



Center for Responsible Travel

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New CREST Report Finds Responsible Travel, Bolstered by Dynamic New Niche Markets, Continues to Outpace Overall Growth in Tourism Industry

Washington, DC – In recognition of Earth Day (April 22), the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) is releasing its *Trends & Statistics 2016* report, demonstrating that the growth of responsible tourism continues to outpace growth of the tourism industry as a whole. In addition, the 2016 report concludes that “the social and environmental imperative for responsible travel” is being spurred, in part, by the twin crises of wealth inequality and climate change. “Doing sustainable tourism business in the era of climate change is not just politically correct, it is a comparative advantage,” states to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The new 15-page CREST report, *The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics 2016*, updates previous CREST studies released each year since 2013. This latest edition is based on a wide range of recent surveys and reports of consumer and industry demand for responsible travel (and related terms). The 2016 report has been prepared and is being distributed in collaboration with 16 leading organizations and academic programs involved in sustainable tourism, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).

“*Trends & Statistics* is CREST’s most popular and widely used publication and we are pleased that so many organizational colleagues have collaborated in compiling data for the 2016 edition,” states Dr. Martha Honey, CREST’s Executive Director. “The release is timed to coincide with Earth Day as a reminder of both the importance of the global tourism industry and the power of travel, when done responsibly, to protect the environment and benefit host communities.”

As in the past, the report looks at demand for responsible travel in three broad areas: consumers, business, and destinations. According to a 2015 Tourism Cares survey, 55% of respondents reported they have volunteered or contributed financially or in-kind while on vacation and 72% rated their travel giving as “important.” Further, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTTC) concludes that travelers are coming “to expect that Travel & Tourism businesses will become sustainable in the same way they expect free Wi-Fi connectivity in hotels or online check-in for air travel.” And, according to Jonathon Porritt, Co-Founder of Forum for the Future, sustainable tourism “is now a fast-moving, extremely dynamic area: those that get it right will thrive; those that don’t will perish.”

In addition, for the first time the 2016 edition of *Trends & Statistics* looks at the emerging and vibrant niche markets that reflect “the strength and diversity of responsible travel.” The report covers six niche markets: adventure tourism, agritourism, culinary tourism, orange (or cultural) tourism, the sharing economy, and wellness tourism. Adventure tourism, for instance, grew an estimated 65% per year between 2009 and 2012, in Europe and North and South America and it “attracts high value customers, supports local economies, and encourages sustainable practices,” according to a study by the Adventure Tourism Travel Association and the George Washington University.

CREST’s findings coincide with the 6th consecutive year (2009 – 2015) of above-average growth in international tourism and projections of continued growth in 2016. The travel industry contributed nearly 10% of world GDP and accounted for 1 in 11 jobs globally in 2015.

The CREST study is distributed for free in partnership with the collaborating institutions.

[Click here for the full report](#)

EXCERPTS

- Nature-based tourism accounts for about 20% of total international travel and continues to grow, according to the UNWTO.
- The percentage of consumers who are willing to pay more for sustainable brands that showed commitment to social and environmental values went up from 55% to 66% between 2014 and 2015. About 73% of the younger generations -- Millennials and Generation Z -- are more likely to pay more for sustainability, compared to 51% of Baby Boomers, according to Nielsen.
- “A growing number of businesses are advocating for a more sustainable and efficient use of natural resources as central for their development,” according to a 2015 study by WWF and others.
- Spafinder Wellness, Inc. finds that among agents that book meetings and incentive travel, 79% reported that demand for healthier corporate/business meetings (i.e., meetings with healthy food, fitness and spa experiences, access to nature, etc.) is a rising trend in 2015.
- A 2015 WTTC study forecasts that the next 20 years will be characterized by our sector fully integrating climate change and related issues into business strategy, supporting the global transition to a low carbon economy, strengthening resilience at a local level against climate risks, promoting the value of responsible travel, and greening entire supply chains.
- A 2015 report on convention centers found that 70% have a dedicated Sustainability Coordinator or Sustainability Manager on staff, 77% have an employee ‘green team’, 85% participate in sustainability programs or initiatives in their community, and 90% have either achieved or are actively seeking a sustainability-related certification.

- 'Green' tourism businesses continue to receive differentiation in popular online travel search and booking engines, including TripAdvisor GreenLeaders, Travelocity, and Expedia. Travel bloggers focused on ecotourism, cultural-heritage tourism, and unique vacation experiences continue to gain traction.
- Agritourism is "repositioning of the agricultural sector to maximize the integration of indigenous food, culture, wellness and the environment into a sustainable tourism experience," according to the Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).
- A 2015 survey of professional chefs in the US revealed that 77% consider environmental sustainability as a "hot trend", 75% mentioned natural ingredients/minimally processed food, and 72% mentioned hyper-local sourcing (e.g. restaurant garden) as leading trends in restaurant menus.
- "Orange tourism is a sustainable tourism that generates cultural, economic and social development through responsible touristic management of cultural heritage, artistic production and cultural and creative industries," according to a 2014 study.
- Surveys by Airbnb show 91% of its users want to 'live like locals,' and they stay 2.1 times longer than typical visitors of a destination, and spend 2.1 times more than normal. In addition, 53% of Airbnb hosts say that sharing their apartment has helped them to stay in their homes.
- 71% of travel agents in North America and Europe say consumers are more aware of wellness travel and 83% say consumers will pay a premium for wellness, according to Pathfinder Wellness.