



Center for Responsible Travel

Transforming the Way the World Travels

The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics 2017

*****Special edition in recognition of the UN's International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development**

The United Nations designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, recognizing, in its resolution, “the important role of sustainable tourism as a positive instrument towards the eradication of poverty, the protection of the environment, the improvement of quality of life and the economic empowerment of women and youth and its contribution to... sustainable development, especially in developing countries.”¹



This International Year (IY2017, as it is known) comes 15 years after the UN’s designation of the International Year of Ecotourism in 2002. Responsible travel has come a long way, from its original roots in small-scale, nature- and culture-based ecotourism. Today sustainability – environmental, social, and economic – is increasingly recognized as the benchmark for all tourism business, of all sizes, in all destinations, and across all sectors of the industry. In addition, the UN’s 2017 International Year clearly recognizes that sustainable tourism is an important tool for development, most importantly in poor communities and countries. As noted by the UN World Tourism Organization, 57% of international tourist arrivals in 2030 will be in emerging economies.² And in 2017 and 2018, emerging and developing economies are forecast to grow 4.5 and 4.8% respectively, outpacing the estimated 4.1% growth in 2016.³

Tourism Terms

Sustainable tourism is one of several closely related terms that are ethically based, defined as follows:

CATEGORY	DEFINITION
Ecotourism	Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, socially and economically sustains the well-being of local people, and creates knowledge and understanding through interpretation and education of all involved (including staff, travelers, and community residents). ⁴
Ethical Tourism	Tourism in a destination where ethical issues are the key driver, e.g. social injustice, human rights, animal welfare, or the environment. ⁵
Geotourism	Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and well-being of its residents. ⁶
Pro-Poor Tourism	Tourism that results in increased net benefit for the poor people in a destination. ⁷
Responsible Tourism	Tourism that maximizes the benefits to local communities, minimizes negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people conserve fragile cultures and habitats or species. ⁸
Sustainable Tourism	Tourism that leads to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life-support systems. ⁹

At its best, tourism has the power to improve the world in many ways, proving a crucial industry in meeting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

And more than many other global industries, tourism's annual growth remains robust, despite challenges. In 2016, international tourist arrivals grew by 3.9% to reach a total of 1.2 billion, according to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer.¹⁰

In recognizing IY2017, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), as the lead UN agency, has identified five key pillars required to ensure sustainable tourism for development. They are:



- Inclusive and sustainable economic growth
- Social inclusiveness, employment, and poverty reduction
- Resource efficiency, environmental protection, and climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Respect for cultural values, diversity, and heritage
- Mutual understanding, peace, and security

This year's special edition of "The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics 2017" is organized around these five themes.

Role of Responsible Travel

The International Year 2017 is both a recognition of how far we've come since the UN's International Year of Ecotourism in 2002 and a clarion call that travel and tourism can and must do a better job of addressing a range of urgent problems.



Photo Source: Country Walkers

As Elizabeth Becker, author of *Overbooked: The Exploding Business of Travel and Tourism*, writes, "Travel and tourism has become a behemoth, capable of doing great good and great damage."¹¹

Indeed, as the economic data tells us, the tourism industry is a powerhouse, but it is also flawed. Some of the world's most popular destinations, for example—Barcelona, Venice, the beaches of Thailand and Brazil—are overrun with tourists, putting a strain on resources, cultural sites, the environment, and—as protests in European cities during summer 2017 demonstrated—residents. And in the Caribbean, the world's most tourism-dependent region, we've witnessed increasingly fierce hurricane-borne winds, rains, and storm surges reduce whole islands to rubble. Climate change is producing hurricanes of greater intensity, and yet sun-and-sand coastal tourism largely continues to build – and rebuild – as in the past. At the same time, poor planning and/or regulation in many countries enable relatively few to profit from the travel industry while host communities in tourism destinations remain poor.

IY2017 provides impetus to broaden and deepen sustainable tourism practices. As Lonely Planet states, "Eco-friendly initiatives and sustainable travel will be a top industry trend. With the United Nations declaring 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism, you can expect industrywide efforts to reduce carbon emissions."¹² Indeed, we are living the imperative to act. According to NASA, "Earth's 2016 surface temperatures were the warmest since modern recordkeeping began in 1880. This makes 2016 the third year in a row to set a new record for global average surface temperatures."¹³ This trend does not show signs of stopping.

