



CENTER FOR RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

2022

The Case for Responsible Travel: *Trends & Statistics*



PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY

This ninth edition of “Trends & Statistics” was edited by Samantha Hogenson Bray and Ellen Rugh, with support from researchers Carolien den Boer, Mitch Foresman, Kayla Dunn, and Jacqueline Harper, and reviewers Greg Miller, Alix Collins and Wes Espinosa. The Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) produced this publication in April 2022. It is available for public use, free of charge. We only ask that you give attribution to CREST.

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Introduction

For the past two years, the tourism industry has been marked by unfathomable challenges that have tested our strength and spirit as never before. The world saw a complete cessation in tourism because of COVID-19 in 2020, and with it, subsequent impacts that tore a rift through people's livelihoods and wanderlust. After a year of uncertainty, the onset of 2021 brought renewed hope. With the introduction of vaccines, tourists became more comfortable traveling and many destinations eagerly welcomed them back. Despite this, the year continued to test the resilience of the tourism industry. The Covid-19 pandemic, compounded by an accelerating climate crisis and a severe lack of equity and diversity in tourism, required a rigorous introspective analysis of the status quo. It forced us to recount and question past behaviors, track ongoing phenomena, and speculate about a better (or much worse) future ahead.

While COVID-19, climate change, and inequity remain as significant challenges, the closeout of 2021 was marked by application of new lessons learned and a more palpable hope for the future. Leaders making real change, the elevation of often silenced voices, new collaborations, and a windfall of new research and analysis have equipped us with knowledge and tools to confront these threats.

Expanding on CREST's 2020 meta-analysis, which shared key studies on COVID-19 and climate change, CREST's 2022 issue of *The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics* reflects on the tourism industry's initial pandemic response and its transition into the next phase of recovery and resilience. In addition to general consumer, business, and destination trends, our ninth edition highlights tangible actions that practitioners, destination managers, and travelers have implemented to build a better future.

"We suffer from a crisis of good travel. We are increasingly disassociated from the things that matter most - each other, experiences, and our communities and impact. As a result, we are unhappier and poorer stewards of one another and our planet, with increasingly dire consequences. We see our present interconnected global challenges of digital addiction, societal separation, widespread environmental degradation, climate crisis, poverty, and social inequities as issues transformational travel and regenerative tourism can and should address."¹ - Jake Hauptert, Co-Founder and CEO, The Transformational Travel Council

Key Terms

<p>Destination Stewardship: A framework whereby the public sector, private sector, and the residents of local community are engaged jointly to preserve, protect, and benefit from visitors to their touristic destination.ⁱ</p> <p>Regenerative Travel: Tourism businesses, communities, donors, and government collectively drawing upon tourism to holistically make net positive contributions to the well-being of visitors, residents, host communities, and the environment to help them flourish and create shared prosperity.ⁱⁱ</p> <p>Responsible Travel: Tourism that maximizes the benefits to local communities, minimizes negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people conserve fragile cultures and habitats.ⁱⁱⁱ</p>	<p>Sustainable Tourism: Tourism that leads to the management of all resources in a manner that economic, social, and aesthetic needs are fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biodiversity, and life-support systems.^{iv}</p> <p>Transformational Travel: Intentionally traveling to stretch, learn and grow into new ways of being and engaging with the world.^v</p> <p><i>*From CREST's perspective, these terms are all pieces of the same puzzle.</i></p>
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The Context for this Extraordinary Time

Where Were We?

In 2019, international tourist arrivals worldwide grew by 4% to reach 1.5 billion.^{vi} Based on that year's trends, UNWTO's pre-COVID projection for 2020 had forecasted a growth of 3% to 4% in international tourist arrivals worldwide.^{vii} At the same time, alarms were going off globally regarding tourism's contributions to global emissions – a staggering 11%.^{viii} These two statistics, at odds with one another, highlighted the challenge of paving a path that can both sustain tourism's economic growth and protect the planet.

In January 2020, Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency – the first collaboration of its kind – formed as “a global community of tourism organizations, companies and professionals, all committed to delivering a Climate Action Plan aligned with the need to cut emissions in half by 2030.” Just as collaborators were gearing up to prepare their plans, the COVID-19 pandemic brought tourism to a screeching halt, and tourism businesses around the world scrambled to stay afloat.

After COVID hit in March of 2020, fraught with uncertainty for the future, travel and tourism experts struggled to forecast what the year ahead might look like. The [UNWTO graph](#) shows the different 2020 economic predictions made in May of that year, next to the real numbers.^{ix}

By early 2021, UNWTO was estimating a significant drop in international arrivals: “Around the world, international arrivals are estimated to have dropped to 381 million in 2020, down from 1.461 billion in 2019– a **74 percent decline**. In countries whose economies are heavily reliant on tourism, the precipitous drop in visitors was, and remains, devastating.”^x Based on these figures, international arrival numbers dropped below 1990 levels. To put this staggering decline

“The collapse in international travel represents an estimated loss of USD 1.3 trillion in export revenues [in 2020] - more than 11 times the loss recorded during the 2009 global economic crisis.” - [UNWTO](#)

into perspective: the 2003 SARS epidemic caused an estimated loss of 2 million arrivals, and the financial crisis of 2008 caused a loss of 37 million arrivals.^{xi}

The World Travel & Tourism Council reported a **US\$4.5 trillion GDP loss in 2020, from 10.4% of global GDP in 2019 to 5.5% in 2020**. Jobs supported by travel and tourism numbered 334 million in 2019, or 1/10 of global employment, and shrank to 272 million in 2020, or 1/11 of global employment.^{xii}

On the climate change front, scientists and environmentalists speculated throughout 2020 on the positive environmental benefits that could come from the pause in travel. **COVID-19 made us temporarily stop—traveling, emitting, etc.** With various travel advisories and border restrictions, international aviation was hit hard. In contrast to pre-crisis levels, **international aviation emissions fell by almost 45% over the course of 2020 to a level last seen in 1999**. It was equivalent to taking approximately 100 million cars off the road.^{xiii}

All in all, after rising steadily for decades, **global carbon dioxide emissions fell by 6.4%, or 2.3 billion tonnes, in 2020**, due to the squelch in economic and social activities worldwide.^{xiv} **Yet, the global stoppage of travel was not permanent, and emissions were quickly replaced by activities such as online shopping and global shipping. Evidence of the sharp rebound became apparent by December 2020, when global emissions were 2% higher than they were in the same month a year earlier.**^{xv}

Furthermore, an analysis for *The Guardian* in November 2020 revealed that far more government coronavirus recovery funds were being allocated to the fossil fuels sectors than to green projects.^{xvi} An analysis done by Vivid Economics published in February 2021 found that **much of the \$14.9 trillion of stimulus announced by G20 countries would harm nature**. The new study also considers a handful of countries beyond those in the G20 that are home to some of the world's richest biodiversity and suggests that "many leaders' claims to 'build back better' are insincere when it comes to protecting nature."^{xvii}

"For example, all G20 members (except for the EU) have included bailouts or tax relief to support fossil-fuel intensive industries (airlines, coal, natural gas, biofuels) in their economic stimulus packages, and/or amended environmental regulations and procedures, including weakening public comment processes, environmental impact assessments and reviews, permit approvals and enforcement."^{xviii}

2021: Where Are We Now?

In 2021, we adapted. Governments, tourism businesses, and travelers learned to experience travel in the COVID era. In March, UNWTO outlined two optimistic recovery scenarios for 2021 in which international travel rebounded in the second half of the year. The **first scenario** forecasted a July rebound that would have marked a 66% increase in international arrivals from the previous year, still 55% below 2019 levels. The **second scenario** pointed toward a potential rebound in

KEY FINDINGS: [IPCC SIXTH ASSESSMENT REPORT](#)

"It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean, and land. Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere, and biosphere have occurred."

"Global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during the 21st century unless deep reductions in carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gas emissions occur in the coming decades."

"Any changes in the climate system become larger in direct relation to increasing global warming. They include increases in the frequency and intensity of hot extremes, marine heatwaves, and heavy precipitation, agricultural and ecological droughts in some regions, and proportion of intense tropical cyclones, as well as reductions in Arctic Sea ice, snow cover and permafrost."

"Human-induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe," concludes the IPCC study, which reveals strengthened "evidence of observed changes in extremes such as heatwaves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones, and, in particular, their attribution to human influence."

September, indicating a 22% increase in arrivals compared to 2020, or 67% below the pre-pandemic levels. “[These forecasts were] based on a number of factors, most notably a major lifting of travel restrictions, the success of vaccination programmes or the introduction of harmonized protocols such as the Digital Green Certificate planned by the European Commission.”^{xix}

While international tourism did rebound in the second half of the year, as expected, the overall “return to normal” remained far below expectations. UNWTO’s first report of 2022 revealed that “Global tourism experienced a 4% upturn in 2021, compared to 2020 (415 million versus 400 million). However, international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) were still 72% below the pre-pandemic year of 2019, according to preliminary estimates by UNWTO.” The 2021 economic contribution of tourism did rise to an estimated US\$1.9 trillion, above the US\$1.6 trillion in 2020. However, this figure is still well below the pre-pandemic value of US\$ 3.5 trillion.^{xx}

While the global tourism industry limped through recovery, in August 2021, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its *Sixth Assessment Report*, part of a series which assesses scientific, technical, and socio-economic information around climate change. The findings have renewed and heightened our need to respond to threat of climate change.

