

The CREST staff on a hike at Theodore Roosevelt Island in Washington, DC

Pictured from left to right:
Samantha Bray
Ellen Rugh
Gregory Miller
Kelsey Frenkiel
Rebekah Stewart



Transforming the Way the World Travels

www.ResponsibleTravel.org



Dear friends and supporters,

I am pleased to share with you the Center for Responsible Travel's first-ever Impact Report. 2019 was a pivotal year for the CREST team, as we took strategic action to address climate change, overtourism, biodiversity loss, and inequitable access to wealth – four key threats to securing a sustainable future.

Here at CREST, we believe that responsible travel can be a vital force for protecting our world's precious natural and cultural resources, while helping local communities thrive. When developed responsibly, tourism has the power to bring sustainable employment and biodiversity conservation to areas that otherwise fall prey to economic instability, extractive industries, and illegal trade and traffic. As an organization, we are dedicated to advancing sustainable travel to preserve and protect beloved environments, cultures, and destinations both today and for future generations.

In 2019, CREST's programs and research helped support destinations in over 16 countries. In the pages of this report, you'll discover how we worked throughout the year to develop innovative projects, produce cutting-edge research, and engage in critically-needed thought leadership to help advance responsible tourism. You'll learn how we brought the tourism industry together at our World Tourism Day Forum and read about communities and travelers who were impacted by CREST's mission.

As our world continues to struggle to respond to the environmental and social threats we face, CREST's work is more important than ever. This report both reflects our incredible journey in 2019 and demonstrates the need for our work in the year ahead. With your partnership, we can develop sustainable tourism solutions to help address our planet's most pressing problems.

Yours in responsible travel,

Gregory Miller, Ph.D.

Gregory Miller

Executive Director

Center for Responsible Travel (CREST)



ABOUT US

The Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) is a unique nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the positive global impact of responsible tourism. Based in Washington, DC, we assist governments, policymakers, tourism businesses, nonprofit organizations, and international agencies with finding solutions to critical issues confronting tourism, the world's largest service industry.

Founded in 2003 in the wake the UN's International Year of Ecotourism, CREST initially focused on the role of small-scale ecotourism in empowering communities and conserving precious resources. Over time, our work has evolved to consider how all tourism can be more responsibility planned, developed, and managed across the industry.

Through our innovative field projects, research, consultancies, and advocacy, CREST is taking action to address our world's key threats to securing a sustainable future.





OUR VISION

To transform the way the world travels.

OUR MISSION

To promote responsible tourism policies and practices globally so that local communities may thrive and steward their cultural resources and biodiversity.





OUR FOCUS

CREST's programs and research are designed to address **four key threats** to securing a sustainable future.



CLIMATE CHANGE

The growing threat of climate change makes responsible travel more important than ever. In this moment of crisis, the tourism industry must come together to develop solutions for our planet and its people.



OVERTOURISM

Overtourism has been a focus of CREST's research and outreach since 2017. Responsible travel solutions are needed to address this problem and help destinations manage drastic fluctuations in visitor numbers.





BIODIVERSITY LOSS

Our planet's biodiversity is under siege.
Responsible tourism can play a critical
role in conservation, protecting plant
and animal life around the world
from harmful extractive activities.



Tourism is the world's largest service industry, providing one in every 10 jobs globally. But when not managed responsibly, this vast industry can contribute to income inequality and exploit local workers.

OUR APPROACH

CREST utilizes a range of tools and strategies to advance responsible tourism and develop sustainable solutions.



FIELD PROJECTS

Through our on-the-ground fieldwork, CREST partners with local communities to protect precious natural and cultural resources and help destinations see the benefits of responsible tourism.



RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

From our seminal *The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics* report to our eye-opening study of cruise tourism in the Caribbean, CREST's research, reports, and publications share vital insights to move the tourism industry towards sustainability.



CONSULTANCIES

CREST works with governments, businesses, and other key stakeholders on consultancy projects designed to advance sustainable tourism planning and destination stewardship.



ADVOCACY & OUTREACH

CREST makes it a priority to share our responsible travel expertise and educate diverse audiences about sustainability through speaking engagements, media outreach, policy advocacy and CREST-organized conferences.

MAPPING OUR IMPACT

In 2019, our programs and research helped support destination communities and protect natural environments and cultural heritage in over 16 countries.

