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Demand for Responsible Travel Strong, Growing, and Profitable Concludes New Analysis by Center for Responsible Travel

WASHINGTON, DC— A new meta-analysis of dozens of recent tourism surveys and market studies finds “increasing recognition among both travel professionals and consumers of the importance of responsible travel.” The analysis by the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST), a nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, DC and affiliated with Stanford University, also finds “strong evidence” that responsible travel is “good for the economic bottom line.”

CREST’s study, [*The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends and Statistics*](#), examines a wide range of surveys and studies done in the past five years to assess commitment to responsible travel, that is, “travel that minimizes negative impacts, brings economic benefits to host communities, and preserves the cultural and natural resources of the destinations.” For instance, a groundbreaking Harvard Business School study found that companies that adopted environmental, social, and governance policies in the 1990s outperformed those that did not, while a Nielsen survey found that 66% of consumers globally prefer to buy products and services from companies that have implemented programs to give back to society. This definitely extends to travel: 93% of *Conde Nast Traveler* readers said that travel companies should be responsible for protecting the environment.

CREST’s findings coincide with two important milestones in the growth of the travel industry: for the first time ever, international tourist arrivals surpassed one billion in 2012 and international tourism receipts exceeded \$1 trillion in 2011. According to the CREST analyses, tourism industry growth is being matched by growing interest in responsible travel among both leisure and business travelers as well as travel businesses and tourism destinations.

“Over the last decade, CREST has periodically conducted similar analyses of tourism trends and statistics. Never before has there been such an abundance of evidence demonstrating that socially and environmentally responsible travel has now entered the mainstream. It crosses age and income groups, different types of tourism, and destinations around the globe,” says CREST Co-Director Dr. Martha Honey.

While the new CREST study draws heavily upon recent studies and surveys conducted in the United States, it also cites findings from other countries, including Russia, Namibia, Botswana, New Zealand, Costa Rica, Germany, U.K., and elsewhere in Europe and the Americas. Further, it notes a range of life style shifts and preferences that reinforce a growing trend towards responsible travel. These include urbanization and a need

to connect with nature, consumer demand for authenticity and experiential tourism, a search for fulfillment, inter-generational travel, and a growing interest in volunteer vacations and travelers' philanthropy.

"The tourism sector is embracing responsible tourism not as an option, but as a condition for its continuous growth," states Luigi Cabrini, the World Tourism Organization's Director for Sustainable Development. He adds, "Recent United Nations research highlights that investing in sustainability reduces costs of energy, water, and waste and enhances the value of biodiversity, ecosystems, and cultural heritage, while responding to increasing demand from travelers for greener tourism. The empowerment of local communities, poverty reduction and new, additional jobs also result from more responsible tourism approaches, spurring tourism's contribution to broader development goals."

The CREST study is endorsed by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Global Sustainable Tourism Council, and six other leading tourism organizations and institutions.



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Excerpts from

The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends and Statistics

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- Surveys and studies "consistently find that between 10% and 15% of discretionary travelers" are "alternative" or "new tourists." These tourists are "typically highly educated, mature, affluent, well traveled, environmentally aware and sensitive to the social and cultural traditions, systems and mores of the destinations they visit." And "growth from these groups is out-speeding that of mainstream segments," concludes a 2011 study by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).
- 93% of *Conde Nast Traveler* readers surveyed in 2011 said that travel companies should be responsible for protecting the environment and 58% said their hotel choice is influenced by the support the hotel gives to the local community
- The 2012 *National Travel & Tourism Strategy* of Americans traveling abroad found, "Nature-based, culture-based, heritage and outdoor adventure travel represent a significant segment of the outbound tourism market," totaling about half or some 10 million U.S. travelers.

- Two thirds (66%) of consumers around the world say they prefer to buy products and services from companies that have implemented programs to give back to society, according to a 2012 Nielsen Wire survey.
- “When it comes right down to it, sustainability pays. And it pays in three ways: guests are increasingly interested, so it’s good for business; there are real opportunities to reduce costs and do things that are ‘green’ at the same time; and ... the ability to get people excited about the company they’re a part of through the kinds of green practices we’ve been implementing is another source of success and payoff.”
—*Frits van Paasschen, CEO, Starwood*
- “Today’s consumers expect travel companies to build sustainability into their product offer. A majority of 70% believe companies should be committed to preserving the natural environment and 55% fair working conditions, while 75% of consumers want a more responsible holiday,” according to a 2012 U.K. report by The Travel Foundation and Forum for the Future.
- A groundbreaking 2011 study by the Harvard Business School found that companies that adopted environmental, social, and governance policies in the 1990s outperformed those that did not. “Adoption of these policies is not just cheap talk; rather these policies reflect substantive changes in business processes,” the study states.
- Ecotourism can return as much as 95% of revenues to the local economy, compared to only about 20% for “standard all-inclusive package tours,” according to a 2011 UN-supported study by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.
- “The buildup of consumers’ socio-environmental awareness of tourism development,” states the UNWTO, “is leading to increased scrutiny on the part of the public in destination decision-making and a growing requirement for new tourism developments to be sustainable.”