realize personal goals and pursue meaningful lifelong activity. Motives for being active in the mountains and on the rocks range from health benefits, pleasure of movement, contact with nature and social incentives, to the thrill of exploration and adventure.

The Tyrol Declaration on Best Practice in Mountain Sports passed by the conference on the Future of Mountain Sports in Innsbruck on September 8, 2002, contains a set of values and maxims to provide guidance on best practice in mountain sports. These are not rules or detailed instructions, rather they:

1. Define today’s fundamental values in mountain sports
2. Contain principles and standards of conduct
3. Formulate the ethical criteria for decision-making in uncertain situations
4. Present the ethical principles by which the public can judge mountain sports
5. Introduce beginners to the values and moral principles of their sport.

It is the aim of the Tyrol Declaration to help realize the innate potential of mountain sports for recreation and personal growth as well as for promoting social development, cultural understanding and environmental awareness. To this end, the Tyrol Declaration picks up on the traditional unwritten values and codes of conduct inherent in the sport and expands on them to meet the demands of our times. The fundamental values on which the Tyrol Declaration is based, hold true for all individuals engaged in mountain sports worldwide – whether they be hikers and trekkers, sport climbers, or mountaineers seeking to push their limits at high altitudes. Even if some of the guidelines for conduct are of relevance for only a small elite, a lot of the proposals formulated in the Tyrol Declaration are addressed to the mountain sports community as a whole. With these suggestions we especially hope to reach our youth, for they are the future of mountain sports.

THE TYROL DECLARATION IS AN APPEAL TO:

- Accept the risks and assume responsibility
- Balance your goals with your skills and equipment
- Play by fair means and report honestly
- Strive for best practice and never stop learning
- Be tolerant, considerate and help each other
- Protect the wild and natural character of mountains and cliffs
- Support local communities and their sustainable development.

THE TYROL DECLARATION IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING HIERARCHY OF VALUES:

- **Human dignity** – the premise that human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and should treat one another in the spirit of brotherhood. Particular attention should be given to equal rights of men and women.
- **Life, liberty and happiness** – as inalienable human rights and with a special responsibility in mountains sports to help protect the rights of communities in mountain areas.
- **Intactness of nature** – as a commitment to secure the ecological value and natural characteristics of mountains and cliffs worldwide. This includes the protection of endangered species of flora and fauna, their ecosystems and the landscape.
- **Solidarity** – as an opportunity through participation in mountain sports to promote teamwork, cooperation and understanding and overcome barriers due to gender, age, nationality, level of ability, social or ethnic origin, religion or belief.
- **Self-actualization** – as a chance through participation in mountain sports to make meaningful progress towards important goals and achieve personal fulfillment.
- **Truth** – as recognition that in mountain sports honesty is essential to evaluate accomplishments. If arbitrariness replaces truth, it becomes impossible to assess performance in climbing.
- **Excellence** – as an opportunity through participation in mountain sports to strive for previously unattained goals and to set higher standards.
- **Adventure** – as recognition that in mountain sports the management of risk through judgment, skills and personal responsibility is an essential factor. The diversity of mountain sports allows everyone to choose their own adventure, where skills and dangers are in balance.

THE ARTICLES OF THE TYROL DECLARATION

Article 1 – Individual Responsibility

MAXIM

Mountaineers and climbers practice their sport in situations where there is risk of accidents and outside help may not be available. With this in mind, they pursue this activity at their own responsibility and are accountable for their own safety. The individual's actions should not endanger those around them nor the environment.

Article 2 – Team Spirit**MAXIM**

Members of the team should be prepared to make compromises in order to balance the interests and abilities of all the group.

Article 3 – Climbing & Mountaineering Community**MAXIM**

We owe every person we meet in the mountains or on the rocks an equal measure of respect. Even in isolated conditions and stressful situations, we should not forget to treat others as we want to be treated ourselves.