NORTH AMERICA

- 1 field project
- 1 consultancy
- 2 fiscally-sponsored programs
- 16 speaking engagements
- 1 CREST-hosted conference
- 3 countries

EUROPE

- 2 completed case studies
- 2 countries

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

- 1 consultancy
- 1 country

CENTRAL AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

- 1 field project
- 1 consultancy
- 10 completed case studies
- 4 speaking engagements
- 2 CREST-hosted conferences
- 10 countries



ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH: **BY THE NUMBERS**

CREST works to advance responsible tourism that empowers local communities and protects natural environments through strategic advocacy and outreach.

In 2019, we:

Shared our expertise and insights on responsible travel though **20** speaking engagements in North America, Central America, and the Caribbean.

Educated the public about responsible travel and influenced the global dialogue on sustainability through 129 media articles in prominent news outlets, including The New York Times, CNN, Travel Weekly, Condé Nast Traveler, and Fortune – an increase of over 55% from 2018.

Served as a thought leader by co-hosting **3** sustainable tourism conferences. Our World Tourism Day Forum, *Impact Tourism: Giving Time, Talent, & Treasure*, was attended by **182** tourism and community development professionals.

Produced **3** research publications designed to inform tourism policymakers, practitioners, and academics on the topics of cruise tourism, impact tourism, U.S. travel to Cuba, and global trends in responsible tourism.

Welcomed **3** tourism leaders to our Academic Affiliates network from institutions in Cuba, Florida, and Washington, DC.



IMPACT TOURISM:

Giving Time, Talent, & Treasure

A World Tourism Day Forum September 27, 2019

2019 WTD FORUM AT A GLANCE

182

attendees

30

sponsors

28

speakers and moderators

6

panel discussions

1

keynote address

At CREST's third annual World Tourism Day Forum, leaders in tourism and community development came together in Washington, DC to discuss how the travel industry can responsibly give back to the communities we love around the world.

The 2019 World Tourism Day Forum, *Impact Tourism: Giving Time, Talent & Treasure*, focused on how tourism business, travelers, and organizations are making strategic contributions of time, talent, and treasure to social and environmental projects in destinations – a concept that CREST calls impact tourism. Recognizing that "doing good" does not always mean "doing right," the forum also used a lessons-learned approach to examine the downsides of poorly implemented travel giving programs.

Hosted in partnership with the Organization of American States, this day-long event featured panel discussions on key issues in impact tourism, including destination-wide travel giving programs, community partnerships, donor travel, corporate responsibility, voluntourism, and in-kind donations. James Thornton, CEO of Intrepid Travel, gave a keynote address sharing the company's lessons learned from 30 years of impact tourism.

A carbon neutral event, sustainability played a central role in the planning and execution of the 2019 World Tourism Day Forum. Among the day's major announcements was the introduction of CREST's annual Legacy in Responsible Travel Award. CREST's Board of Directors honored Dr. Martha Honey, CREST Co-Founder and Director Emeritus, with the inaugural Legacy in Responsible Travel Award in recognition of her pioneering work to promote responsible tourism across the globe.

Building on the forum's momentum, we look forward to releasing an Impact Tourism Handbook in 2020, featuring how-to case studies from many of the World Tourism Day Forum speakers, along with other best-practice leaders.





ADDRESSING **OVERTOURISM**

In 2019, overtourism disrupted daily life, degraded precious natural and cultural sites, and impacted the traveler experience. Throughout the year, CREST was hard at work to address overtourism across the globe, conducting critical research and providing industry leadership.

Media Advocacy

Media advocacy is a central component of our strategy to educate stakeholders about overtourism and identify emerging solutions. In 2019, we shared our expertise on overtourism in a wide variety of news outlets, including The Washington Post, NBC News, Vox, and Hawaii Public Radio.

Presenting Our Research

Throughout 2019, we presented our overtourism research insights at important events and educational institutions. From thought-provoking panel discussions hosted by the Smithsonian Institution and Zócalo Public Square to interactive presentations at Georgetown University and Washington University in St. Louis, this education and outreach is a critical pillar of CREST's mission.