Yet, as World Travel Market reminds us, "Responsible tourism is about more than carbon footprints and climate change. Protection of the natural environment, engaging with communities, sharing economic benefits and animal welfare are among the other factors which contribute to a sustainable and responsible approach to tourism."¹⁴

All who are involved in tourism – businesses, local and indigenous communities, NGOs, academics, development agencies, the media, travelers, governments, etc. – must play a role to advance sustainable practices. There are, for instance, a growing number of tools available to assist travelers in making responsible travel choices. Examples include the [US Travel Care Code](#), created by a network of academics and professionals committed to encouraging responsible travel¹⁵; Sustainable Travel International's "[Travel Better Club](#)," which offers training programs, resources, travel benefits, and an online community to travelers committed to "making a difference by traveling better"¹⁶; and an increasing number of online travel purchasing platforms, such as [Kind Traveler](#), which help consumers choose responsibly-minded companies that are giving back to their communities.¹⁷

But governments, in particular, must step up to the plate. “Only governments can handle runaway tourism. Few major industries fall so squarely into their hands – local, regional and national,” argues Elizabeth Becker.¹⁸ For starters, governments cannot continue to measure success solely by increased arrival numbers or hotel beds. Success must be measured in increased retention of tourism revenue in the destination, and the equitable distribution of tourism earnings to better economic, social, and environmental conditions in the destination.

Five Pillars of Sustainable Tourism for Development¹⁹

1. Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth

According to UNWTO:

- 4% or more annual increase in international tourist arrivals since 2009
- 7% of total world exports and 30% of world services exports from tourism
- US\$ 1.5 trillion in exports from international tourism in 2015
- 10% of world GDP²⁰

The UNWTO says, in part, “Capitalizing on this strong economic potential to ensure that tourism advances with truly sustainable economic growth will hinge on:

- Cultivating a favorable business environment, characterized by stability and supportive policies;
- Ensuring openness and a high degree of connectivity; and
- Bolstering the resilience of the tourism sector.”²¹

Experts say...

“The [tourism] sector is ... expected to perform at a solid growth rate and outperform global economic growth once again. Travel & Tourism forecasts over the next ten years also look extremely favorable with predicted growth rates of 4% annually.” — *World Travel & Tourism Council*²²

“To secure tourism’s role as an engine for inclusive and sustainable economic growth requires the adoption and implementation of plans and policies that safeguard the long-term development needs of local communities, while also conserving natural and cultural resources and guiding the responsible enjoyment of destination assets by visitors. It also requires the informed participation of stakeholders, inclusive of local participation in tourism ownership and involvement in decision making, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide

participation and consensus building. One of the principle tenets of responsible tourism is that it promotes carefully managed growth and advocates for the availability and accessibility of quality employment and opportunities for entrepreneurship to create and sustain livelihoods for members of the local community.” — *Hugh Riley, CEO and Secretary General of the Caribbean Tourism Organization*²³

“Travel is more than an opening for good will. It is one of the world’s most powerful economic engines, and can drive the way countries treat their citizens, indigenous peoples, wildlife, and the environment. Travel is the world’s largest industry, with a trillion-dollar annual footprint. This means that travelers have enormous power. Where we put our footprints has reverberations reaching far beyond our personal experience. By ‘voting with our wings’—choosing our destinations well and cultivating our roles as citizen diplomats—we can help to change the world for the better.” — *Jeff Greenwald, Ethical Traveler*²⁴

Consumer Support

According to an in-depth study by Sustainable Travel International in partnership with Mandala Research, 60% of all leisure travelers in the United States alone (105.3 million Americans) have taken a “sustainable” trip in the last three years. They spend significantly more (on average \$600 per trip), stay longer (seven days compared to four days), and over three-fifths believe they have a great deal of responsibility for making sure their trips do not harm a destination’s people, environment, or economy.²⁵

The Global Wellness Institute reports “International wellness tourists on average spent \$1,613 per trip in 2015, 61% more than the typical international tourist. The premium for domestic wellness tourists is even higher, spending an average of \$654 per trip, 164% higher than the typical domestic tourist.”²⁶



Travelers take part in an environmental give-back project. Source: CREST

The latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, the first half of 2017 (January – June), shows 6% total growth in international visitor arrivals from the previous year. This is the strongest half-year in international travel since 2010.²⁷

Researchers estimate that eight billion visitors arrive every year to the world's 140,000 protected areas. The research also calculated that these protected areas brought in at least \$600 billion to national economies. Unfortunately, only about \$10 billion is being spent to safeguard and manage these areas. WWF estimates that about 3-4 times that amount is actually required for sufficient management.²⁸

Business Case

The World Travel & Tourism Council reports the global Travel & Tourism sector directly sustains twice as many jobs as the financial sector, and five times as many jobs as the chemicals manufacturing sector.²⁹

“As a worldwide export category, tourism ranks third, behind only fuel and chemicals, and ahead of food products and automotive industry. In many developing countries, tourism is the top export sector... The share of tourism in total exports of goods and services rose from 6% to 7% in 2015, with international tourism outpacing the growth of world trade in goods for the fourth consecutive year, increasing by 2.8% in 2015.”³⁰

In 2016, The Travel Foundation successfully handed over the project "Taste of Fethiye" in Turkey to a local NGO, which allows local small-scale farmers to supply the mainstream tourism hotels and restaurants in the area with fresh fruits and vegetables. Twenty-four mainstream hotels have bought from Taste of Fethiye; 70% of the fresh fruit and vegetables for hotels involved now is locally sourced, compared to 45% before the project began. Farmers have increased their income by 24%.³¹