Article 4 – Visiting Foreign Countries**MAXIM**

As guests in foreign cultures, we should always conduct ourselves politely and with restraint towards the people there – our hosts. We will respect holy mountains and other sacred places while seeking to benefit and assist local economy and people. Understanding of foreign cultures is part of a complete climbing experience.

Article 5 – Responsibilities of Mountain Guides and other Leaders**MAXIM**

Professional mountain guides, other leaders and group members should each understand their respective roles and respect the freedoms and rights of other groups and individuals. In order to be prepared guides, leaders and group members should understand the demands, hazards and risks of the objective, have the necessary skills, experience and correct equipment, and check the weather and conditions.

Article 6 – Emergencies, Dying and Death**MAXIM**

To be prepared for emergencies and situations involving serious accidents and death all participants in mountain sports should clearly understand the risks and hazards and the need to have appropriate skills, knowledge and equipment. All participants need to be ready to help others in the event of an emergency or accident and also be ready to face the consequences of a tragedy.

Article 7 – Access and Conservation**MAXIM**

We believe that freedom of access to mountains and cliffs in a responsible manner is a fundamental right. We should always practice our activities in an environmentally sensitive way and be proactive in preserving nature. We respect access restrictions and regulations agreed by climbers with nature conservation organizations and authorities.

Article 8 – Style**MAXIM**

The quality of the experience and how we solve a problem is more important than whether we solve it. We strive to leave no trace.

Article 9 – First Ascents**MAXIM**

The first ascent of a route or a mountain is a creative act. It should be done in at least as good a style as the traditions of the region and show responsibility toward the local climbing community and the needs of future climbers.

Article 10 – Sponsorship, Advertising and Public Relations**MAXIM**

The cooperation between sponsors and athletes must be a professional relationship that serves the best interests of mountain sports. It is the responsibility of the mountain sports community in all its aspects to educate and inform both media and public in a proactive manner.

THE MAXIMS AND GUIDELINES OF THE TYROL DECLARATION

Article 1 – Individual Responsibility**MAXIM**

Mountaineers and climbers practice their sport in situations where there is risk of accidents and outside help may not be available. With this in mind, they pursue this activity at their own responsibility and are accountable for their own safety. The individual's actions should not endanger those around them nor the environment.

1. We choose our goals according to our own actual skills or those of the team and according to the conditions on the mountains. Refraining from doing the climb should be a valid option.
2. We make sure that we have the proper training for our goal, that we have planned the climb or trip carefully and have gone through the necessary preparations.
3. We make sure we're properly equipped on every trip and know how to use the equipment.

Article 2 – Team Spirit**MAXIM**

Members of the team should be prepared to make compromises in order to balance the interests and abilities of all the group.

1. Each member of the team should have regard and take responsibility for the safety of their team members.
2. No team member should be left alone if this risks his/her well-being.

Article 3 – Climbing & Mountaineering Community**MAXIM**

We owe every person we meet in the mountains or on the rocks an equal measure of respect. Even in isolated conditions and stressful situations, we should not forget to treat others as we want to be treated ourselves.

1. We do everything we can, not to endanger others and we warn others of potential dangers.
2. We ensure that no one is discriminated against.
3. As visitors, we respect the local rules.
4. We do not hinder or disturb others more than necessary. We let faster parties pass. We don't occupy routes others are waiting to do.
5. Our reports on climbs truthfully reflect the actual events in detail.

Article 4 – Visiting Foreign Countries

MAXIM

As guests in foreign cultures, we should always conduct ourselves politely and with restraint towards the people there – our hosts. We will respect holy mountains and other sacred places while seeking to benefit and assist local economy and people. Understanding of foreign cultures is part of a complete climbing experience.