Soon after, the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, referred to as COP26, was held in Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom, from October 31 - November 13, 2021. In alignment with COP26, the **Glasgow Declaration for Climate Action in Tourism** was launched. Developed with inputs from a diverse range of tourism stakeholders, the Declaration was drafted by representatives from UNWTO, UNEP, Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, the Travel Foundation, and Visit Scotland. Building upon the movement Tourism Declares started, *The Glasgow Declaration is a catalyst for increased urgency about the need to accelerate climate action in tourism and to secure strong actions and commitment to cut tourism emissions in half over the next decade and reach Net Zero emissions as soon as possible before 2050.*^{xxi}

The Glasgow Declaration lays out a coordinated plan for climate action whereby signatories agree to deliver and implement climate action plans. Signatories agree to do this within one year of signing and commit to publicly report their progress against interim and long-term goals annually. The five shared pathways for plans to follow are outlined, including **measure, decarbonize, regenerate, collaborate, and finance.**^{xxii}

According to early results shared from a UNWTO-led survey mapping climate action across 1,174 respondents in the travel industry, 28% of travel and tourism stakeholders say they have a climate action plan, while 73% are not measuring emissions at this time.^{xxiii} **In short, the tourism industry has a lot of catching up to do.**

GLASGOW CLIMATE PACT

The primary outcome was the agreement and signing of the **Glasgow Climate Pact (GCP)** to guide countries and corporate action toward achieving worldwide temperature reduction and emission goals. In addition to GCP, COP26 countries also made bold collective commitments to **curb methane emissions, halt and reverse forest loss, align the finance sector with net-zero by 2050, ditch the internal combustion engine, accelerate the phase-out of coal, and end international financing for fossil fuels**

By the end of COP26, 151 countries had submitted new climate plans (NDCs) to slash their emissions by 2030. The Glasgow decision calls on countries to “revisit and strengthen” their 2030 targets by the end of 2022 to align them with the Paris Agreement’s temperature goals.

In 2009, rich nations committed to mobilize \$100 billion per year by 2020 and through 2025 to support climate efforts in developing countries. In the Glasgow Climate Pact (GCP), it was noted “with deep regret” that those countries failed to meet that goal in 2020.

Countries also agreed to a robust process to develop a new, larger climate finance goal to go into effect after 2025. They established an Ad Hoc Work Programme to convene technical experts and ministers to flesh out the details. The post-2025 climate finance goal is expected to be set by 2024. Developed countries also agreed to **at least double funding for climate plan adaptation** by 2025, which would amount to at least \$40 billion.

Source: [World Resources Institute](#)

Where Are We Going?

The Omicron variant and subsequent surge in COVID-19 cases disrupted the recovery of international travel through 2021's year-end as some countries reintroduced travel bans and restrictions for certain markets. Paired with the continuation of uneven vaccination distribution, border closures, and an increasingly challenging economic environment, international tourism still faces a long, challenging road to full recovery. According to UNWTO's latest Panel of Experts, the majority (64%) now expect international arrivals to return to 2019 levels only in 2024 or later^{xxiv}

Yet the pandemic—despite its tragic toll on human lives—has highlighted new opportunities for tourism offerings, including more diversified 'slower', smaller, and more authentic experiences.^{xxv} In 2020, UNWTO revealed some emerging trends out of the pandemic:^{xxvi}

Closer	Domestic tourism has shown positive signs in many markets since people tend to travel closer. Travelers go for 'staycations' or vacations close to home.
Get away	Nature, Rural Tourism and Road Trips have emerged as popular travel choices due to travel limitations and the quest for open-air experiences.
New concerns	Health & Safety measures and cancellation policies are consumers' main concerns.
Last minute	Last-minute bookings have increased due to volatility of pandemic-related events and the travel restrictions
Change in demographics	Younger travelers more resilient: Travel recovery has been stronger among younger segments. 'Mature' travelers and retirees will be the most impacted segments.
More responsible	Sustainability, authenticity, and localhood: Travelers have been giving more importance to creating a positive impact on local communities, increasingly looking for authenticity". ^{xxvii}

Two years later, the same largely rings true. "Domestic tourism continues to drive recovery of the sector in an increasing number of destinations, particularly those with large domestic markets. According to experts, domestic tourism and travel close to home, as well as open-air activities, nature-based products, and rural tourism are among the major travel trends that will continue shaping tourism in 2022."

Throughout the past two years of uncertainty, however, one recurring theme has emerged: tourism needs to build a new path forward. Around the globe, we are now seeing more individuals, businesses, and destinations raising their voice to promote a more responsible future:

"This crisis is an opportunity to rethink the tourism sector and its contribution to the people and planet; an opportunity to build back better towards a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient tourism sector that ensure the benefits of tourism are enjoyed widely and fairly." --Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General, UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)^{xxviii}

"Travel and tourism will recover. We will come out from this crisis stronger and better, but we need to make sure that we are doing everything we can to reduce the timeframe of recovery. We can do this by working together in a coordinated approach, engaging with governments and making sure that we follow the path that we have defined. By doing this we can bring back the more than 120 million jobs that have been impacted."- Gloria Guevera, CEO and President, WTTC^{xxix}

"The tourism sector witnessed continuous growth in the past decade, creating significant benefits in terms of socio-economic development and employment, which are now at stake. At the same time, such growth represented important challenges related to the carrying capacity of destinations, consumption of natural resources and impacts on climate change. Addressing all these issues must be at the heart of a responsible recovery of the tourism sector,

as the resilience of tourism will depend on the sector's ability to balance the needs of people, planet and prosperity."- Virginia Fernández-Trapa, Programme Officer, Sustainable Development of Tourism, UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ^{xxx}

"At The Transformational Travel Council, we believe that travel, or the business of travel, is not a mere product, or a transaction. It is a process, and should be practiced like yoga, or meditation - the more effort you put into it, the more you improve and more genuinely fulfilled you feel. Travel is too often based in passive entertainment, when an active approach often bears more delicious fruit. Let's shift the paradigm and ask WHY we travel, and HOW we can do it better, rather than focusing on WHERE we go and WHAT we do."^{xxxi} - Jake Hauptert, Co-Founder and CEO, The Transformational Travel Council

Consumer Behaviors & Trends

"COVID-19 restrictions on travel and hospitality seem to have heightened people's appreciation of and need for travel and hospitality services in their lives. I found that **the more travelers felt deprived of their ability to travel (relative to pre-pandemic), the sooner they were likely to (re-)engage in travel and hospitality experiences. Moreover, this effect was significantly stronger than the dampening effect on travel and hospitality of the anxiety people felt due to COVID-19.**"^{xxxii} - Makarand Mody, Assistant Professor of Hospitality Marketing, Boston University

As the pandemic forced consumers to look more introspectively, Booking.com's 2020 survey found the following:

- "With over half (53%) of global travelers wanting to travel more sustainably in the future, **we expect to see a more eco-conscious mindset in 2021 and beyond**, as Coronavirus has amped people's awareness about their impact on the environment and local communities.
- More than two-thirds (69%) expect the travel industry to offer more sustainable travel options and travelers will consequently visit alternative destinations in a bid to avoid traveling during peak season (51%) and overcrowding (48%). This desire also means that 63% will stay away from crowded tourist attractions, indicating that **destinations will need to adapt new, smart crowd management measures to appease travelers visiting their country.**
- Additionally, the impact of Coronavirus has inspired more than half (53%) of travelers to consider reducing waste and/or recycling their plastic when traveling once all travel restrictions are lifted, showing that **people are not just committed to protecting themselves, but also the places they visit.**"^{xxxiii}

"Research from American Express Travel showed that 68% of respondents agree they are trying to be more aware of sustainability-friendly travel brands to support. In addition, 55% of respondents say they are interested in 'carbon negative' travel and 60% agree they want to book airlines that have a carbon neutral commitment."^{xxxiv}

A survey conducted by Ipsos Mori revealed that 65% of global respondents claimed that "it is important that climate change is prioritized in the economic recovery after coronavirus."^{xxxv} Similarly, Euromonitor's *Voice of Industry Sustainability Survey* in July 2020 found "**64% of global consumers are worried about climate change - yet only 50% of travel companies engage with SDG13 on climate change.**"^{xxxvi}

This consumer commitment to becoming better stewards of their host destination has continued, with Booking.com's 2021 survey revealing:

- "Well over half (54%) of people agree it's important that their trip is beneficial to the local community at their destination...
- Furthermore, 67% want the money that they spend when travelling to go back to the local community and 68% want to have authentic experiences that are representative of the local culture."^{xxxvii}

When it comes to sustainability in travel, **69.1% of tourism professionals believe that consumers will now be more concerned about sustainability than before the pandemic**, per a 2021 report from Euromonitor International.^{xxxviii}

“Inspired by the important social justice movements of our time, in 2022 travellers will do more research into how well the place they are staying supports local businesses (35%) or how their tourism spend will affect or improve local communities (21%), signifying a new desire to do right by the people who call our favourite vacay destinations home.”^{xxxix}

Yet as the Adventure Travel Trade Association points out in their 2022 trends report, **“Although consumers are indicating that they want sustainable travel options, they often do not know what choices are available or where to find them.”^{xl}** While innovative ways to spread this information continue to make progress, ensuring travelers are well-equipped to make responsible choices will continue to be a critical task to address in our recovery.

