



Center for Responsible Travel

# The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics 2020

*Special edition: Lessons from COVID-19 for tourism in a changing climate*

*This 8th edition of "Trends & Statistics" was edited by Samantha Hogenson Bray and Ellen Rugh with support from lead researcher Emily Ganem and reviewers Gregory Miller, Rebekah Stewart, Kelsey Frenkiel, and Grace Klopp. The publication was produced by CREST in September 2020. . It is available for public use free of charge and we ask only that attribution is given to CREST.*

**The world looks much different in 2020 than ever anticipated. Due to COVID-19, overtourism—the theme of CREST's 2018 *Trends & Statistics* report—quite literally disappeared overnight. For the first time in modern history, global tourism virtually collapsed.**

As of the end of 2019, tourism had accounted for 1 in 10 jobs and 10% of GDP globally. Based on the latest COVID-19 scenarios released in July 2020, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates that international tourist arrivals will decline 58%-78% globally in 2020 (a shocking contrast from 3-4% annual growth that had been estimated in January).<sup>1,2</sup> Scenario projections forecast this could equate to 100 to 200 million tourism jobs at risk.<sup>3</sup> The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates 1 million jobs are being lost per day in the Travel & Tourism sector.<sup>4</sup> As the largest global downturn since international travel took off in the 1950s, the WTTC calls the impact of COVID-19 a "sharp escalation in the economic loss to the world economy,"<sup>5</sup> with \$2.7 trillion in travel and tourism GDP lost in a best case scenario and \$5.5 trillion in a worst case scenario.<sup>6</sup>

## 58-78%

The UNWTO estimates that international tourist arrivals will decline 58-78% globally in 2020 (down from 3-4% estimated growth in January).

## \$2.7 — \$5.5 Trillion

Estimated loss in international tourism receipts in 2020.

COVID-19 has impacted every facet of life and fundamentally changed the way destinations, businesses, and travelers will plan, manage, and experience tourism. The need for dramatic changes to respond to this new reality came swiftly and painfully. While we remain suspended in this unanticipated grand experiment, we are offered the opportunity to apply lessons learned from COVID-19 to make tourism more resilient as we look to recovery. The truth is, our beloved industry was on a path of self-destruction for decades, valuing profits at the expense of people, planet, and purpose. At the same time, while tourism has stalled and some positive short-term environmental benefits have emerged, climate change remains an existential threat that has real consequences for destination communities around the world. **COVID-19 has proven that simply stopping tourism is not enough to meet the demands of the climate crisis and has also highlighted the immense need and value of tourism to global and local supply chains, conservation, and cultural exchange.** Sustainable tourism provides an economic incentive for destinations to avoid extraction-based

economies, providing employment while decreasing carbon-intensive practices such as mining, deforestation, and slash and burn agriculture.

It is not unfathomable that economies could return to unsustainable practices in order to meet very immediate needs, sacrificing the future for the present. However, crisis breeds innovation, and destination communities and businesses must not let this opportunity go to waste. The industry has been forced to adapt in the face of adversity, and the same rigor and dedication must be applied to neutralize the threat of climate change as we look to the future of tourism. CREST Executive Director Dr. Gregory Miller shares in the July 2020 webinar “Rebuild Responsibly: How and Why to Decarbonize the Travel Industry Following the Pandemic,” organized by Intrepid Travel:



“The pandemic will have little impact on the planet directly, with the exception of the temporary lapse in human-induced pollution, land and marine habitat alteration, and reduced global greenhouse gas emissions. If there is a positive effect from the pandemic, it is our collective human perception of our impacts and what we can and must do as a society to respond, adapt, and be resilient. Even though climate change presents a slower, more long-term health, environmental, and economic threat, an equally dramatic and sustained shift in behavior will be needed to prevent irreversible damage to human society. As travel resumes post-COVID, we must have significant, enduring change toward quality over quantity tourism (value over volume). It is the quality of visitation, not the quantity of visitors that countries and destinations need to seek, and measure, with an individual and societal commitment to a responsible recovery. Post COVID, there will be a profound shift in the competitive landscape in the travel and tourism sector, with preparation and effective risk management, adaptation and resilience, and decarbonization being fundamental to future competitiveness and relevance.”