1. Always treat the people in your host country with kindness, tolerance and respect.
2. Strictly adhere to any climbing regulations implemented by your host country.
3. It is advisable to read up on the history, society, political structure, art and religion of the country visited before embarking on the trip to enhance our understanding of its people and their environment. In case of political uncertainty, seek official advice.
4. It's wise to develop some basic skills in the language of our host country: forms of greeting, please and thank you, days of the week, time, numbers, etc. It is always astounding to see how much this little investment improves the quality of communication. By this we contribute to the understanding between cultures.
5. Never pass up an opportunity to share your climbing skills with interested locals. Joint expeditions with climbers from the host country are the best setting for an exchange of experience.
6. At all costs we avoid offending the religious feelings of our hosts. For example, we should not display naked skin in places, where it is unacceptable for religious or social reasons. If some expressions of other religions are beyond our comprehension, we are tolerant and refrain from passing judgment.
7. We give all possible assistance to local inhabitants in need. An expedition doctor is often in a position to make a decisive difference in the life of an acutely ill person.
8. To benefit the mountain communities economically, we buy regional products, if feasible, and take advantage of local services.
9. We are encouraged to assist local mountain communities by initiating and supporting facilities favoring sustainable development, for example training and educational services or ecologically compatible economic enterprises.

Article 5 – Responsibilities of Mountain Guides and other Leaders

MAXIM

Professional mountain guides, other leaders and group members should each understand their respective roles and respect the freedoms and rights of other groups and individuals. In order to be prepared guides, leaders and group members should understand the demands, hazards and risks of the objective, have the necessary skills, experience and cor-

rect equipment, and check the weather and conditions.

1. The guide or leader informs the client or group about the risk inherent in a climb and the current danger level and if they are suitably experienced involves them in the decision-making process.
2. The selected route should relate to the skill and experience of the client or group in order to ensure it is an enjoyable and developmental experience.
3. If necessary the guide or leader points out the limits of his or her own ability and where appropriate refers clients or groups to more capable colleagues. It is the responsibility of clients and group members to point out if they believe a risk or hazard is too great and that retreat or alternative options should be followed.
4. In circumstances such as extreme climbs and high altitude ascents guides and leaders should carefully brief their clients and groups to ensure everyone is fully aware of the limits of support that guides and leaders can provide.
5. Local guides inform visiting colleagues about the distinctive features of their area and the current conditions.

Article 6 – Emergencies, Dying and Death

MAXIM

To be prepared for emergencies and situations involving serious accidents and death all participants in mountain sports should clearly understand the risks and hazards and the need to have appropriate skills, knowledge and equipment. All participants need to be ready to help others in the event of an emergency or accident and also be ready to face the consequences of a tragedy.

1. Helping someone in trouble has absolute priority over reaching goals we set for ourselves in the mountains. Saving a life or reducing damage to an injured person's health is far more valuable than the hardest of first ascents.
2. In an emergency if outside assistance is not available and we are in a position to help, we should be prepared to give all the support we can to persons in trouble as far as is feasible without endangering ourselves.
3. Someone who is seriously injured or dying should be made as comfortable as possible and offered life preserving support.
4. In a remote area if it is not possible to recover the body, the location should be recorded as accurately as possible with any indications as to the identity of the deceased.
5. Personal possessions, such as camera, diary, notebook, photographs, letters and other personal artifacts should be safeguarded for and delivered to the bereaved.
6. Under no circumstances may pictures of the deceased be published without prior consent of the family.

Article 7 – Access and Conservation

MAXIM

We believe that freedom of access to mountains and cliffs in a responsible manner is a fundamental right. We should always practice our activities in an environmentally sensitive way and be proactive in preserving nature. We respect access restrictions and regula-

tions agreed by climbers with nature conservation organizations and authorities.

