Center for Responsible Travel
Transforming the Way the World Travels

www.responsibletravel.org

The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics 2017
Executive Summary

What is "Trends & Statistics"?

Every year, the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST), working with leading tourism organizations and institutions, publishes what's come to be known in the shorthand as "Trends & Statistics," a compilation of facts, quotations, data, and resources designed to advance the practice of responsible travel worldwide. This year, in recognition of the United Nations naming 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, CREST has modeled the content after the Year's five "pillars" created by the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Those pillars, or keys to ensuring that sustainable tourism leads to positive local development, 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

Why It's Important

The international year, also known as IY2017, is, on the one hand, a recognition of how far the sustainable tourism industry has come in the last 15 to 20 years. But it is also a clarion call for practitioners to do a better job of addressing a range of urgent problems.

For example, some of the world's most popular destinations—Barcelona, Venice, the beaches of Thailand— are overrun with tourists, putting a strain on resources, cultural sites, the environment, and residents. And in the Caribbean, climate change is producing hurricanes of greater intensity, and yet coastal tourism largely continues to build—and rebuild—exactly as it has 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 impoverished.

It is incumbent upon those who play vital roles in tourism—including businesses, local and indigenous communities, NGOs, academics, development agencies, the media, and travelers—to advance sustainable practices. In this report, you'll find the critical data necessary to do so.

Governments must also take the lead. Only they can rein in runaway tourism—by, for example, not continuing to measure success primarily by increased arrival numbers. It should, instead, be measured in increased retention of tourism revenue and the equitable distribution of tourism earnings to better the economic, social, and environmental conditions of a destination.

How It Works

This year's "Trends & Statistics" approaches these challenges one UNWTO pillar, or key sustainable-development tool, at a time. And it does so via four sub-categories: what the experts say about the tool, followed by how consumers, businesses, and destinations themselves make use of it.

Below is just a taste of what you'll find in this year's "Trends & Statistics," with a sampling from each pillar. But we encourage you to peruse the entire document, which is comprehensive in its coverage and useful to all players in the sustainable tourism industry.

Inclusive and Sustainable Growth

Experts say...

"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*

Social Inclusiveness, Employment, and Poverty Reduction

Consumer Support

Sustainable Travel International and Mandala Research report more than 2/5 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.

Resource Efficiency, Environmental Protection, and Climate Change

Business Case

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."

Cultural Values, Diversity, and Heritage

Destination Case

Based on an Adventure Travel Trade Association report, "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.'"

Mutual Understanding, Peace, and Security

Consumer Support

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 2/3 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.

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