A New Publication

As part of CREST's commitment to addressing overtourism, we have been working to compile a publication that will critique causes of overtourism and assess experiments underway to address it. This book, to be published by Island Press, will feature essays and case studies by tourism experts around the world.







PROMOTING CONSERVATION & COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

Biodiversity loss and climate change are two of our world's greatest threats to securing a sustainable future. In 2019, CREST worked to develop sustainable solutions through our initiatives focused on tourism master planning, food waste prevention, and tourism in a changing climate.



Sustainable Tourism Master Planning in Oman

CREST completed a major project in Oman's South Al Sharquiyah Governate, a region rich in history, culture, and scenic beauty. In partnership with three other firms, we developed the Oman Ministry of Tourism's sustainable tourism master plan for South Al Sharquiyah. Oman is rapidly becoming an international destination, and this project provided a comprehensive blueprint for developing sustainable tourism in one of the most naturally diverse regions of the country.



Understanding Food Waste in the Caribbean

In a collaboration with World Wildlife Fund (WWF), CREST worked on a project to better understand the policy and capacity landscape of food waste in the Caribbean, and the role the tourism industry can play in food waste prevention and management. The project stemmed from WWF's work with the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA), supported by The Rockefeller Foundation, to create the Hotel Kitchen platform – a toolkit of guidance and resources to help hotels prevent food waste, donate food, and keep waste out of landfills and incinerators.

The project resulted in a now published report uncovering opportunities to address food waste in seven Caribbean countries, including Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and St. Lucia. The report includes an overview of tourism in each country, food systems dynamics, and waste management initiatives among the public, private, and civil sectors. It is a helpful resource for hoteliers, food and beverage managers, and government officials, particularly in the countries covered.



Addressing Tourism in a Changing Climate

Climate change was a central focus of CREST's outreach and advocacy in 2019. Throughout the year, we shared our expertise on how travelers can minimize their carbon footprints in major media outlets like The New York Times, CNN, The Boston Globe, and Condé Nast Traveler. We also provided our research insights on tourism and climate change through presentations at institutions like Dalhousie University and the East-West Center.

SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

CREST is committed to addressing social and economic inequality in the tourism sector, supporting the preservation of local cultures, and helping destination communities see the benefits of responsible tourism. 2019 was a landmark year for our work in these areas.



Developing Sustainable Indigenous Tourism in Mexico

The CREST team worked with two indigenous communities located near the rim of the spectacular Copper Canyon in Chihuahua, Mexico to offer authentic indigenous tourism experiences throughout 2019. Designed to help the communities benefit economically from tourism and preserve their land and culture, this unique project offers tourists the opportunity to participate in women-run cooking and handicraft demonstrations and take a variety of hiking and storytelling tours in the Canyon led by licensed guides. Since the "Rarámuri Experiences" project opened for business, hundreds of tourists have taken part in these community-led cultural experiences.



Fostering Local Economic Development in Michigan

In 2019, CREST embarked on a responsible tourism project funded by the Lundin Foundation and conducted in partnership with local community members in Big Bay, Michigan. The project's purpose is to enhance economic opportunities and quality of life for local residents in Big Bay. Located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Big Bay is a tranquil town surrounded by unspoiled nature and full of community pride. After conducting a scoping study to analyze how tourism could be leveraged for local economic development in Big Bay, CREST worked with stakeholders to initiate marketing and baseline data collection activities in this unique community. Through this project, CREST is working to help responsibly develop Big Bay's tourism and outdoor recreation marketing, support local residents in leveraging the benefits of sustainable tourism, and contribute to destination stewardship and community placemaking.



Giving Time, Talent, and Treasure Through Impact Tourism

CREST's impact tourism program focuses on how tourism business, travelers, and organizations are making strategic contributions of time, talent, and treasure to social and environmental projects in destinations. Originally referred to as travelers' philanthropy, impact tourism is not about collecting loose change for charities. Rather, it is about integrating business and visitor support for local communities into the core definition of responsible travel. CREST's 2019 World Tourism Day Forum focused on this important topic, and the 2019 edition of our annual report, *The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics*, included a special focus on impact tourism programs.



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PROJECT SPOTLIGHT:

Advancing Sustainability and Supporting Responsible Travel in Cuba

CREST's work in Cuba focuses on strengthening small-scale tourism, mitigating the impacts of climate change on the burgeoning travel sector, and advocating for legal U.S. travel to the island. We believe that educational and people-to-people exchanges to Cuba are important for fostering cross-cultural understanding and can be transformational both for everyday Cubans and for American travelers.