— Dr. Gregory Miller, Executive Director, Center for Responsible Travel (CREST)

Photo by David Marcu

## Let this be our clarion call.

CREST’s annual metanalysis, *The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics*, shares key studies on COVID-19 and climate change and what lessons may be applied from the former to meet the challenges of the latter. In addition to general consumer, business, and destination trends in the context of recovery, we explore the unprecedented opportunity to mitigate two existential threats with one coordinated approach, truly making the world a safer, more equitable, and more resilient place for all.

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Photo by Pizxabay.



## Key Terms



### Climate Change Adaptation

The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects.<sup>7</sup>

### Climate Change Mitigation

Human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases.<sup>8</sup>

### COVID-19

A mild to severe respiratory illness that is caused by a coronavirus (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 of the genus Betacoronavirus), is transmitted chiefly by contact with infectious material (such as respiratory droplets) or with objects or surfaces contaminated by the causative virus, and is characterized especially by fever, cough, and shortness of breath and may progress to pneumonia and

### Resilience

An ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.<sup>10</sup>

### 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.<sup>11</sup>

### Responsible Tourism

Tourism that maximizes the benefits to local communities, minimizes negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people conserve fragile cultures and habitats.<sup>12</sup>

## Tourism in a Changing Climate

*Tourism in a Changing Climate* is CREST's strategic theme for 2020. Understanding the issue of climate change and the need for responsible, sustainable travel is of strategic importance to the tourism industry today. While there is some debate about the exact amount of greenhouse gas emissions for which tourism is responsible due to the complexity of the industry (stretching into agriculture, infrastructure, energy, water, etc.), tourism's major contribution is a self-inflicted wound on its own sectoral health. Climate change poses a direct threat to both the well-being of tourism as a critical economic sector and to the residents of vulnerable tourism destinations. For this reason, the industry must step up with workable, sustainable solutions for our planet and its people. Not only will this allow the industry to protect the travel experiences they offer and thus remain competitive, but also, it is the right thing to do.

*"These climate change risks are not well understood and are not being considered for national climate change strategies or tourism development plans, and that urgently needs to change if tourism is to be a part of the new climate economy of the future. Without responses from the global community, climate change will pose a growing headwind against tourism development, compromising tourism competitiveness and its ability to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals in many countries."*<sup>13</sup>

*—Dr. Daniel Scott, Professor and University Research Chair in Climate and Society, Executive Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre on Climate Change, University of Waterloo, Canada.*

A 2005 UNWTO and UN Environment study estimated that transport-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the tourism sector accounts for "3.7% of all man-made CO<sub>2</sub> emissions." A 2019 update found that in 2016, that figure was 5% of all man-made CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This figure is projected to grow to 5.3% by 2030.<sup>14</sup>

Through a seminal 2018 study determining the carbon footprint of tourism, researchers found that “between 2009 and 2013, tourism’s global carbon footprint had increased from 3.9 to 4.5 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e, four times more than previously estimated, accounting for about 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Transport, shopping and food are significant contributors. The majority of this footprint is produced by and in high-income countries (....) [The researchers] project that, due to its high carbon intensity and continuing growth, tourism will constitute a growing part of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions.”<sup>15</sup>

## Tourism’s Contributions to Climate Change

In a University of Cambridge assessment on the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, researchers state that key findings relevant to tourism in a changing climate include:<sup>16</sup>



Iceland. Photo by Mark Neal.

### Climate Change

“The sector is exposed to numerous direct and indirect impacts from climate change,” including sea-level rise in coastal destinations, rising temperatures for winter sports, biodiversity loss impeding ecotourism, and water availability for all tourism.

“The contribution of tourism to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is rising... the sector’s emissions are on course to grow 130% between 2005 and 2035,” partly because the world is “becoming more affluent.”