Destination Case

In reference to the WTTTC Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, “Over the years there has been a gradual rise in the quality and quantity of applications from urban destinations. This reflects not only the growth in urban tourism around the world, but the increasing focus on tourism as an economic development tool by city and town authorities with its inherent requirement for a more sustainable approach.”³²

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries reports tourism and recreation is 58% of the local economy in Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, which generated more than \$2 billion in spending during one tourist season (\$2.48 billion in 2015 dollars). On the other end of the country, \$155.6 million on average is spent annually on recreational fishing alone in

the four national marine sanctuaries located along California's coast. This spending supports an average of 1,400 jobs and generates \$213.1 million in sales and output for local California economies.³³

Ethical Traveler has released their 2017 list of The World's Ten Best Ethical Destinations, based on the merits of environmental protection, social welfare, animal welfare and human rights. This year's winners (in alphabetical order): Belize, Cabo Verde, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominica, Mongolia, Palau, Tonga, Uruguay, Vanuatu.³⁴

Nominated for a 2017 WTTTC Tourism for Tomorrow Community Award, Cinnamon Wild Yala, a Sri Lankan hotel and resort chain, has “made considerable efforts to continuously support the local community. A total of 80% of all hotel staff are recruited from the local neighbourhood, and Cinnamon Wild Yala has partnered with drivers from the area who are contracted to supply safari jeeps for guests. Local school children are engaged through a nature club and are taught to appreciate their natural surroundings, and efforts are made to source select ingredients and produce from members of the local community on a regular basis. All sustainability and CSR initiatives implemented at Cinnamon Wild Yala stem from corporate level policies and are applied, monitored, and assessed on a regular basis.”³⁵

2. Social Inclusiveness, Employment, and Poverty Reduction

According to UNWTO:

- One in every eleven jobs globally is in tourism
- Largest export category in many developing countries
- 57% of international tourist arrivals in 2030 will be to emerging economies
- Almost twice as many women employers as other sectors³⁶

UNWTO says, in part, “To harness tourism's potential for inclusivity, decent work and poverty eradication – while overcoming the challenges of unsustainable tourism activity – it will be important to:

- Pursue an ‘inclusive growth’ approach;
- Create decent jobs, redress the skills gaps while ensuring fair, productive employment;
- Support local communities and empower women and youth; and
- Provide tourism experiences for all, via a focus on universal accessibility.”³⁷

#TravelEnjoyRespect

Experts say...

“As one of the world’s leading employment sectors, tourism provides important livelihood opportunities, helping to alleviate poverty and drive inclusive development.” — *United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon*³⁸

“Travel & Tourism’s contribution to world GDP grew for the sixth consecutive year in 2015, rising to a total of 9.8% of world GDP (US\$7.2 trillion). The sector now supports 284 million people in employment – that’s 1 in 11 jobs on the planet.” — *WTTC and Oxford Economics*³⁹

“Now more than ever, travelers are seeking to positively impact the communities they are visiting. It no longer suffices to simply take a vacation; travelers care about where their dollar spend is going and will make purchase decisions based on their ability to empower the community they visit. Travelers seek to provide local benefits while interacting with locals, i.e. community-based tourism and voluntourism are major trends.” — *Travel+SocialGood Executive Director, Kelley Louise*⁴⁰

Consumer Support

“Research shows that for every 30 new tourists to a destination one new job is created. The travel and tourism industry offers employment opportunities for persons entering the labour market for the first time or without many options in other sectors.... [T]he industry plays a key role in creating opportunities for low-skilled workers, minorities, migrants, youth, the long-term unemployed, and women who prefer part-time work due to family responsibilities.”⁴¹

Sustainable Travel International and Mandala Research report more than two-fifths of sustainable travelers say they have purchased from travel companies because they believe they offer fair wages to their employees and invest in employees; while 38% say they have done business with travel companies who have helped to reduce human trafficking.⁴²

A survey by Mandala research shows that 78% of sustainable travelers perceive travel as positively impacting local residents and workers. Additionally, 71% feel as though it has a positive impact on local culture as well.⁴³

“According to a 2017 Cone Communications CSR Study, 89% of consumers will switch to a brand that supports a good cause over one that does not, given similar price and quality.”⁴⁴

#IY2017

Business Case

“Working for a bigger cause excites employees. It’s one of the softer measures to wrap your head around, but if you talk to someone where sustainability is embedded into the corporate culture, it’s a selling-point to attract and retain workers.” — *Eliot Metzger, senior associate, World Resources Institute*⁴⁵

“Tourism is a relatively labour intensive sector and is traditionally made up of small and micro enterprises. Many activities in tourism are particularly suited to women, young people and disadvantaged groups such as ethnic minority populations. Many tourism jobs are potentially quite accessible to the poor as they require relatively few skills and little investment.”⁴⁶

Over 70% of the workers at Ilunion Suites Madrid have a disability and 26% at all Ilunion Hotels across Spain. They received WTTC’s “Tourism for Tomorrow Award” in 2016 in the “People” category for their commitment to Universal Accessibility and for integrating people with disabilities into the workforce.⁴⁷