The Emergence of New Outdoor Enthusiasts

“The World Tourism and Travel Council identified, in their report on the future of the industry, trends they expect to stay between September 2020 and September 2022. **The report said the pandemic has shifted travelers’ focus to domestic trips or nature and outdoor destinations.** Travel will largely be “kickstarted by the less risk averse travelers and early adopters, from adventure travelers and backpackers to surfers and mountain climbers,” the report says.^{xli}

McKinsey & Company shares, “Instead of spending on luxury accommodations, travelers are saving money for destination experiences. Many tourists are booking activities before they travel, which suggests the in-destination experience has a bigger impact in the overall tourist decision-making process. **Many adventure activities, such as cave discovery, highland hiking, isolated island stays, water sports, and food festivals have become the main reason for travelers to visit a destination in the first place.**”^{xlii}

A Booking.com study reports, “Globally, the use of simple pleasure-related endorsements such as **hiking (94%), clean air (50%), nature (44%) and relaxation (33%)** on Booking.com has increased since the start of the pandemic, over two thirds of travelers (69%) will look to appreciate more simple experiences such as spending time outdoors or with the family while on vacation, and **over half (56%) will seek out more rural, off-the-beaten-track experiences to immerse themselves into the outdoors.**”^{xliii}

While nature-based tourism options became more popular during the pandemic due to their myriad benefits, locals have also spent more time outdoors in their own communities. A report commissioned by the Outdoor Industry Association revealed several insights about the emerging US demographic of “new outdoor enthusiasts” -- those who either started an outdoor activity for the first time, or for the first time in more than a year during the pandemic. In March 2021, it found that:

- “New participants are more likely to be female, younger, living in an urban area and slightly more ethnically diverse than existing participants.
- New participants primarily sought socially distanced outdoor activities in order to spend time with loved ones safely, to exercise, stay healthy or to reduce screen-time fatigue.
- New participants are largely motivated by outdoor recreation opportunities with low barriers to entry that are available and accessible within 10 miles of their homes, including walking, running, biking and hiking.”^{xliv}

However, by July 2021, updated research found that about one-quarter of new participants said that they did not want to continue their new outdoor activities, likely a trend as consumers return to pre-pandemic habits. Diversity concerns were also reported within this study, which showed that nearly 75% of outdoor participants were white.^{xlv}

Regarding “veteran” outdoor recreationalists, a year-long study conducted by Leave No Trace suggests that post-pandemic, avid outdoor recreationists will participate in more types of outdoor recreation, change the types of

outdoor recreation they participate in, travel further than they previously did to recreate, and utilize their local public lands more often.^{xlvi}

For the adventurer, Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) research reveals that “climate change is on top of adventure travelers’ minds as they look forward to traveling in the future. **Two-thirds (66%) of adventure travelers ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that they are “worried about climate change” and the same number would “like it if” they knew that their “travel spending helped fight the climate crisis.”** Also, compared to the general U.S. consumer, U.S. adventure travelers participate in daily green activities significantly more, in everything ranging from recycling to reducing food waste to reducing plastics and energy use.”^{xlvii}

While it is inherently a good thing that more people are appreciating their outdoor environments, this increase in visitation has not come without a cost. In Germany, “in the Black Forest National Park, visitation increased by 100,000 visits between April and June 2020 compared with the same period in 2019 (a 50 per cent increase). Many first-time visitors appeared unfamiliar with protected areas or even forests, and more people wanted to camp inside the protected area, which is not allowed. Some visitors justified their non-compliance with park rules as a wish to break free in nature during such restrictive times.”^{xlviii}

National parks in the western USA have also shown similar trends: “The 1960s-era wastewater system in Yellowstone [National Park] was pushed to the brink. Arches [National Park] temporarily closed 120 times because all the parking lots were full. The Grand Canyon struggled to cope with a record number of rescues, and an influx of remote workers have driven rents sky high in gateway towns such as Jackson Hole, Wyoming.” To put this surge into perspective, visitation in Yellowstone National Park hit 4.4 million in 2021 -- a million more than in 2020.^{xlix}

Business & Industry

Across the globe, tourism businesses and industry sub-sectors have begun to emerge from the shock of the pandemic’s onset. Collective struggle and heartbreak highlighted the interconnected nature of the tourism industry and perpetuated momentum for a holistic recovery that betters this interconnected system for all.

“This particular situation we are going through has presented society with an exceptional opportunity to think and reframe a model of growth that is utterly unsustainable for a planet with finite resources. This moment requires an enhancement of cooperative strategies that, on the one hand, unify the tourism ecosystem in order to solve the traditional issues of fragmentation, and on the other hand, create a holistic vision and understanding of tourism as a living and dynamic system, complex by nature and performance. Likewise, this holistic vision must be applied to impact measurement by redefining concepts related to competitiveness and success within the tourism industry and by shifting metrics away from quantity, towards prosperity, of host communities.”^l -- Alicia Fajardo, Tourism Expert at Better Tourism, and Chair of #TurismoRESET

Around the world, we are seeing an increased commitment to these sustainable practices, with companies of all sizes proudly pledging to take climate action. However, as Jim Sano, Vice President of Travel, Tourism and Conservation, WWF, succinctly put, “It’s one thing to commit. It’s quite another to have a plan.” As a result, WWF released in December 2020 *Beyond Science-Based Targets: A Blueprint for Corporate Action on Climate And Nature* in hopes of cutting through the noise and focusing on the actions that can underpin a truly effective corporate strategy for mitigating the effects of climate change and protecting nature.^{li}

From the ingredients sourced onboard a cruise ship to air transportation, “[all] businesses have the ability to influence their supply chain to adopt sustainable tourism practices. [Per Purdue University’s Sustainable Tourism & Responsible Travel Lab,] here are 5 things you can do now to encourage your supply chain:

1. Commit to Sustainable tourism: Ensure that you are “walking your talk” and ensure your organization is working towards sustainability.

2. Promote the importance of sustainable tourism.
3. Encourage suppliers and customers to adopt sustainable tourism practices.
4. Set expectations for future business: Set expectations for suppliers about your expectations and the need to comply with sustainability standards. Create a timeline for adoption of sustainability through the supply chain.
5. Ensure comprehensive, systematic approaches to sustainability. Getting all the members of your supply chain 'on the same page' can be challenging. GSTC accredited sustainable tourism certification programs can help create a shared commitment to recognized standards."^{lii}

Aviation

Pre-COVID, aviation was one of the fastest-growing contributors to greenhouse gas emissions over the past two decades. With a 26% increase in emissions in the EU from 2014-2019,^{lii} the Union's official website even notes that "if global aviation was a country, it would rank in the top 10 for greenhouse gas emissions."^{liv}

Despite, or perhaps in response to, the aviation's industry's poor environmental reputation, more airlines had begun taking responsibility for their emissions. "As recently as January 2020, JetBlue was expanding its offsetting programs and had plans to be the first carbon-neutral carrier in the U.S., starting in July 2020. Meanwhile, in February [2020], Delta Air Lines announced that it would commit \$1 billion over the next 10 years to become the first carbon neutral airline globally."^{lv}

However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the near collapse of the airline industry and a collective cry for government bailouts naturally created skepticism about the promises made by these airlines.

"In contrast to pre-crisis levels, emissions from international aviation fell by almost 45% or 265 Mt CO₂ across the year to a level last seen in 1999. This decline is equivalent to taking around 100 million conventional cars off the road."^{lvi}

"Airlines are seeking public money so they can get back to the business-as-usual of soaring emissions enabled by light-touch pollution laws and tax exemptions. It's time to ensure that aviation makes a green transition by linking aid to taxes and greener fuels which will reverse the sector's rapid emissions growth."- Andrew Murphy, Greenpeace, Transport & Environment aviation manager^{lvii}

In most cases, government aid designed to stabilize the airlines shaken by Covid-19 did not include any provisions to them towards green transitions. "Lufthansa, the [European] continent's largest carrier, will receive a 9 billion-euro (\$10.1 billion) bailout from the German government, without climate strings attached. Besides Air France-KLM, only Austrian Airlines, a national subsidiary of Lufthansa, will face climate conditions for its government bailout, mainly focused on reducing flights for destinations that could be reached by train within three hours."^{lviii} As part of this, Austrian Airlines pledged to halve its domestic CO₂ emissions and reduce its overall carbon emissions by 30% before the end of 2030.^{lix}

"The 3.4 billion-euro (\$3.8 billion) bailout [to the Dutch arm of Air France-KLM] will require cuts to dividends and jobs, alongside a one-fifth reduction in evening flights, in part to encourage rail journeys, as well as a requirement to reduce emissions per passenger by half by 2030. Those conditions come on the heels of similar restrictions for Air France, which received a 7 billion-euro (\$7.9 billion) bailout from the French government, including a requirement that domestic flights be cut by 40%. The airline had already committed to reducing emissions per passenger by 2030. Pre-pandemic, both governments held individual stakes of about 14% in the company. The Dutch and French bailouts are outliers, not the norm."^{lx} However, it should be noted that "these climate conditions attached to the bailout are not legally binding, leaving it to the good will of Air France."^{lxi}

"Good will" is also the path of choice for some US companies, who, across the board, did not have any climate commitments attached to their bailouts.^{lxii} In April 2021, JetBlue pledged to reach net-zero by 2040. And in December 2020, United pledged to be 100% "green" by 2050, but without using carbon offsets, which fit under

the definition of net-zero. To help it achieve that goal, United announced an investment in carbon capture technology, which removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.^{lxiii}

Yet “how” to accomplish such monumental goals remain convoluted. “There are few viable options to decarbonize planes: Biofuels remain expensive and niche, and there are no large-scale, commercially available electrified planes. Beyond developing alternative fuels and researching electric planes, the simplest way to reduce aviation emissions is simply to make flying more expensive and less convenient, largely through a combination of taxes, including on jet fuel, which is currently untaxed, and limits on short-haul or domestic flights.”^{lxiv} However, passing costs on to consumers challenges the democracy of travel, creating an option only available to the affluent.