“The tourism sector’s emissions are somewhat concentrated: for example, air transport accounted for 43% of the sector’s emissions in 2005, but just 17% of the trips taken. Cruises tend also to have high associated emissions. This means that reducing demand in a few, small sub-sectors of tourism could have a significant effect on emissions.” Lifestyle changes are necessary to mitigate.

### Costs and Effects in Tourism

“There is considerable uncertainty about how tourists will respond to the effects of climate change.”

“While the built environment accounts for around 20% of the sector’s climate impact, transport makes up 75%. Transport has some of the highest costs associated with emission reductions.”

### Adaptation and Mitigation in Tourism

“Adaptation options exist, but many are likely to add costs and offer only short-term relief.” Examples from report include winter sports businesses can move to more expensive solutions like artificial snow or moving up to higher elevations.

Solutions offered include:

To reduce energy demand, buildings can be constructed or retrofitted with energy-saving renewable energy systems, appliances, building codes, and urban planning.

Reduce emissions for transportation by using more efficient vehicles, alternative fuels, operational improvements, such as improved aviation routes, and modal shifts, especially from road to rail on a decarbonized energy grid.

## Climate Change and Consumers

Travel writer Henry Wismayer grapples with the realities of tourism in a changing climate. He states that traditional travel media has shifted toward promoting a, “hyper-consumerist, bucket-list-driven travel,” the effects of which worsen climate change.<sup>17</sup> The Transformational Travel Council is promoting a different kind of travel. The TCC believes “that by empowering the potential and possibility of travel it can incite change by breaking down divisions within us and between us. That we’d all benefit from a more conscious, purposeful travel that maximizes the power of travel to positively transform how we live our lives, how we live with others, and how we live on our planet.”<sup>18</sup>

“Climate change is on the minds of many American leisure travelers. In fact, fully half (50%) say that they expect it to impact their travels in one way or another at some point in the next five years,” says the researchers of a recent Destination Analysts survey titled “The State of the American Traveler.” The report goes on to say “There is desire among respondents to be more thoughtful about their own environmental footprint by, for example, changing their mode of transportation to a train or boat. Others reported that they would be more attracted to sustainable regions in the coming years.”<sup>19</sup>

A recent survey from Destination Analysts finds that both predicted natural disasters and a general higher frequency of extreme weather events in some destinations would cause **travelers to plan a trip to a different destination**. Many travelers are particularly concerned with coastal destinations.<sup>20</sup>

Researchers surveyed tourists who previously visited Florida about hypothetical changing climate scenarios. They found that: “The examination of the tourist perspective showed the presence of ample sunshine and factors related to beach comfort as the reasons for choosing the destination. In a scenario where beaches disappear and tropical diseases become more widespread, the majority of respondents stated they would choose a different destination. However, respondents would reconsider their intentions if adaptation measures such as reduced prices, coastal habitat conservation and measures to protect beaches from erosion and coastal areas from inundation were in place. The findings suggest that seasonal and geographic shifts in tourism demand could be mitigated by the implementation of adaptation measures at the destination level.”<sup>21</sup>

In a 2015 study on climate change visitation in US national parks, researchers found that, even in the most extreme warming scenarios, visitation in national parks is likely to increase. Visitation may increase as much as 23% by 2060, according to current temperature increase predictions.<sup>22</sup>



The David Suzuki Foundation suggests the following when booking to lower the carbon footprint of your flight: “Fly economy, take direct, non-stop flights, take daytime flights, choose airlines carefully, and offset your flights.”<sup>23</sup>

“SeaGrass Grow is the first and only blue carbon calculator – planting and protecting coastal wetlands to fight climate change.” SeaGrass Grow is a program of The Ocean Foundation that helps individuals and businesses to calculate and offset their carbon footprints.<sup>24</sup>

According to Euromonitor International, amid COVID-19 there has been a shift in consumer focus on ethical purchasing decisions and climate change to more immediate socioeconomic concerns.<sup>25</sup>