New research by C&M Travel Recruitment and C&M Executive Recruitment shows that women in the UK travel industry are still earning less than their male equivalents at every level, except in junior roles. Women starting in new executive roles earn, on average, 7.56% less than men in similar positions.⁴⁸

Destination Case

“In order to make significant contributions to the alleviation of poverty, it is essential to work in the mainstream of tourism, which will require an emphasis on... ensuring that tourism destinations as a whole are both competitive and sustainable, addressing issues of resource management and the relationship between tourism and other economic sectors.”⁴⁹

In 1986, the Mexican government established the Sian Ka’an Biosphere Reserve, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the early 1990s, a Mexican NGO called Amigos de Sian Ka’an started a boat tour to help fund conservation, which eventually evolved into a plan for the area to become an entire ecotourism destination that benefits the local community. In 2004, Amigos de Sian Ka’an transferred the tour initiative completely to local community cooperatives. Maya Ka’an was officially launched in 2014 and now covers 10,000 Km² in three municipalities, and there are 18 cooperatives in Mayan and fishing communities operating tours. Nine of the cooperatives and 35 of their guides are certified ecotourism operators. Amigos de Sian Ka’an has invested over 200 hours of training for the cooperatives and promotes the destination in several media and tourism fairs in Mexico and Europe. The project now directly benefits 400 people in the Mayan region of Mexico.⁵⁰

The remote Simien Mountains National Park in Ethiopia is in one of the poorest areas on the planet, with average income of residents in the region of less than \$1 per day. To provide a source of income for residents, Simien Lodge was built in 2005. The goal was not only to create a world-class trekking destination but also to use the lodge as a platform to involve tourists in community projects. When the lodge began, there were 5,000 annual visitors and only 20 mountain guides. Now, there are 24,000 visitors and 80 scouts and 60 guides. Guiding receipts have multiplied eight times, and the area now even boasts a university. Over the past two years, the program has allowed for eight classrooms to be built in three primary schools, several hundred desks have been donated, and monastery walls were rebuilt that had been destroyed by communist soldiers in 1987. A matching program explained in packets in guest rooms is currently raising funds to build a health center. As a rule, the lodge works in areas where there are various ethnic, tribal, and religious communities to ensure fair dealings with all people, and projects must benefit the community as a whole.⁵¹

3. Resource Efficiency, Environmental Protection, and Climate Change

According to UNWTO:

- [The industry is] committed to reducing its 5% of world CO₂ emissions
- Raises financing for conservation of heritage, wildlife, and the environment
- Can be a vehicle for protecting and restoring biodiversity
- Must sustainably manage an expected 1.8 billion international tourists in 2030⁵²

UNWTO says, in part, “The tourism sector must become more rigorous in its efforts to monitor, report and reduce resource consumption and emissions. An integrated approach to environmental sustainability is required, grounded upon strategies for decoupling tourism growth from environmental degradation and excessive resource use, with a focus on:

- Enhancing the efficient use of resources;
- Biodiversity conservation and environmental protection;
- Investing in climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
- Increasing knowledge of how environmental issues are related to tourism and increasing awareness among key stakeholders.”⁵³



Experts say...

“We are now in real time climate change, this is no longer just an academic exercise. For every one degree the temperature goes up on this planet from CO₂ emissions the atmosphere is absorbing 7% more precipitation. So, we are getting more violent water events, more violent winter snow, more violent spring floods, more prolonged summer droughts and wild rains, more category 3, 4, and 5 hurricanes.” — *Jeremy Rifkin, Economist, WTTC*⁵⁴

“We could put a solar panel on every ski lift tower on earth and it wouldn’t matter much. But a sign on every ski lift tower saying, ‘Pull out your cell phone and call your congressman to tell him to stop caving to the fossil fuel industry and do something about climate change before winter vanishes forever’ would be of great use.” — *Bill McKibben, author and climate activist*⁵⁵

“In the future [tourism] may be more exposed to criticism as a ‘dirty’ sector, as other sectors move to cleaner energies while aviation remains dependent upon fossil fuels. That means that the [travel] industry should do everything it can on the ground to reduce emissions and other harmful environmental and social effects.” — *Randy Durband, Global Sustainable Tourism Council*⁵⁶

“Mother Nature challenged us as well, with some of our member-countries affected in varying degrees by hurricanes. Yet, despite the adversities occasioned by these events, our resilience and fortitude as a region stood out and even the worst affected were back open for business in quick time, proving that tourism is an effective way to re-energise an economy following a natural or other disaster.” — *Hugh Riley, CEO and Secretary General of the Caribbean Tourism Organization*⁵⁷

“Sustainable tourism is one of many options that protected area managers can use to support their conservation activities, if the conditions are right. With appropriate planning, development, operation, and partnerships - sustainable tourism can proactively contribute to conservation objectives, while also playing a positive role in the livelihoods of local economies.” — *Dr. Anna Spenceley, Chair, IUCN WCPA Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group*⁵⁸