As air companies and other tourism businesses work to resolve the challenges of decarbonization, some booking engines have boosted their efforts to provide transparent environmental information. “Google is jumping into sharing information about travel’s impact on the environment. In the past few months [since February 2022], they have introduced the ability to see the most fuel-efficient routes to their destination, detailing flight emissions estimates, and labeling hotel listings with applicable sustainability credentials and eco-certifications. This information transparency allows travelers to educate themselves and take action on their sustainability preferences.”^{lxv}

Cruise Tourism

While the environmental, social, and economic impacts of large cruises generally require vast improvements, there’s no question that the cessation of cruises, because of COVID-19’s onset and subsequent variant surges, was a shock to those who depend on their income. “Of all those affected in the devastated travel sector, the \$150 billion cruise industry – which was expected to carry 32 million passengers in 2020 – has been particularly badly hit. Many small nations, particularly islands, rely on the revenue earned from guests on visiting ships and the related tourism activities including restaurants, attractions and tours. The industry is said to contribute \$2 billion to the Caribbean a year; in St Kitts and Nevis alone, the total economic contribution of cruise tourism was \$149 million in 2017/18.”^{lxvi}

While many destinations crippled by this loss of economic revenue were eager to re-welcome passengers, the onset of the pandemic forced a time of reflection in which others decided to chart a different course. “[The] Italian government ruled [in late March 2021] that even when voyages resume, gigantic cruisers will no longer be permitted to pass Venice’s St. Mark’s Square and must find berthing outside its fragile lagoon.” Italy’s cultural minister said that the government’s decision had been influenced by UNESCO, “which had long called on Italy to reconcile the balancing of lagoon preservation with the economics of cruise and freight activity.”^{lxvii}

However, cruise destinations are not the only ones rethinking their model. Despite a “historic global suspension in the industry’s activities that led to over \$25 billion in losses in 2020 and left the industry saddled with over \$60 billion in debt in the first quarter of 2021, as well as a huge consumer confidence challenge,”^{lxviii} some cruise lines have begun reevaluating their global impact.

“The pandemic is also accelerating the move to more environmentally friendly cruise ships. For instance, Carnival Corp. sold 19 of its oldest, least efficient ships during 2020. Arnold Donald, Carnival Corp. CEO, has explained that by ridding itself of some of its oldest and smallest tonnage and eventually replacing it with larger ships with the latest energy-saving technology, ‘We will emerge with a more efficient fleet.’ For example, the company said, Carnival Cruise Line’s newest ship, the Mardi Gras, consumes about 33% less fuel and emits about half as much carbon per person as one of its Fantasy-class ships.”^{lxix}

“Another sustainability bonus from the pandemic is expected to be a reduction in food costs and food waste as new health and safety protocols have done away with – at least in the near term – the self-serve buffets that are so common across cruise ships and many hotels, particularly all-inclusive resorts.” Prior to the pandemic, Holland America Line, had moved 80% service of its food away from self-serve model, which reduced food waste anywhere from 25% to 40%.^{lxx}

On the heels of COP26, the Cruise Line International Association (CLIA) further announced in November 2021 that “its members – which include industry giants Carnival Corporation, Royal Caribbean Cruises and Norwegian Cruise Line – are committed to pursuing net carbon neutral cruising by 2050, reducing 40 percent of emissions by 2030, and supporting the development of clean fuel alternatives.”^{lxxi}

Despite these announcements, the cruise industry requires significant transformations, with skeptics posing questions about the effectiveness of new environmental technology to reduce emissions and cruise lines’ willingness to address other sustainability issues, such as overtourism, unregulated pollution, and habitat degradation.

Business Travel

Like cruise tourism, business travel was among the hardest hit sub-sectors of the tourism industry. As a 2021 Deloitte report raised, “Shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic brought global travel to a standstill, one thing became clear: Corporate travel would face a slower return than leisure, almost as surely as international would lag domestic.” Yet, in addition to health and safety of employees being a factor when resuming corporate travel, Deloitte research found “As travel returns, companies are eyeing both their carbon footprint and their bottom line. Neither cost nor sustainability alone is likely to cause huge travel cutbacks. But together they will slow the rate of return as many companies see controlling trip frequency as a top option to address both.”^{lxxii}

“Businesses are increasingly expected to commit to sustainability strategies because of rising public and shareholder pressure to do so. Corporate spending related to sustainable activities in 2017 was estimated to be \$US 611 billion with diverse initiatives across organizations of all sizes and sectors, including investment in green information systems and sustainable travel.”^{lxxiii}

That said, research conducted in 2021 by Business Travel News (BTN) found that “executive-level commitment to mitigating climate change was the foundation for an effective sustainable business travel strategy,” elaborating on the importance of collaboration between business travel and a sustainability leader who can help define strategy, make decisions on which projects to pursue, and provide managers with tools needed to make the necessary changes. BTN continues, “That said, nearly half of travel buyers who participated in the BTN survey had not been formally tasked with either assessing or mitigating carbon emissions associated with business travel.”^{lxxiv}

Many of these steps towards sustainability are being directly initiated by companies. In Europe, for example, some major banks are banning flights between their European offices and instructing staff to take trains where feasible. Additional added pressure to transform business travel is coming from destinations. In 2021, France said that domestic flights between towns and cities with good train links will be banned,^{lxxv} and a law stating as much went into effect in April 2022.^{lxxvi}

Further, travel management companies and booking platforms have played an increased role in promoting responsible options for their corporate clients. “American Express Global Business Travel pledged last year to become carbon neutral. The company expanded that initiative to clients this year, offering preferred terms for carbon offsetting projects through Carbonfund.org Foundation and Carbon Footprint.”^{lxxvii}

Innovative Businesses & Non-Governmental Organizations

Across the globe, responsible tourism professionals have used the downturn of international travel as an opportunity to hone their sustainability skillsets and practices. “Despite the challenges the pandemic has presented to our industry, we’re pleased to see that many professionals are using this time as an opportunity to enhance their skills and many organizations invest in development of their staff by participating in the GSTC training program. In 2020 we offered 28 training sessions, attended by a total of over 800 tourism industry professionals, with exceptional satisfaction marks and statements of intent to put their expanded knowledge to practical use. In 2021, the number grew to 46 training sessions attended by 1,300 professionals from around the world. The GSTC Sustainable Tourism Training Program (STTP) is a critical part of the GSTC’s mission of increasing knowledge and practices among tourism industry stakeholders. We believe passionately in the need to take a holistic approach to

sustainability, and there is no better way to act holistically than to apply the GSTC Criteria.”^{lxxxviii} -- Randy Durband, GSTC Chief Executive Officer.

The Wild adventure company, which operates eco-lodges located in the remote Southcentral Alaskan wilderness, used their period of vacancy to have their onsite team learn new skills like shrimping, foraging, making kombucha, experimenting with pickling, and hand-making sausages.^{lxxxix}

We have also witnessed the development of new partnerships and industry initiatives to catalyze collective action against threats. Tomorrow’s Air is the first travel-focused collective for carbon removal and permanent storage, with the mission “To convene the global community of travelers who care about air, extending the influence of each individual and building strength through our numbers to clean carbon from the atmosphere, ensuring our air for today and tomorrow.”^{lxxx} Tomorrow’s Air and Airbnb have collaborated to create a free virtual experience to learn the importance of carbon dioxide removal and how they extract and store it, by offering online Zoom tours of the ClimateWorks facility in Switzerland.^{lxxxi}

“The formation in July 2020 of the Future of Tourism Coalition underscores the eagerness among industry players across the industry to work more closely together on rebuilding tourism better. What started with just 22 signatories [to the group’s Guiding Principles], is now an amalgam of more than [600] companies, destinations, academics, and policymakers from around the globe.”^{lxxxii} CREST is one of the six non-profits leading this coalition.