You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of a difference you want to make. —Jane Goodall

Sustainable Tourism Conferences

In 2019, CREST undertook a variety of initiatives to strengthen small-scale, household-based tourism in Cuba. In the spring, we successfully co-hosted two sustainable tourism workshops in Cuba in partnership with two provincial universities. The first of these workshops was held on the eastern end of the island in Holguín in April, and the other took place in Pinar del Río province in June. We identified and sponsored a group of highly-regarded academics and tourism practitioners to share their insights and experiences during these conferences.

The diverse conference participants hailed from throughout the Americas, with CREST sponsoring 10 speakers from Argentina, Costa Rica, Mexico, and the United States as well as six speakers from Cuba. The topics covered during these critical learning exchanges included tourism and climate change, small-scale tourism and ecolodges, wellness tourism, certification, tourism development in protected areas, and overtourism.

Research and Analysis

Over the summer, CREST released *Cruise Tourism in the Caribbean: Selling Sunshine*, a book sharing lessons learned from Caribbean cruise tourism for Cuba and other destinations. This eye-opening publication considers the economic, environmental, and social impacts of cruise tourism. Based on this analysis, it cautions against overdependence on cruise tourism and outlines reforms needed to bring more benefits and equity to Caribbean countries.

U.S. Policy Advocacy

Throughout 2019, CREST engaged in critically-needed policy advocacy in the United States focused on Cuba travel policy, coordinating an advocacy coalition comprised of U.S. tour operators, NGOs, and Cuba experts. As part of our advocacy efforts, CREST hosted a press briefing in February 2019 about how Americans can legally travel to Cuba, which resulted in 13 published articles in major media outlets. Building on that momentum, we organized a press trip to Cuba in July 2019 that resulted in nine moving on-the-ground reports from three top journalists. This press trip was designed to explore how recent changes in U.S. policy have affected small-scale Cuban entrepreneurs.

2019 AUCTIONS:

Connecting Responsible Travelers with Sustainable Companies

CREST's fundraising travel auctions, hosted four times each year on Charitybuzz.com, provide vital support for our mission to promote responsible tourism and protect our world's special places. The funds raised through these auctions are essential in supporting our field projects and research, outreach and advocacy, and daily operations as a nonprofit.

These auctions also connect travelers to sustainable businesses that offer a wide variety of trip packages in destinations around the world. CREST is deeply grateful to our auction donors, who are working to make a positive environmental and social impact in their communities.



Images courtesy of Bodhi Surf + Yoga

AUCTION WINNER SPOTLIGHT

In February 2019, CREST travel auction winners Gena and Trevor had the opportunity to take an unforgettable vacation with our Platinum Sponsor Bodhi Surf + Yoga in Uvita, Costa Rica. Gena and Trevor spent a week in paradise learning to surf, practicing yoga, rejuvenating in nature, and connecting with the local community.



"Every minute that I was in the water learning something surpassed my expectations, and it ended up being a huge highlight unexpectedly," shared Gena, reflecting on her time learning to surf.

"I thought it was really fun really feeling that connection to yoga and seeing the similarities between that and being on the board," added Trevor.

Bodhi Surf + Yoga offers its guests a vacation that promotes learning, community engagement, and a closer relationship with nature. A Certified B Corporation that offsets its annual carbon emissions, Bodhi is committed to fostering pro-environment behaviors in guests and in the local community. At end of their trip, Gena and Trevor discussed Bodhi's focus on sustainability and the impact that it had on them.

"It hit me – because of the mission here [at Bodhi] and because of the emphasis on the environment –that our role with our children is...teaching them how important conserving energy is and being good stewards of the environment and the earth," said Gena.

CREST's quarterly travel auctions bring responsible travelers like Gena and Trevor together with inspiring companies like Bodhi Surf + Yoga. Visit page 19 of this report to view our full list of 2019 auction donors.



OUR FISCALLY SPONSORED PROGRAMS:

CARING FOR DESTINATION COMMUNITIES

CREST fiscally sponsors two impactful programs based in the United States, CARE for the Cape & Islands and the Destination Stewardship Center. We are proud to support these projects working to protect precious natural and cultural resources in destinations.