1. We respect the measures to preserve cliff and mountain environments and the wildlife they support and we encourage our fellow climbers to do likewise. By avoiding noise, we strive to reduce disturbing wildlife to a minimum.
2. If possible, we approach our destination using public transportation or car pools in order to minimize traffic on the roads.
3. In order to avoid erosion and not to disturb wildlife, we stay on trails during approaches and descents and, in the wilderness, pick out the most eco-compatible route.
4. During the breeding and nesting periods of cliff dwelling species we respect seasonal access restrictions. As soon as we learn about any breeding activity, we should pass on this knowledge to fellow climbers and ensure that they stay away from the nesting area.
5. During first ascents, we are careful not to endanger the biotopes of rare species of plants and animals. In equipping and redeveloping routes, we should take all precautions to minimize their environmental impact.
6. The broad implications of popularizing areas through retro-bolting should be carefully considered. Increased numbers may cause access problems.
7. We minimize rock damage by using the least detrimental protection technique.
8. Not only do we carry our own garbage back to civilization, but we also pick up any rubbish left by others.
9. In the absence of sanitary installations, we keep an adequate distance from homes, camp sites, creeks, rivers or lakes while defecating and take all the necessary measures to avoid damage to the ecosystem. We refrain from offending other people's aesthetic feelings. In highly frequented areas with a low level of biological activity, climbers take the trouble to pack out their feces.
10. We keep the campsite clean, avoiding waste as much as possible or dispose our rubbish adequately. All climbing material – fixed ropes, tents and oxygen bottles – must be removed from the mountain.
11. We keep energy consumption to a minimum. Especially in countries with a wood shortage, we refrain from action that could contribute to the further decline of forests. In countries with endangered forests, we need to carry adequate fuel to prepare food for all participants in an expedition.
12. Helicopter tourism should be minimized where it is detrimental to nature or culture.
13. In conflicts over access issues, landowners, authorities and associations should negotiate to find solutions satisfactory to all parties.
14. We take an active part in the implementation of these regulations, especially by publicizing them and establishing the necessary infrastructure.
15. Together with the mountaineering associations and other conservation groups we are proactive on the political level in protecting natural habitats and the environment.

Article 8 – Style

MAXIM

The quality of the experience and how we solve a problem is more important than whether we solve it. We strive to leave no trace.

1. We aim to preserve the original character of all climbs, most especially those with historical significance. This means that climbers should not increase fixed protection on existing routes. The exception is when there is a local consensus – including agreement from the first ascensionists – to change the level of fixed protection by placing new gear or removing existing gear.
2. We respect the diversity of regional traditions and will not try to impose our point of view upon other climbing cultures – nor will we accept their ways imposed upon ours.
3. Rock and mountains are a limited resource for adventure that must be shared by climbers with many interests and over many generations to come. We realize that future generations will need to find their own NEW adventures within this limited resource. We try to develop crags or mountains in a way that doesn't steal opportunity from the future.
4. Within a region where bolts are accepted, it is desirable to keep routes, sections of cliffs, or entire cliffs free of bolts in order to preserve a refuge for adventure and to show respect for diverse climbing interests.
5. Naturally protected routes can be just as fun and safe for recreational climbers as bolted routes. Most climbers can learn to place safe natural protection and should be educated to the fact that this provides additional adventure and a rich and natural experience with comparable safety, once the techniques have been learned.
6. In cases of conflicting interest groups, climbers should resolve their differences through dialogue and negotiation to avoid access being threatened.
7. Commercial pressures should never influence the climbing ethics of a person or a region.
8. Good style on big mountains implies not using fixed ropes, performance-enhancing drugs, or bottled oxygen.

Article 9 – First Ascents

MAXIM

The first ascent of a route or a mountain is a creative act. It should be done in at least as good a style as the traditions of the region and show responsibility toward the local climbing community and the needs of future climbers.

1. First ascents should be environmentally sound and compatible with local regulations, the wishes of landowners, and the spiritual values of the local population.
2. We will not deface the rock by chopping or adding holds.
3. In alpine regions, first ascents should be done exclusively on lead (no prefixing from above).
4. After giving full respect to local traditions, it is up to the first ascensionist to determine the level of fixed protection on their route (taking into account the suggestions in Article 5).
5. In areas designated as wilderness or natural reserves by land managers or the local access committee, bolts should be limited to an absolute minimum to preserve access.
6. Drilling holes and placing fixed gear during the first ascent of aid climbs should be kept to a bare minimum (bolts should be avoided even on belay anchors unless absolutely necessary).
7. Adventure routes should be left as natural as possible, relying on removable protection whenever it is available and using bolts only when necessary and always subject to local

traditions.