In July 2021, it was announced that four ski industry leaders, Alterra mountain Company, Boyne Resorts, POWDR, and Vail Resorts, comprising a combined 71 resorts, would come together to operate with sustainability at the forefront. Together, they created the Climate Collaborative Charter, which was the ski industry’s first unified collective to combat climate change.^{lxxxiii}

Tourism businesses have adapted and innovated to meet their financial needs in times of strife. The Cayuga Collection of Sustainable Luxury Hotels in Costa Rica, Panama & Nicaragua introduced the Green Futures Bonds program in 2020. Travelers purchasing these bonds, which could be redeemed in 2020 or 2021, received double their investment in Room Rate, along with a native tree planted to contribute to rainforest reforestation. The investments would be used to support the staff at their hotels-- their line cooks, cleaning staff, nature guides, and so many others-- so that they could continue to support local employment and make a positive impact in the communities in which they operate.^{lxxxiv}

Oropopo Experience, a tour service also based in Costa Rica, offered Jungle Virtual Experiences-- virtual educational tours offered to any “tourist” interested in learning more about Costa Rica’s flora and fauna from the comfort of their own home. They also offer virtual “field trip” packages to universities and school learning programs, while donating 1% of their ticket sales to the Costa Rica Wildlife Foundation.^{lxxxv}

The Newt in Somerset, UK, launched a root-and-stem grocery business producing and delivering fresh food throughout the surrounding region. “Called the Mobile Newt, the innovative new service makes use of the hotel’s workforce, as well as its 800-acre estate, to supply customers across Somerset – opening up a much-needed line of revenue in the process.”^{lxxxvi}

The all-women team of the environmentally conscious and community-based luxury eco-resort Abano Ritz, in Abano Terme, Italy, launched a new formula. Just a few rooms were opened, reserved for guests over 50 who were concerned by the pandemic and who wanted to feel protected, but not isolated. It was called ‘Senior Living’, a synthesis between a second home and a 5-star thermal hotel, with personalized packages such as post-Covid convalescence or extended-stay 24-hour assistance for guests with disabilities or health conditions. This model allowed them to provide supportive care during trying times, while allowing dozens of families in the community to keep their jobs.^{lxxxvii}

Tourism-affiliated NGOs also stepped up during this time to provide critical support to the aching industry, and the communities who rely on it. Tourism in Need, a sister campaign of Share the Wonder, which offers fun and educational day trips for underprivileged youth in Southeast Asia, has been connecting travelers with responsible

tourism organizations who have been struggling through the COVID-19 crisis. With the motto of “Give today, go tomorrow” Tourism in Need promises that “[by] giving to one of these organizations, you will ensure their important work can continue and you will be able to return to beautiful and cared-for places.” All money raised goes directly to their partners in need.^{lxxxviii}

Intrepid Travel's non-profit, The Intrepid Foundation, in partnership with MEDLIFE, delivered meals to more than 350 families, or 1,700 people, in the Sacred Valley in Peru. Many members of these families had worked as cooks and porters, livelihoods that were directly impacted by the lack of tourism.^{lxxxix} After their initial crisis response, the Intrepid Foundation then doubled down on their efforts in 2021 by announcing their commitment to raising AUD\$100,000 to support a global vaccine equity campaign.^{xc}

Workers & Communities

As a result of the dramatic decline in tourism visitation and the millions of tourism jobs lost, there is major concern that progress made in equality and sustainable economic growth could be rolled back.^{xc} Progress looks like this – in the US alone, 83% of travel businesses are small businesses and 60% of are owned by women.^{xcii}

Community-level impacts have had far-reaching effects on public servants and protected area staff. “Wildlife Rangers see no relief in sight, as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact Africa’s communities and wildlife. The pressures on Africa’s protected areas threaten to compromise decades of development and conservation success through the elimination of essential funding for wildlife protection that comes from tourism and through an increase in poaching.” In 2020, the Wildlife Ranger Challenge was launched, in which ranger teams across Africa participated in a series of mental and physical challenges, culminating into the Wildlife Ranger Challenge 21km half marathon. “\$10m was raised to support over 9,000 rangers who collectively work to protect more than 4,000,000 km² of conservation areas across Africa providing salaries, equipment and operating costs.” In 2021, this global awareness campaign returned once again, running from June-September, bringing together more than 150 ranger teams across 20 African nations.^{xciii}

“Many businesses are considering how to engage locals through a long-term business model, and destination management organizations are also engaging with communities and residents as primary stakeholders more than ever before. The benefits of doing so will be positive all-around – more resilience for local companies into the future, and a better overall tourism experience for visitors and residents.” - [Jeremy Sampson](#), Chief Executive Officer of The Travel Foundation and Chair of the Future of Tourism Coalition.¹

On Bintan island, furloughed workers have been hired by ocean clean-up and plastic offsetting firm Seven Clean Seas to comb the beaches for litter. **The workers, who have been hired on a weekly contract basis, are being paid the same daily rate as their usual jobs, plus 25 per cent extra if they collect 25 kilograms of plastic.**^{xciv}

With Australia’s tourism economy at a standstill in 2020, five tour companies found a new purpose for idle vessels and staff – planting coral. The work done by the Coral Nurture Program signifies the first time on the Great Barrier Reef that tourism operators have worked alongside researchers in reef restoration. Continuing in 2022, the program has seen great success in restoring coral populations to ensure healthy and thriving ecosystems for tourists to enjoy.^{xcv}

“One of the very first quick response and contribution of our expertise in implementing clean energy was providing Solar Power infrastructure to the remotely located health centers at tourist destinations. With the help of our CSR partners, we made the centers equipped with facilities to store critical care medical instruments and also Battery-operated vaccine carriers to distribute upcoming vaccines. Interrupted electricity has always been a big challenge for these remotely located health centers to set up basic medical equipment required for pregnant women, emergency casualties, and to set up the cold storage. A reliable source of Solar based electricity has enabled these

centers to have all these essential machineries and also create a safety net for the travellers visiting the regions.”
- Global Himalayan Expedition and Mountain Homestays, Ladakh India^{xcvi}

Inclusivity

As COVID-19 and the climate crisis shed light on the interconnectedness between these threats and societal issues, the tourism industry must act in accordance.

“Creating responsible and sustainable tourism will only happen when leaders of global travel and tourism organizations, DMOs and travel brands become deliberate in decision making and intentional in their approach to invest long-term in creating equitable opportunities for local stakeholders and underserved businesses in minority and rural communities to actively participate and profit in their local tourism ecosystems. A more diverse and inclusive travel and tourism industry will only occur when tourism marketing and community tourism development are part of one comprehensive strategy for destinations.” -- Stephanie M. Jones Founder & CEO of National Blacks in Travel^{xcvii}

Unfortunately, the pandemic has spurred a dramatic increase in hate crimes and violence towards the Asian community, which will impact their travel behaviors. “Destinations have a responsibility to not only protect Asian travelers but also to protect local communities that reflect their culture and heritage. Chinatowns, Japantowns and other

“There’s a recognition among many travel brands that travel can be used to shed light on diverse voices, and should be used to educate, and even help heal some of the social and environmental injustices in our world.” - [Jennifer Spatz](#), founder and CEO of Global Family Travels.¹

cultural enclaves have a troubled history based in segregation and exclusion. Over time, these areas have flourished and ultimately became a draw for tourism. MMGY Travel Intelligence shows a steadily growing interest in travelers engaging in cultural activities or exploring their family’s background during a leisure stay, indicating that these will be important experiences for travelers moving forward. As Asian-owned businesses continue to close over the course of the pandemic, these areas are at risk of not recovering. Endemic, in-language support for these business owners as well as financial resources from destinations and civic organizations can help ensure these neighborhoods and businesses continue to be a source of rich cultural experiences for both Asian and non-Asian travelers.”^{xcviii}

The Black Traveler: Insights, Opportunities & Priorities research report conducted by MMGY Travel Intelligence found that Black travelers are paying attention to destination marketing and it influences their travel decision-making. 54% of American Black travelers are more likely to visit a destination if they see Black representation in travel advertising. In the United Kingdom and Canada, 42% and 40% agreed, respectively, that Black representation influenced their choices. Additionally, destinations that are perceived as safe for Black travelers is highly influential for decision-making. In the study, 71% of American and Canadian respondents felt safety was extremely or very influential to their decision, and in the United Kingdom and Ireland, 58% of respondents felt similarly.^{xcix}

In a similar MMGY Travel Intelligence study titled *Vistas Latinas: A Landmark Study on U.S. Travelers of Hispanic Descent*, 57% of respondents agreed that they are more likely to visit a destination the embraces Hispanic cultures and celebrates Hispanic businesses. If a destination’s advertising and/or marketing materials include Hispanic individuals, 52% of respondents said they were more likely to visit. The study also found that six in 10 Hispanic travelers want to travel to a destination to learn more about their origin and heritage; moreover, 85% of Hispanic travelers have visited the country or territory of their family heritage.^c

“Indigenous Tourism, like adventure travel, is well suited for post-pandemic recovery. A [2020 study] by Euronews expects increased demand for wide-open spaces, eco-tourism, slow travel, and engaging with local communities, all hallmarks of adventure travel and Indigenous Tourism...These trends indicate that Indigenous tourism is perfectly positioned for the recovery of travel post-pandemic. Now is the time for Indigenous community leaders, government officials, tour operators, and others in the tourism sector to connect, collaborate, and prepare

for the return of experienced travelers as well as new travelers with pent up desires to get out into the world and look for new activities, cultures, and destinations to explore.”^{ci}