“Currently, national and regional tourism strategies, with very few exceptions, fail to account for the impacts of climate change.” — *Helena Rey, Programme Officer, UN Environment's Economy Division*⁵⁹

Consumer Support

“In Germany...61% of those interviewed said they would like to make their holiday sustainable, but only 2% actually turn their good intentions into practice. The barriers mentioned mainly include concerns about possible extra costs and a lack of suitable products.”⁶⁰

AIG Travel's 2017 Pulse Pole, based on 1,300 respondent travelers, reveals 78% reported that sustainable travel is "very important" or "somewhat important," compared to 52% of respondents with that opinion in 2016... When considering five specific ways the travel industry could make it easier for people to travel sustainably, respondents' most frequent answer was "educate consumers about sustainable travel basics" (36%) followed by "incorporate sustainable travel practices into existing products and services" (26%).⁶¹

“Every year, humans take a total of 32 million flights, producing 781 million tons of carbon! Then, when we actually get to our destinations, travelers use double the amount of water we do at home. We love the feeling of treating ourselves when we travel. Unfortunately that often means we're using much more natural resources than we normally would.”⁶²

“Brits are also taking the initiative themselves, with 75% saying that the environment and sustainability is an important consideration in their choice of holiday destination. This represents a significant increase over the past twelve months.”⁶³

“With increased regulatory pressure on the horizon, new and more sophisticated lobbying from NGOs that incorporates incentives as well as shaming and a rise in consumer activism via social media have created a new need for companies to be both transparent and authentic in their environmental strategies. While 'greenwashing' is still commonplace, there is a slow shift towards a more genuine approach to green issues.”⁶⁴



Hotels are able to tread lightly on the land by building with, and not destroying, the natural environment.

Source: Island Outpost's GoldenEye, Jamaica

“Ethical Traveller Tech Choice CO₂ Fit is a tracking app by Changers intended to motivate and reward people for making greener travel choices. The app invites users to “become conscious of your daily behavioural impacts and share this increased awareness with your family and friends.” Users activate the app at the start of a trip and select a transportation type: bike, bus, train, car or plane, and the distance and speed travelled is calculated and used to create a CO₂ value for that journey. If the user has used less CO₂ than they would have on an average car journey, they are rewarded with Recoins. Recoins are a form of digital currency redeemable against WWF-backed CO₂ certificates, each representing a saving of one tonne of CO₂. If they take more carbon-costly transport, they create a negative balance in their Recoin account.”⁶⁵

According to the Rainforest Alliance, nature-based tourism accounts for about 20% of international travel.⁶⁶

The Adventure Travel Trade Association's “Adventure Travel Trends Snapshot” reports ecotourism has the highest level of client demand overall for travel activities in 2017, followed by cultural, environmentally sustainable, and hiking activities.⁶⁷

Business Case

“Except for a few hotels, aviation companies, restaurants, and tour operators, GHG and resource efficiency accounting and reporting is not yet widespread across the tourism value chain. Mapping the sustainability hotspots of the most important tourism value chains will fill a major gap for a much-needed baseline of verifiable, consistent GHG emissions, and resource efficiency. This will, however, require mature levels of cooperation and collaboration between the tourism public & private sectors.” — *Helena Rey, Programme Officer, UN Environment's Economy Division*⁶⁸

“The internet has put into the hands of consumers more powerful tools for the probing of corporate claims of all kinds. The ‘new normal’ will be an increased standard of sustainability transparency demanded by consumers – particularly of brands in the airline and wider travel industry.”⁶⁹

“Tourism is very energy-dependent, and nearly all of the energy it uses is derived from fossil fuels. Globally the sector causes some five percent of man-made CO₂ emissions. Three quarters of these are caused by transport, with aviation accounting for 40 percent of the total footprint, and cars for 32 percent. Accommodation follows with 21 percent.... [T]ourism's contribution to global climate change is estimated to reach as much as 14 percent.”⁷⁰

“Nine out of ten industry executives say sustainability is important to their organisation – up from 80% last year. While only 28% of organisations have a carbon emission reduction policy, 38% consider the travel industry’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction performance to be better than other industries.”⁷¹

WTTC states, “Just doing the basics or having a general sustainability goal is simply not enough anymore; data driven evidence with targets and monitoring is now embedded into the activities of those at the forefront of sustainable tourism. Tourism for Tomorrow winners and finalists are now expected to show measurable impact, and as a result the standard is increasingly high.”⁷²

“Food production has the largest environmental footprint globally of any human activity, yet 1/3 of the world’s available food either spoils or gets thrown away.” This is a tremendous problem in the hospitality industry. WWF has established a partnership with the American Hotel and Lodging Association, with support from the Rockefeller Foundation, in an in-depth program to ‘design the best techniques, messaging, and engagement strategies for food waste prevention across the industry.’⁷³

On the issue of food waste, LightBlue Consulting’s Benjamin Lephibert says, “So when you know that a hotel selling 15,000 meals a month can generate more than 70 tons of food waste per year, and that the average true cost of food waste per kilo is US\$5, it becomes easier to understand the scale of savings to be made from reducing food waste.”⁷⁴