CARE for the Cape & Islands

CARE for the Cape & Islands was founded in 2012 by Jill Talladay as a grassroots organization to engage visitors and residents to help preserve and protect the natural environment, culture, and history of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket.

CARE provides annual grants to fund projects that include historical trail development such as a Pilgrim trail and Sea Captains Row that share stories of early settlers, food forest and pollinator demonstration gardens, marine debris education, and water bottle filling stations to help reduce single use plastic. To date, CARE has awarded more than \$65,000 to fund over 50 projects through its grant program. CARE has generated more than 7,000 hours of volunteer labor and engaged more than 70 companies and organizations in the Cape Cod Stewardship Collaborative.



Destination Stewardship Center

The Destination Stewardship Center's mission is to help protect the world's distinctive places by supporting wisely managed tourism and enlightened destination stewardship. The program's goal is to help people find the resources they need to achieve that mission. The Center's website, www.DestinationCenter.org, provides information on the ways tourism can help – or hurt – distinctive places around the world.

The Center was founded in 2011 by Jonathan Tourtellot, continuing a program he founded and directed at National Geographic. Jonathan originated the concept of geotourism, defined via National Geographic as "tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents." This approach informs the Center's strategy. The Center works closely with CREST and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council on matters of destination management and sustainability.







MEET OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In August 2019, CREST welcomed **Dr. Gregory Miller** to the team as our new Executive Director. He assumed leadership from our visionary Co-Founder and Director Emeritus, Dr. Martha Honey, who retired as Executive Director after 16 years.

Gregory is a respected environmental, tourism, and outdoor recreation leader with a proven track record in conservation and recreation planning, public-private partnerships, and nonprofit management. He believes in working globally and acting locally to protect our precious natural and cultural resources.

CREST's Board of Directors welcomed Gregory enthusiastically. "We are tremendously excited to have Gregory Miller on board as CREST's leader during this new chapter for the organization," said Mike Robbins, CREST Board Chair. "His impressive credentials, exemplary leadership skills, and passion for sustainability and conservation make him the ideal fit for the Executive Director position."

Gregory's executive experience includes 12 years as the President of American Hiking Society and 16 years as Vice President for the Andes/Southern Cone Region at The Nature Conservancy. In addition to his executive and policy experience, Gregory worked for several years as a naturalist in South America and has held a lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship and exploring the outdoors responsibly.

2019 was an exciting year of transition and promise for CREST. Under our new Executive Director's leadership, we look forward to working with you – our committed network of supporters and partners – to reach new levels of achievement in responsible tourism.



Upper left: Gregory in Cotopaxi National Park, Ecuador with giant bromeliads, the subject of his long-term

ecological research

Lower left: Hiking in the New River Gorge, West Virginia

Lower right: With small Pacific Islands tourism leaders at the East-West Center in Washington, DC

OUR FOCUS IN 2020

In response to the global climate crisis, CREST developed a new organizational focus for 2020: *Tourism in a Changing Climate*.

At CREST, we believe that tourism – the world's largest service industry – can play a critical role in addressing society's most pressing problems.

The growing threat of climate change makes responsible travel more important than ever. As climate impacts become even more severe, the tourism industry must come together and act as we never have before to develop solutions for our planet and its people. Travel is a privilege that comes with great responsibility from businesses, destinations, and travelers.

Through this new initiative, CREST will work with all sides of the travel industry to address the environmental impacts of tourism and utilize our cutting-edge research, field projects, and industry leadership to provide climate solutions.

Early in 2020, the world was hit with the COVID-19 pandemic. CREST has joined our travel partners in addressing the crisis, providing information and analysis to identify appropriate policy and destination responses. We hope that you'll join us throughout the year as we work to develop practical solutions to respond and adapt to the pandemic, as well as longer-term climate solutions for the tourism industry.





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The CREST team would like to thank the following donors whose generous financial support made our work possible in 2019.

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^{*} Denotes Platinum Sponsorship, which means that the donor has committed to supporting CREST auctions for a period of five years



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Businesses and institutions that sponsored our 2019 World Tourism Day Forum

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The Explorer's Passage

Travelers Against Plastic

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