Insights from the US Travel Association detail that in post-pandemic tourism recovery, the LGBTQIA+ community will be leading the way in travel. USTA President and CEO Roger Dow noted that in particular, gay travelers are “adventurous and like new experiences. They have a penchant for travel far greater than their heterosexual counterparts. They travel more and spend more when they travel.” Yet, despite leading in recovery efforts, safety and hostility towards LGBTQIA+ travelers still remain large concerns, as homosexuality is still criminalized in over 70 countries, including some popular travel destinations.^{cii}

However, consumer demands show promising signs towards acceptance and diversity, as an American Express study released in March 2021 revealed that **“69% of respondents agree that they want to choose an airline/hotel that values diversity and inclusion, and whose employees reflect a diverse customer base.”**^{ciii} Such traveler choices may include Delta airlines, recognized for their allyship with the LGBTQIA+ community as the top airline in the 2021 Gay Travel Awards. Delta Airline partnered with its health plan provider to generate resources for LGBTQ+ employees and families to help address the unique health disparities this community faces.^{civ}

In September 2021, Discover Puerto Rico launched a new initiative called Live Out, to promote the island as a safe and friendly destination for the LGBTQIA+ community. Their other initiative, Pathway to Employment, assists trans, queer, and non-binary people to find safe workplaces and help them get hired in the tourism industry.^{cv}

In May 2020, McKinsey & Company reported that in the US, accommodation, and food services, which holds some of the highest share of minority employment (>37%), also has the highest **share of vulnerable small-business jobs (7.9 million in the USA).**^{cvi}

Founded in 2010, Tourism RESET provides a space for scholars, educators, and industry professionals to work together and exchange ideas on tourism subjects. Their main topics include ideas around race, ethnicity, social equality, and operating with the belief that tourism development, when done sustainably and responsibly, can be used as a tool to alleviate those issues.^{cvi}

In 2022, Hurtigruten Expeditions set sail with their Black Traveler Advisory Board onboard, a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiative that is the first of its kind in the cruising industry. Starting with their Antarctica itinerary, BTAB will experience Hurtigruten’s cruising products that haven’t yet been marketed to Black travelers and identify how Hurtigruten Group can become more inclusive.^{cvi}

“To help promote racial equity and overcome underrepresentation in its local travel and tourism industry, Experience Columbus and the Greater Columbus Sports Commission are partnering with Tourism Diversity Matters, a tourism and events industry resource for diversity expertise, to launch the Diversity Apprenticeship Program (DAP). Designed to help close the significant racial equity gap in the Central Ohio hospitality community, the new apprenticeship program will provide hands-on experience and job opportunities to local students, recent graduates and professionals who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color) and have a passion for tourism.”^{cix}

Ben Sherman, Chair of the World Indigenous Tourism Alliance and member of Oglala Lakota Tribal Nation, shares the following call to action for the tourism industry:

- “Indigenous people are legendary in our trusting and generous welcoming of visitors from distant places. A visiting guest in one’s home or on one’s lands calls for the same care and protection as one’s own family. This principle expresses the reciprocal nature of respect for our fellow human beings.
- As good stewards of the earth, Indigenous people possess the ancient knowledge of the natural law of the earth’s creator. With this knowledge from the ancestors, Indigenous people can build lives for our families and communities that demonstrate respect and reverence for the natural law.

- Indigenous people can seek to create tourism businesses in partnership with the members of the tourism industry that honor humankind's obligation and sacred duty to the earth. In this day of economic and environmental crisis we see no alternative.”
- We, World Indigenous Tourism Alliance, seeks to influence the tourism industry to act with simple human decency and ecological conscience in all its dealings around the globe. We ask the tourism industry to address the rights of Indigenous peoples to participate fully in all development activities on our traditional homelands.”^{cx}

UNWTO, in conjunction with the World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (WINTA) and OECD have unveiled a set of guidelines and recommendations for indigenous communities related to the socio-cultural impacts of COVID-19 on tourism. Some recommendations include:

- **“Use tourism’s infrastructure for humanitarian aid:** Tourism’s infrastructure and equipment can enable communities to benefit from mitigation initiatives. The solidarity can create bonds and better understanding between tourism operators and indigenous communities.
- **Inclusive tourism recovery plans:** The active engagement of Indigenous communities in defining their interaction with tourism reduces the negative impacts on their well-being. The close relationship between Indigenous populations and the natural world, as well as the transmission of their cultures, must be integrated into any tourism recovery plan.
- **Use partnerships to prioritize Indigenous tourism:** Indigenous tourism operators should speak as a single voice to better mobilize support. Private and public partnerships, particularly those involving companies specialized in responsible tourism with Indigenous communities, can prioritize indigenous peoples in the recovery process.”^{cx}

Researchers out of Mount Royal University have created a suggested code of conduct for spas offering services or rituals based on or inspired by Indigenous traditions. “The code features several themes including risks; honouring culture; product development and training; client experience; as well as local empowerment. The benefits to Indigenous communities include meaningful employment and preserving ancient practices that are at risk of erosion.”^{cxii}

Women in Travel

“Women represent half of the world’s population. And yet, as we unfortunately all know, there’s still a long way to go in order to fully reach equality in terms of rights and opportunities. So, when it comes to their professional life, women still face a number of barriers that prevent them from thriving in the workplace. These barriers are multiple and often interlinked. They include unequal opportunities, gender stereotypes, conflict between their professional duties and their family duties as well as gender-based violence. In the case of the tourism industry, the nature and the dynamics of the sector further exacerbates the barriers due to different factors such as demanding working hours, seasonal variability, or the distance between the tourist area and the residential areas. And this has been further highlighted by COVID-19.”^{cxiii} -- Sophie Hartman, the Regional Platform Coordinator at the Association of Southeast Asian Social Enterprises for Training in Hospitality & Catering (ASSET-H&C)

Women are more employed in the tourism industry than other industries, making them an especially hard-hit group during the pandemic. According to WTTC, “The tourism sector employs 1 in 10 people globally, and of this “women account for 54% of employment in the sector, compared to 39% for the global economy, and employs almost twice as many youths than other sectors.”^{cxiv} In countries like Panama and Nicaragua, “more than 70% of tourism business owners are women, compared to 20% in other sectors.”^{cxv}

“When women generate income, they invest it in their families and communities, so supporting women-owned businesses is a worthy investment. No matter where you’re traveling to, **do a little research on what hotels,**

restaurants and stores are owned by women....Another great way to empower women on your next adventure is to hire female tour guides and drivers.” Jennifer Spatz, *Travel Tips to Support Gender Equality*^{cxvi}

The Ku-Humelala Craft Group in South Africa pivoted from making handicrafts to sell to tourists to making face masks to protect people from coronavirus.^{cxvii} The 15 women in this craft group adapted their business model to keep earning money by selling locally to individuals and businesses. The Africa Foundation also bought some of the hand-made masks distribute among schoolchildren to enable their safe return to learning.^{cxviii}

“The UN has set up a program called **“Weaving the Recovery”** this will nurture traditional knowledge and collective well-being while providing Indigenous Women with the skills they need to access varied markets, trade ethically and become leaders in the post-COVID19 tourism recovery. The resulting toolkit, experience gained, and partners’ unwavering commitment will ensure its replication in other regions, bringing its benefits to other women and accelerating tourism’s sustainable and equitable recovery.”^{cxix}

Along Italy’s ‘Terre del Custoza’ in, women entrepreneurs from five prominent food and wine labels have joined together to open their gates as a public-private space and have organized outside activities for local families and tourists. These women not only sell their products but also engage locals and tourists in cooking and yoga classes, and more.^{cxx}

In South Africa, 225 women from across the country were selected to participate in the Women in Tourism Entrepreneurship Programme. Nedbank and South Africa Tourism joined together to empower more black women to get involved in tourism. This program is designed to help inspiring entrepreneurs create a knowledge foundation, provide mentorship, and open markets to black-women-owned small/medium sized tourism businesses. The COVID-19 pandemic hit the South African tourism sector hard, and this program intends to rebuild and reignite the sector by empowering black-women.^{cxxi}

Accessibility

Often left out of inclusivity discussion, progressive and responsible travel practitioners must continue to push action towards developing and advocating for best practices in accessible tourism.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), **more than one billion people around the world live with some form of disability**, and this number will increase as people live longer. The UN estimates that by 2050 approximately 1.6 billion people in the world will be over 65 years old.”^{cxxii}

UNWTO, together with the ONCE foundation and the European Network for Accessible Tourism, launched a new ISO Standard on Tourism for All, the first global standard aimed at implementing and improving accessibility throughout the tourism value chain. “The awareness-raising work will sensitize institutions, governments, and service providers to the importance of accessibility for all and inclusion. It will make clear that this is not only a question of human rights and equal opportunities, but also a major competitive advantage for destinations and the private sector.”^{cxxiii}