As such an important development tool, sustainable investment and financing is still sorely needed in the tourism sector. “In modeling undertaken by UNEP to quantify the likely effects of increased green investment in tourism, results indicated that despite a rise in the flow of tourists, green investment would lead to significant resource conservation through considerable efficiency improvements.”⁷⁵



Coral restoration projects combat the loss of coral reefs in the Dominican Republic. Source: *Puntacana Resort & Club*

Innovation and technology must be utilized to adapt to and mitigate climate change. According to the World Bank, “Engaging the private sector is essential for multiple reasons. It can mobilize financial resources and technical capabilities, leverage the efforts of governments, engage civil society and community efforts, and develop innovative climate services and adaptation technologies... Highly innovative adaptation products and services developed and marketed by private companies are already improving climate resilience.”⁷⁶

Destination Case

“There are more than 70 countries and territories across the world that have million-dollar reefs—reefs that generate more than one million dollars per square kilometer. These reefs support businesses and people in the Florida Keys, Bahamas and across the Caribbean, Mexico, Indonesia, Australia, Maldives and Mauritius, to name a few.”⁷⁷

“Hawaii island context highlighted a critical issue for conservation in the coming decades: The nexus between biological and cultural diversity, and how their conservation and sustainability requires a combination of traditional wisdom and modern knowledge.”⁷⁸

“Low-lying island idylls, such as The Maldives and the Pacific Islands, are already falling victim to rising sea levels and sea acidification that is destroying the sealife that tourists flock to see. Meanwhile, rising temperatures mean snow shortages in many of our favourite ski resorts.”⁷⁹

“Tourism provides an economic impetus for conservation of the environment because protected and scenic areas are attractions for both domestic and international tourists. This can also contribute to a wider appreciation of nature conservation by promoting and increasing accessibility to specific sites and aspects of nature.”⁸⁰

In recent years, the forest concessions in Guatemala’s Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) have become a model of successful sustainable forest enterprise for the world, maintaining an astonishing near-zero deforestation rate while improving local livelihoods.⁸¹

In 2005, Misool Eco Resort in Indonesia, along with the local people, created “No Take Zones”, in which all fishing, shark finning, and harvesting of turtle eggs and shellfish are prohibited. Inside these zones, illegal fishing activity has been reduced by 86%. “As a result of this, in the past 6 years the fish biomass has increased by over 250%, and in some areas, over 600%. While coral reefs continue to face global threats, Misool’s work sets a hopeful precedent for restoration & renewal.”⁸²

A survey by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre found that 72% of survey respondents acknowledged climate change as a threat to natural and cultural heritage.⁸³

4. Cultural Values, Diversity, and Heritage

According to UNWTO:

- [Tourism] revives traditional activities and customs
- Empowers communities and nurtures pride within them
- Promotes cultural diversity
- Raises awareness of the value of heritage⁸⁴

UNWTO says, in part, “Bolstering the links between sustainable tourism and culture will require:

- Positioning ‘cultural tourism’ as a tool for sustainable development;
- Safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage—both tangible and intangible; and
- Linking tourism to living, contemporary culture and the creative industries.”⁸⁵

Experts Say...

“Researchers have found that heritage sites remain a main attraction.... In many areas, tourism augments cultural pride and self-worth by increasing attention paid to communities and their history and the sense of valorization they receive from being a tourist attraction, from being something worth seeing. As a result, tourism can often assist in the preservation and revitalization of cultural traditions when communities examine and reevaluate the significance of their heritage.” — *World Monuments Fund, Preservation Society of Charleston, National Trust for Historic Preservation*⁸⁶

“Rationing scarce resources and overcrowding at iconic destinations is an issue...Do you do it by rationing? Vouchers? Leave it so the problem escalates? Bringing together the mayors or representatives of iconic sites to talk about best practices would be a useful thing.” — *Professor Ian Goldin, University of Oxford*⁸⁷

“Most governments still measure tourism success simply by the number of visitors. The more, the better. For the moment, officials have been reluctant to regulate tourism to the benefit, first of all, of their own citizens. Instead, tourism is seen as an easy moneymaker and a short cut to economic development. The exceptions are standouts. France, Bhutan, Costa Rica and Canada are among the few countries with governments willing to co-ordinate policies of sustainable tourism and they haven’t suffered: they are among the most popular destinations in the world.” — *Elizabeth Becker, author*⁸⁸

Consumer Support

According to UNESCO, “Cultural tourism is growing at an unprecedented rate and now accounts for around 40% of global tourism.”⁸⁹

COLLOQUY’s travel-habits research shows that the millennial consumer, born between 1981 and 1997, is significantly more attracted to destinations with cultural or historical significance (76% versus 63% of the general population), access to adventures like scuba diving and hiking (59% versus 45%) and festivals or regional events (66% versus 49%). In addition, 74% of Americans said having a unique experience is the most important reason for taking a vacation, topping rest and relaxation at 69%.⁹⁰