8. The independent character of adjacent routes must not be compromised.

9. When reporting first ascents, it is important to report the details as accurately as possible. A climber's honesty and integrity will be assumed unless there is compromising evidence.

10. High-altitude mountains are a limited resource. We especially encourage climbers to use the best style.

Article 10 – Sponsorship, Advertising and Public Relations

MAXIM

The cooperation between sponsors and athletes must be a professional relationship that serves the best interests of mountain sports. It is the responsibility of the mountain sports community in all its aspects to educate and inform both media and public in a proactive manner.

1. Mutual understanding between sponsor and athlete is necessary to define commogals. The many facets of mountain sports require clear identification of the specific expertise of both athlete and sponsor to maximize opportunities.

2. To maintain and improve their level of performance, climbers are dependent on continuous support from their sponsors. For this reason it is important that the sponsors keep backing their partners even after a series of failures. Under no circumstances may the sponsor pressure the climber into performing.

3. To establish a permanent presence in all media, clear channels of communication must be organized and maintained.

4. Climbers should take pains to report their activities realistically. An accurate account enhances not only the credibility of the climber, but also the public reputation of his sport.

5. The athlete is ultimately responsible for representing to sponsor and media the ethics, style, social and environmental responsibility stated in the Tyrol Declaration.

THE PLURALISM OF CLIMBING GAMES

Modern climbing encompasses a broad spectrum of activities ranging from hiking and bouldering to crag climbing and mountaineering. Mountaineering comprises extreme forms of high altitude alpinism and expedition climbing in high ranges like the Andes or Himalayas. Although the dividing lines between the various forms of climbing are by no means rigid, the following categorization makes it possible to present the vast diversity of modern mountain sports comprehensibly.

Hiking and trekking

Hiking to mountain huts, cols and summits is the most widespread form of mountaineering. A multi-day hike in the mountains and other wilderness areas, especially off the beaten track, is often referred to as a trek. Hiking turns into a technically more demanding form of mountaineering as soon as hands have to be used for progress.

Climbing via ferratas

Routes on steep rocky terrain equipped with steel cables and iron rungs are becoming more and more popular. An arena hitherto reserved for technical rock climbing is made accessible through an elaborate infrastructure and special protection systems.

Classic mountaineering

A mountaineer in this category will rock climb up to a standard of UIAA grade 3 and ascend up to 50-degree snow and ice. The typical goals in this category of climbing are the regular routes of peaks in the alpine zone.

Ski mountaineering

The adherents of this classic form of alpinism use alpine or telemark skis to hike up mountains or traverse entire ranges. Due to the complexity of the skills required, this discipline ranks among the most demanding – and dangerous – forms of mountaineering.

THE HIERARCHY OF “CLIMBING GAMES”

A system for categorizing the different kinds of climbing introduced by Lito Tejada-Flores, has proved helpful in describing the many facets that modern technical climbing has acquired. Every specialized type of climbing “game” is defined by an informal but a precise set of rules, formulated so as to keep the task at hand difficult – and thereby interesting. The greater the danger in a particular climbing game due to the natural environment, the more lenient the restrictions for the use of technical equipment. The lower the objective dangers, the stricter its “rules” get.

Bouldering

In “bouldering” difficult sections of rock close to the ground are negotiated, normally without a rope. The equipment allowed is reduced to the climbing shoes, a chalk bag – and these days – a crash pad. Bouldering is practiced on natural boulders and rocks as well as on artificial objects.