Accessible Athens is a website, created by the Municipality of Athens, that provides accessible routes and sites for tourists with visual or mobility disabilities. There are currently eight tourism itineraries (four for visually impaired individuals and four for people with mobility issues) that combine multiple points of interest with the least number of obstacles and restrictions in the physical terrain. The routes were traced and tested by focus groups made up of individuals with visual or mobility impairments. The website also provides details on Athens’ transportation systems and includes accessibility options.^{cxxiv}

ILUNION Hotels, a Spanish hotel chain, defines “all-inclusive” in a new way. It is the first hotel chain to achieve the Universal Accessibility Certification (UNE 170001) in all its hotels-- in many of which, **over 70% of the staff employed have some type of disability**.^{cxxv}

In Cali, Colombia getting outdoors and enjoying wildlife is made possible for the visually impaired by Juan Gabriel Soto. Juan has been blind from a very young age and has created a sensory tour for the visually impaired that guides them on a bird listening tour.^{cxxvi}

Launched in 2018, the European Capital of Smart Tourism initiative aims to kick-start a conversation about smart tourism excellence across four categories: accessibility, sustainability, digitalization, and cultural heritage and creativity. In 2020, the program released a free Compendium of Best Practices packed with best practices to support new, innovative efforts in four categories.^{cxxvii}

Among those lauded in the Compendium is Valencia, Spain, which is part of a national initiative known as Tur4al. “The initiative provides a collaborative platform for sharing information on accessibility in tourist destinations. Anyone can contribute insights across a range of categories, from hotels and restaurants, to monuments, and beaches. Experts review the information, and users provide their feedback by rating services. Users can filter searches according to their requirements, such as hearing loops, staff with knowledge of sign language, or the acceptance of assistance dogs.^{cxxviii}

“The important thing and the good thing are that everyone can make that decision to make a small change in their own business, starting with a leadership and cultural change at board or management level, in accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities and ageing. And if they begin to understand this, they begin to do the small things right, we start to see the changes. Sustainability is a key part of universal design, accessibility and age inclusion: leaving nobody out, leaving nobody behind, and that’s the key going forward. Everyone should have the right to have that human right, tourism services and to participate in the experience and society as equal as possible.” -- Paudie Healy, CEO, Universal Access Ireland^{cxxix}

Destinations & Governments

Domestic Travel

At the start of the pandemic, domestic tourism quickly became a lifeline for many destinations struggling from the sharp reduction in international travel. As people emerged out of lockdowns, eager to stretch their legs but either unable, or unsure how to do so internationally, domestic tourism blossomed.

“Domestic tourism has restarted and is helping to mitigate the impact on jobs and businesses in some destinations. However, real recovery will only be possible when international tourism returns. This requires global co-operation and evidence-based solutions so travel restrictions can be safely lifted.”^{cxxx}

“The pandemic forced many of us to travel within our country, our state, or our county. We’ve become more accustomed to domestic travel as a safety precaution, but also because it tends to be easier to budget, plan, and control.” - Gabe Saglie, senior communications manager for Travelzoo.^{cxxxi}

“UNWTO expects domestic tourism to return faster and stronger than international travel. Given the size of domestic tourism, this will help many destinations recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic, while at the **same time safeguarding jobs, protecting livelihoods and allowing the social benefits tourism offers to also return.**”^{cxxxii} -- UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili

At times, this initial boom in domestic travel was spurred by governments who incentivized it to boost their economies. In Italy, the government launched a *Bonus Vacanze* initiative in 2020, which offered families with a household income of up to EUR 40,000 a EUR 500 discounts on domestic tourism accommodations.^{cxxxiii}

In Malaysia, the government allocated US\$113 million worth of travel discount vouchers, as well as personal tax relief of up to US\$227, for expenditures related to domestic tourism.^{cxxxiv}

The government of Costa Rica moved all federal holidays in 2020 and 2021 that were to fall on weekends or mid-week to Monday so that Costa Ricans could enjoy more domestic travel and longer stays.^{cxxxv}

Years later, destinations continue to find unique ways to ensure their domestic markets remains a consistent source of revenue. In Ontario, Canada, the government put in place a Staycation Tax Credit to boost local businesses. By staying locally in 2022, residents are eligible to receive a 20% return on accommodation expenses.^{cxxxvi}

In some places, domestic tourism reached historic peaks. Research from across the EU reveals that the share of domestic nights spent in tourist accommodations were higher every month of 2020 compared to 2019.^{cxxxvii} And in 2021, German domestic travel increased by 27% from 2020 with approximately 73.6 million air passengers taking off and landing at German airports.^{cxxxviii}

However, not all countries have been able to easily pivot to domestic tourism economies and offset the economic shock caused by decreased international travel. A report from the Brookings Institute revealed that tourism-dependent economies relying more heavily on international tourism experienced a more severe hit to their economic activity than those that rely on domestic tourism.^{cxxxix} Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are among the most vulnerable countries in the world, as their small domestic markets and a high dependence on tourism limits their ability to fiscal respond to external shocks,^{cxli} such as COVID-19 or the climate crisis.

Vaccine Passports

As vaccination rollout began in 2021, so did hope for economic recovery. However, many countries and political leaders continued to grapple with ways to boost their economies while ensuring the safety of their citizens. Despite global debate, many countries introduced “vaccine passports” in hopes that they would facilitate a safer, swifter rebound of international travel by providing a way to verify an individuals’ COVID-19 vaccination status.

In March 2021, New York was the first US state to launch a digital health certificate called the Excelsior Pass, which verifies a person’s fully vaccinated status.^{cxlii} Then in June, Poland, Germany, Greece, Croatia, Bulgaria, Denmark, and Czechia started issuing the first EU COVID-19 passports in a bid to improve travel across Europe.^{cxliii}

However, unequal access to vaccines has and continues to prevent some individuals from traveling. While some countries are providing their citizens 3rd and 4th booster shots, others have not mass distributed initial doses. As of January 2022, Africa had received only 540 million vaccines, approximately 6%, of all COVID-19 doses, even though they have 17% of the world’s population. This means that less than 10% of the African continent are fully vaccinated.^{cxliiii}

Some countries, on the other hand, do not require travelers to be vaccinated upon entry. Countries such as Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, Costa Rica, and Turkey require visitors to show negative PCR tests within 72 hours before departing. Mexico does not require visitors to show a negative PCR test or quarantine upon arrival.^{cxliiv}

Even as 2021 came to an end, countries were still changing vaccine passport qualifications. In December 2021, the European Commission announced that vaccine certificates would only be valid for nine months without a booster shot.^{cxliv}

Wildlife

Over the course of the past two years, ecologists have debated about the costs and benefits of human lockdowns on wildlife populations. On one hand, in North America, birders documented an 80% increase of 82 species since the start of the pandemic. Many species, including eagles and hummingbirds, increased their presence in urban areas during the lockdowns.^{cxlvi} And due to beach closures in Florida, the nesting success of loggerhead turtles went up 39%. However, there were also downsides. With less travel, there were disruptions to conservation enforcement projects. As a result, illegal hunting and fishing increased as people became more desperate for money.^{cxlvii}

Many African countries in particular rely on tourism to fund wildlife conservation. In South Africa, for example, about 85 percent of funding for South Africa National Parks came from tourism-related sources in 2018.^{cxlviii} Yet across Africa, wildlife reserves, conservancies and parks **have been forced to halt infrastructure projects and cut salaries as they struggle through the crisis without tourism dollars.**^{cxlix}

“One aspect that’s not very well understood in the tourism industry is that they think it’s enough to give jobs to local people, for them to stop dangerous practices such as logging, poaching and burning the forest. Based on our experience, it is not reality. Reality is, in addition to giving jobs which is essential, you still need the rangers doing

law enforcement. And you need to support those rangers financially with food, with salaries, with life insurance, with equipment, so they can stop the illegal activities and protect the nature that tourists are coming to see.”^{cl} -- Suwanna Gauntlett Founder and CEO of Wildlife Alliance

Pre-COVID, tourism was much more lucrative than illegal wildlife trading. **“Wildlife tourism contributed \$120 Billion USD to economies in 2018. In Africa it makes up 36.3% of the tourism sector,** in Latin America, it is 8.6% of the sector; and in Asia and the Pacific, it is 5.8%. Illegal wildlife trade is worth up to \$23 Billion USD annually.”^{cli}

The reduction in tourism “places jobs at risk and has already led to a rise in poaching, looting and in consumption of bushmeat, partly due to the decreased presence of tourists and staff.”^{clii}

- In Nepal, the first month of **lockdown saw more forest-related crimes, including poaching and illegal logging, than the previous 11 months,** according to a review by the government and World Wildlife Fund.^{cliii}
- Between February and June of 2020, the **Uganda Wildlife Authority** recorded 367 poaching cases across the country, **more than double** the 163 cases recorded during a similar period in 2019.^{cliv}
- “Only in South Africa alone, where the government has been able to provide some form of social safety net for its citizens during the lockdown, has there been a marked drop in poaching.”^{clv}

Despite these repercussions, conservation and tourism practitioners have been coming together to support their communities and reflect on meaningful lessons about how to build back in a safer, more sustainable manner.