According to a study of Heraklion, Greece, 80% percent of cruise passengers surveyed visited archaeological sites and historical places. Respondents listed their top three reasons for going on a cruise as “discovering new places,” “experiencing new cultures and way of life,” and “visiting historical and archaeological sites.”⁹¹

According to the UNWTO, San Juan, Puerto Rico’s Spanish colonial cultural heritage is a particularly strong draw for cruise passengers. A very high percentage of transit passengers, 91%, disembark in San Juan. The 2014/2015 BREA study found that in Puerto Rico, ‘guided tours’ (or shore excursions) and ‘historic sites and museums’ received the highest scores of all visit attributes, each with a mean score of 8.5 [out of 10].⁹²

“Travel has massive impacts on fragile communities all over the world. Local populations can really feel the impact of “un-responsible tourism.” Native communities can be exploited and made to feel like a human zoo with tourists flashing cameras in their faces.”⁹³



Demand continues to grow for experiential travel, and culinary tourism is no exception. Travelers take part in a bread baking interactive demonstration. Source: Nikki Rose, *Crete’s Culinary Sanctuaries*

“A notable outcome of the squeeze on leisure time is that consumers are taking a greater interest in experience over possessions.... While [increased employment] translates into higher income, it has in effect led to a larger number of people with constraints on their leisure time.”⁹⁴

According to an ATTA survey of over 1,000 respondents, “travelers are not content with just being in the presence of a new culture. They want to gain some understanding of it, along with a ‘broadened perspective’ and ‘expanded horizons.’”⁹⁵

Business Case

“The best responsible and sustainable tourism companies, however, go further than just improving the health and well-being of their paying guests. They look to improve it for the communities where they operate, too. Expediciones Sierra Norte won a Tourism for Tomorrow Award in 2016 for the walking trails and community tourism it runs, and these support the preservation of the 2,000 plant species that serve as a storehouse of indigenous knowledge for traditional healers from the local communities in the Mexican state of Oaxaca.... Sierra Norte annually receives around 17,000 tourists. And rather than increase pressure on their environment, the growth in visitors has been used to increase the capacity of community members to protect and sustainably manage the cultural heritage these visitors are flocking to see.”⁹⁶

“Tour businesses with a strong awareness of the impact they're making will benefit greatly from their already established ecotourism practices. However, that's not to say that businesses who are just waking up to this trend will be far behind! Companies will need to develop a strong social focus.”⁹⁷

“Food experiences are not limited to simply dining out. They include cooking courses, farm tours and the classic food markets, which make up about 95% of these experiences. These experiences are closely tied to the culture of the location. Many travelers consider it to be one of the best ways to get to know the story of the place they are traveling to and it works as a valuable resource for tourism companies.”⁹⁸

“At their largest, such [tourism business] efforts to support people’s health and sense of wellbeing can extend across an entire destination. Parkstad won the Destination award in 2016 for turning round the fortunes of a rundown former coal mining district now seen as an all-round destination and place to enjoy activity holidays and nature.”⁹⁹

A 2017 ComRes survey reports “49% of respondents confirmed that their enjoyment of a holiday would be reduced if they observed animal abuse during their stay, whilst 71% said that they would more likely buy holidays from travel companies that care for animals.”¹⁰⁰

Destination Case

A WWF study concludes that “elephant conservation in protected areas represents a wise investment with immediate and ongoing payback for tourism. Rates of return are positive, sometimes strongly, in these areas, indicating that tourists’ willingness to pay, to see elephants as part of a visit to a protected area, are sufficient to offset the increased costs necessary to safeguard elephant populations.”¹⁰¹

“National tourist boards are looking to history to find attractions for visitors, with the development and promotion of hiking trails proving a surprising success. Many of these trails are centuries old, but are seeing a resurgence in popularity. Diaspora, religious and rural tourism are all seeing the benefit of the hiking trend. Key trails include the Nativity Path in Palestine, Abraham’s Path from Turkey to Egypt, the Jordan trail and Lebanon’s mountain trail.”¹⁰²

Many U.S. destinations are improving their products and offerings in response to global trends such as culinary travel, cultural travel, demand for authentic experiences, adventure, and health & wellness stays.¹⁰³

Authored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), a 2016 report highlights the urgent need to:

- Identify the World Heritage sites that are most vulnerable to climate change and implement policies and provide resources to increase resilience at those sites
- Ensure that the threat of climate impacts is taken into account in the nomination and listing process for new World Heritage sites
- Engage the tourism sector in efforts to manage and protect vulnerable sites in the face of climate change and educate visitors about climate threats



An emerging trend, guests combine wellness and adventure activities for the ultimate rejuvenating experience.
Source: Bodhi Surf School

5. Mutual Understanding, Peace, and Security

According to UNWTO:

- [Tourism] breaks down barriers and builds bridges between visitors and hosts
- Provides opportunities for cross-cultural encounters that can build peace
- A resilient sector that recovers quickly from security threats
- A tool for soft diplomacy¹⁰⁶

UNWTO says, in part, “Advancing tourism’s contribution to mutual understanding, peace and security requires:

- Fostering a ‘culture of peace’ and global citizenship through tourism;
- Harnessing tourism as an agent for peace and reconciliation
- Maintaining safety and security across the tourism sector.”¹⁰⁷

Experts Say...