Climbing on artificial objects

Today most climbers use artificial walls for training and leisure, either at home, in a gym or outdoors. A growing number of climbers is active exclusively on artificial walls. There are also new forms like therapeutic climbing and climbing as an art – for instance dance or ballet.

Crag climbing

Routes between one and three pitches long are called crag climbs. Because of their shortness and the almost total absence of objective dangers, the free ascent “ethic“ has gained international acceptance for this type of climbing during the last two decades. This means that a route only counts if no fixtures placed in the rock have been used for progress during the ascent.

Continuous climbing

If a climb is longer than three or four pitches it is referred to as a continuous climbing route.

Bigwall/aid climbing

In this climbing game developed in Yosemite Valley, the activists ascend walls that cannot be free climbed with specially designed equipment. They strive to reduce the drilling of holes for the placement of bolts or other means of progress as much as possible, thus leaving a minimum of traces after completing the ascent.

Alpine climbing

In the “alpine game” activists not only have to deal with the problems posed by actual climbing but also with the “objective” dangers of a frequently hostile environment in high mountains. Because survival often not only depends on the ability to safely master the technical problems of a route but also on the speed of a party, the unwritten rules of the alpine game classically permit the use of pitons and chocks for progress. However, starting in the late sixties, the principles of free climbing have been increasingly applied in the high mountains. Whereas at the beginning of the new era, the focus was on the free ascent of routes normally done on aid, it didn’t take long for new difficult climbs – put up according to the stricter rules – to appear in the mountains. These include both extremely bold adventure routes and hedonistic sport climbs.

An important aspect of alpine climbing is the ascent of ice routes. These range from classic ice faces to seriously hard futuristic enterprises. A type of ice climbing that has recently become popular is the ascent of frozen waterfalls, ice-stalactites und glazed rock. Modern mixed rock-and-ice-routes sometimes involve very hard rock moves with the aid of crampons and ice tools. The game is governed by the rules of free climbing. The ice and mixed routes can range from short one-pitch affairs to bold operations in the higher ranges that can last for several weeks.

Adventure climbing and sport climbing

Modern climbing terminology differentiates between the styles of adventure or traditional climbing and sport climbing. Adventure or “trad” climbing has the following elements:

Performance is judged by the amount of stress resistance necessary for the ascent of a route.

- The climber is responsible for the placement of protection or has to do without.
- Mistakes made by the leader can have very drastic consequences.

Sport climbing is characterized as follows:

- Performance is judged by the technical grade of the route climbed.
- The kinesthetic element is dominant.
- Bolts enable perfect protection.
- If modern belaying techniques are employed properly, leader- falls tend not to be severely punished.

The styles of adventure and sport climbing can be applied to crags as well as to alpine walls.

Between the pure versions of adventure and sport/plaisir climbing there are numerous hybrid forms.

Different games and safety-“philosophies” correspond to diverging individual needs of climbers. The wealth of forms in mountain sports provides pleasure and self-fulfillment for a great number of people – a fact that we welcome.

Both the friends of the sport climbing approach as the adherents of the adventure philosophy have a right to climb in accordance with their wishes and abilities.

It should be our goal to preserve the pluralism of climbing styles, leaving them their special arenas.

Super-alpine climbing

This mountaineering discipline applies the rules of alpine climbing to high-altitude terrain on the six, seven and eight thousand-meter peaks long reserved for traditional expeditions. In the super alpine game fixed ropes, help from outside sources or the installation of a chain of camps and bottled oxygen are all rejected.

Expedition climbing

Two forms of this game have developed: The first variation has the function of enabling a maximum number of members to reach prestigious summits in the high mountain ranges via the normal route. They optimize the probability of success through liberal use of porters, fixed ropes and artificial oxygen.

In contrast, the extreme form of expedition climbing strives to push the limits of technical difficulty with the help of the most modern equipment save bottled oxygen: fixed ropes, portaledge camps and equipment depots.

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Unclimbed peaks near Bassom Tso, eastern Tibet. John Harlin W