In Zimbabwe, Wilderness Safaris tapped into its non-profit partner, Wilderness Wildlife Trust and the Wilderness Safaris Group Sustainability Fund to continue to maintain its anti-poaching and conservation efforts during the pandemic. In Botswana, Wilderness Safari staff members are now tasked with driving around areas to maintain a presence and curtail illegal activity.^{clvi} And in Botswana and Rwanda, the company has been working with local governments and donors to support local food security in the form of parcels and essential items to villages surrounding lodges and training facilities.^{clvii}

Crowdsourcing platforms have been implemented in conjunction with stand-alone appeals to raise money to provide continued salaries to hospitality and conservation staff, such as those doing antipoaching and wildlife monitoring. While success of these has varied greatly, the Africa Foundation’s ongoing COVID-19 Campaign generated hundreds of thousands of dollars for these efforts.^{clviii}

In Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, conservationists are now demanding permanent safety measures to be implemented to protect endangered mountain gorillas from COVID-19 and other airborne viruses. As humans are genetically related to gorillas, these species are susceptible to human pathogens as a result of close contact with tourists. Luckily, the pandemic has taught conservationists and travelers both about how easily diseases can spread; as tourists return, they are now more willing to follow stricter great ape viewing guidelines.^{clix}

Rethinking Management & Governance

During the Covid-19 pandemic’s sudden travel hiatus, many destinations used the time to look introspectively at their tourism models and practices. Shannon Guihan, Chief Sustainability Officer and Head of The Travel Corporation’s TreadRight Foundation, notes: “I would have much preferred the pandemic had not happened. However, **it has really awakened destinations to the role that tourism plays.** Until the world stopped, and governments were able to understand what an economic vehicle the sector is, I don’t think there was a really strong appreciation for that.”^{clx}

“While we couldn’t continue at the speed things were, this is showing us that no tourists is no good either – there needs to be a more moderate way. Our first task is getting locals back out into the city, then the domestic market and our neighbours. When the international market returns, we’ll focus more on specific sectors. It’s an opportunity to change the rules.” - [Mateo Asensio](#), International Promotion Manager, Consorci de Turisme de Barcelona

Despite the border closures and significant slowdown of tourism throughout 2020 and 2021, destinations continued to press forward in their planning for its return.

Unlike many destinations that tightened budgets, Iceland actually increased tourism spending by 40% in 2020. A significant amount of this US\$13.6 million budget was used to

improve infrastructure at tourist sites that had suffered from overtourism pre-pandemic.^{clxi} “Many of these places, like the basalt column-flanked canyon of Stuðlagil, drew fame via social media and saw an explosion in visitation as a result. The government used the Covid-19 pause to build necessities like restrooms, parking lots, designated trails, and wheelchair-accessible entrances.”^{clxii}

In June 2020, New Zealand launched the New Zealand Tourism Futures Task Force to create a more sustainable future with a long-term vision. Their four key principles for transforming tourism include: protecting the New Zealand brand; avoiding return to business as usual; pricing the full cost of tourism into the visitor experience; and improving cross-sector collaboration between the Government and tourism businesses to achieve change.^{clxiii}

In July 2020, the city of Valencia, Spain, was the first city in the world to verify and certify its carbon footprint, using pioneering technology from Global Omnium.^{clxiv} “The city is committed to achieving carbon-neutral tourism activity by 2025, making Valencia the world's leading tourist destination with zero environmental impact. To this end, actions will be established to reduce and compensate for the CO2 emissions derived from tourism.”^{clxv}

In 2019, Sonoma County Tourism announced a shift from being a Destination Marketing Organization to a Destination Stewardship Organization, an effort to drive positive impacts from tourism’s intersection with community and the environment.^{clxvi} Following through on this development, Sonoma later unveiled their 2021-2023 strategic plan with a focus on destination stewardship. Their destination stewardship priorities include encouraging responsible travel behavior, aligning with local organizations and national programs with a similar mission, and communicating a broad-based approach to destination stewardship, among others.^{clxvii}

Led by the St. Kitts Sustainable Destination Council in partnership with the St. Kitts Ministry of Tourism in 2021, St. Kitts relaunched its Heart of St. Kitts Sustainability Charter program to promote a responsible restart of tourism on the island. The Charter was revised with support from Sustainable Travel International and input from more than 30 local businesses to provide a framework of best practices for the local tourism industry. The revised Charter addresses new best practices and pressing issues – such as the climate crisis, equity and inclusion, and health and safety –for a sustainable tourism recovery. The program was also expanded to offer more robust benefits and resources for participating businesses that will help them implement sustainability practices and showcase their unique sustainability stories.^{clxviii}

As many natural areas face shifting quantities and demographics of travelers, they are learning how to better market to and educate responsible travelers. For example, in collaboration with CREST, a Belizean branding committee comprised of the Belize Tourism Board, WWF, the Ministry of the Blue Economy, PACT, the Department of Fisheries, and the Belize Tourism Industry Association developed a new logo and brand for the Belize Barrier Reef, emphasizing conservation, stewardship, and its UNESCO World Heritage status.

Just before Scotland hosted COP 26 in Fall 2021, they announced Destination Net Zero, a program to provide support to tourism businesses and destinations as they transition to greener, net zero futures.^{clxix} Not only will this program develop a net zero action plan for Scotland, it will also work with three Scottish Destinations (Glasgow,

the Outer Hebrides, and Inverness & Loch Ness) to develop initial climate action plans, provide training content and tools to accelerate climate action knowledge for destinations, and set a model for climate action planning that can be applied in other destinations.^{clxx}

With a massive jump in tourism numbers, the Jackson Hole Travel & Tourism Board (JHTTB) has shifted their priorities towards balancing destination marketing with destination management. For this transition, the community's values and needs will drive plans for tourism. To start 2022 off, the board is asking for input regarding tourism from those who work and live in Teton County. "We are calling on the community to get involved and help us shape the future of tourism for Teton County by giving input that will help us understand how tourism is impacting them in both good and bad ways," said Christa Valentino, a board member.

To catalyze these changes, many organizations quickly put together new resources and initiatives to help destinations better understand and navigate the path towards a more responsible future. For example, in the summer of 2020, the Destination Stewardship Center and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) released their first Destination Stewardship Report aimed at providing information and insights to those involved in destination stewardship efforts.^{clxxi}

Providing a roadmap for European destinations to tackle every aspect of their journey towards sustainable transformation, the European Travel Commission (ETC), representing 32 national tourism organizations in Europe, published a handbook *Sustainable Tourism Implementation: Framework and Toolkit*. "This handbook is for European National Tourism Organisations (NTOs), to support efforts to develop national approaches that advance sustainable tourism. It is intended as a practical document to aid implementation, for all European nations regardless of where they are on their sustainability journey. It is intended to support both those NTOs considering a national certification scheme, and those who are not, to advance national efforts to improve sustainability outcomes."^{clxxii}

The Transformational Travel Council launched their Transformative Destinations Program in April 2021, where they guide the integration of transformational travel practices and the world's first Regenerative Tourism Principles for Destinations. This program is designed to transform communities from the inside-out and ground up, holistically improving visitor, resident, community, and environmental well-being to help them flourish..^{clxxiii}

Then in October 2021, Green Destinations announced the launch of their START (Support Tools for the Assessment and Reset of Tourism) program, which aims to bring together efforts to rethink, recover and restart tourism in destinations. With this unveiling, Green Destinations launched two tools: the SDGs & Tourism Assessment & Reset Tool, to help destination managers self-assess their destination's sustainability performance, and the Benchmarking Report Tool, to monitor performance in relation to the destination's own KPI's, compare performance with 'reference destinations' and provide detailed individual information about sustainability performance.^{clxxiv}

Conclusions

- The challenges and opportunities presented by the pandemic have highlighted both the fragility and resilience of the tourism industry. Above all, this dichotomy has created momentum and a roadmap for a future that is more sustainable, responsive to threats, and inclusive of diverse travelers.
- As both a victim of and contributor to climate change and social inequity, tourism must avoid returning to its pre-COVID trajectory and transition to meeting demanding goals to mitigate the impacts of climate and promote social justice and equity.
- Governments must create policies that support a climate-friendly future, fair working conditions for tourism industry employees, and incentivize businesses to improve their sustainability practices.

- Sustainability in the post-Covid recovery world necessitates collaboration between all stakeholders in the tourism value chain and local communities. By joining virtual communities that share experiences and practices, stakeholders at the start of their sustainability journey can lay the foundation for their future and join others in informing, sharing ideas, and transforming the industry.
- Destinations and businesses must not be afraid to share their climate, sustainability, and community stories with guests. Travel provides an unequivocal opportunity for education, and it can be done in a way that is informative and useful for guests. Trends tell us that many travelers are looking for more sustainable options, but they don't know how to find them.
- A healthy tourism industry is a competitive tourism industry. Maintaining the pre-COVID status quo will be at the detriment of business in the long-term. The solutions are there if we are willing to utilize them.

Collaborators



ADVENTURE TRAVEL
TRADE ASSOCIATION

ASU
Center for
Sustainable
Tourism
Arizona State
University



BLACKS IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM
BUILDING BETTER TOGETHER



BLACKSTONE VALLEY
TOURISM COUNCIL



California State University
MONTEREY BAY



**CENTER FOR PROTECTED
AREA MANAGEMENT**
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY





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