“There is a clear link between peace and tourism... The research showed that countries with a more open and sustainable tourism sector tend to be more peaceful, and suffer from less conflict and violence. A sustainable and open tourism sector contributes to higher levels of ‘positive peace’, namely the attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies. Countries with a more sustainable and open tourism sector are more likely to enjoy higher levels of positive peace in the future.” — *IPK International on behalf of ITB Berlin*¹⁰⁸

“Tourism can support development and also peace, for example, when putting pressure on governments to cease fighting, or it can establish harmonious relationships between citizens, or increasing tolerance and acknowledgement of the rights of others.” — *Iaia Pedemonte, Gender Responsible Tourism*¹⁰⁹

“Tourism is not only a mode of consumption, but a microscopic meeting place where isolated, marginalized, and suffering people can be supported by international solidarity. Unfortunately, mainstream tourism is very rarely designed in a way, in that it contributes to understanding one another, cultivating peace and recovering justice.” — *Tourism Watch*¹¹⁰

Consumer Support

“Hiking is being targeted to send out a message of peace, hope and reconciliation. Some of the trails go across country borders, offering visitors a more varied trip, as well as

fostering stronger relationships between neighbouring tourism organisations. Tourism infrastructure is minimal in many places along these routes, which means that home stays are often the only lodging opportunity.”¹¹¹

According to a 2016 World Travel Monitor survey, outbound travelers are more sensitive than ever about possible risks from terror attacks. As many as 45% of international travelers had serious safety and security concerns. About two-thirds of these respondents said they still plan to travel abroad but only to destinations they perceive as safe. A further 14% plan to go on holiday within their own country instead of taking a foreign trip, and 19% said they would not travel at all until the security situation had improved.¹¹²

“The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported that people are choosing to travel to destinations based on perceptions of safety and that 20% of the tourists are changing their travel plans due to safety concerns.”¹¹³

Business Case

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group won the Tourism for Tomorrow Enterprise category for its Adding Color to Lives project, which is an urban art project for at-risk youth sponsored by Park Inn by Radisson. Through the project, disadvantaged youth collaborate with a renowned street artist, Joel Bergner, to create large scale urban murals in their local neighborhoods. “From a single individual to our surrounding communities — and expanding to points across the globe — it creates a ripple effect of positive change, allowing us to add color to the young people’s lives,” said Inge Huijbrechts, Vice President, Responsible Business.¹¹⁴

The “Tourism sector can contribute to peace and coexistence in territories that have been affected by the armed conflict in Colombia, territories with natural wealth and cultural diversity. These territories have been consistently increasing their income through this sector in recent years (more than 10%), even above growth rates in Latin America (5%) and the world (4%).”¹¹⁵

“The end of the civil war saw a remarkable upsurge of environmental activism in Lebanon dedicated to nature protection and rural preservation, the promotion of hiking and camping, especially for youth, and advocacy for publicly accessible green spaces in cities.... The LMT [Lebanon Mountain Trail], which is today nearly 230 miles long, is used extensively by eco-tourism groups such as Vamos Todos and Cyclamen, who are committed to environmental and cultural preservation and the promotion of rural tourism.”¹¹⁶

Destination Case

People-to-people travel is not only a legal way for Americans to visit Cuba, it provides guests with unique access to people and places the average tourist rarely sees and allows the traveler to discover Cuba from a local’s perspective. It provides the opportunity to meet talented artists and musicians in their home studios, and participate in discussions

with Cuban government officials, experts in architecture, political scholars, journalists, & award-winning economists. The impact of the Obama administration measures was immediate: total tourist arrivals from the U.S. shot up by 77% from 2014 to 2015, and a further 76% in 2016. What's more, this activity stimulated a significant rise in overall tourism: international arrivals rose by 17% in 2015 and 14% in 2016.¹¹⁷

“For nearly 400 years, the border area of northeastern Mexico, West Texas, and south-central New Mexico has operated as a wide multicultural, bilingual, cooperative community. Located at the intersection of two countries and three states, the North American Borderplex is a cultural melting pot unlike anywhere in the world. The Borderplex Alliance promotes cultural

tourism, ecotourism, sporting & event tourism, and medical tourism.”¹¹⁸

“Looking at data for individual countries, there are many examples of non-conflict-affected countries that deteriorate in their Global Peace Index Scores, but improve in their Tourism Scores. Examples include Oman, where tourism has flourished despite high levels of militarisation, and Ukraine, where tourism's contribution to GDP increased from 2.65% to 4.95% between 2014 and 2015 despite continuing war with Russia in the northeast of the country. This speaks again to the resilience of the tourism sector in light of worsening levels of violence and conflict.”¹¹⁹

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