According to a 2019 MMGY survey, “33% of American travelers indicate they are willing to pay 10% higher rates/fares on travel service providers who demonstrate environmental responsibility.” Researchers believe that these “conscientious travelers” are likely to take more trips and spend more on vacations than “non-conscientious travelers.” The “conscientious traveler” mindset is led by “millennials, and especially millennial families.” The same survey reveals “13% of travelers’ behaviors were influenced by perceptions of a provider’s efforts toward environmental sustainability,” a 5% increase from 2018.<sup>26</sup>

Skift reports, “choosing environmentally sustainable travel businesses is especially important in China and India, but fewer Millennial/Gen Z travelers in all markets [US, UK, Australia, China, and India] are willing to pay more to use these businesses.”<sup>27</sup>

**Via a 2019 National Geographic consumer survey of 3,500 adults in the US, 42% of respondents remarked sustainable travel decisions are a priority. However, only 15% of survey respondents understand the meaning of sustainable travel.** The same survey found that half of US travelers who prioritize sustainability in their travel decisions are 18 to 34 years old.<sup>28</sup>

Photo by Dominik Reiter

**A recent Booking.com survey found that travelers are likely to find ways to travel sustainably within destinations. This includes:**

- Altering transportation behaviors to walking, biking, or hiking (52%).
- Expressing the desire for travel dollars to return to the local community (68%).
- Searching for authentic cultural experiences (72%).
- Requesting sustainable travel tips from travel companies (41%).
- Offsetting the footprint of their accommodation (56%).
- Visiting eco-friendly accommodations (73%).

This rising popularity in eco-friendly accommodations has sustained for four consecutive years. The Booking.com survey found 50% of travelers indicated that they understand how to travel more sustainably. However, 36% of respondents felt they can’t afford sustainable travel, 34% indicated making more sustainable travel decisions would constrict their itineraries, and 34% agreed that sustainable destinations do not appeal to them as much as other destinations.<sup>29</sup>

In a recent international STR survey, 70% of travelers felt as though tourism providers make little or no effort to implement sustainable practices.<sup>30</sup>





## Climate Change and Business

*"We've seen travelers make a lot of strides in being more sustainably conscious - from packing reusable water bottles to using reef-safe sunscreen to even researching whether wildlife tours and activities are harmful. But we need more innovation and action from airlines, cruise lines, hotel brands and tour operators themselves."*

*—Kelley Louise, Founder, Impact Travel Alliance<sup>31</sup>*

*"GSTC is pleased to report encouraging progress in impacting sustainable tour operations via a significant uptick recently in tour operators gaining sustainable certification, especially among DMCs or local inbound operators. Several factors contribute to the rise, mostly awareness of the value of certification to provide a discipline to holistically improve business practices. But a key driver is also supply chain development; that is, buyers of tours and transport seeking a credible way to make claims of the sustainability of their own operations. Several cruise lines are now picking up on the model developed by Royal Caribbean in their partnership with WWF to purchase MSC and ASC-labeled fish and seafood and to contract with land tour operators certified by Certification Bodies that are accredited by GSTC. October 2019 MSC Cruises adopted the model with the launch of their Protectours line of shore excursions which requires the operator to be certified, thus making a credible claim that the programs are operating with sustainability in mind."*

*—Randy Durband, Global Sustainable Tourism Council.<sup>32</sup>*

The climate awareness group Protect Our Winters "compared snowfall data with skier visits from 2001 to 2016. The group found that, during the five years in that span with the lowest snowfall, fewer skiers meant \$1 billion in lost revenue and 17,400 fewer jobs compared with the average ski season." One Aspen company, Skico, has created initiatives to become more sustainable and increase public awareness around climate change. The company's projects began in 1999. In the meantime, they have built "LEED-certified buildings, retrofitted boilers, installed LED bulbs and a small solar array. Later, Aspen helped build a 147 kilowatt solar array in nearby Carbondale. Skico tried their mills at wind power, sourced local food, and constructed a small hydroelectric plant on Snowmass Mountain... In 2012, Skico invested \$5.4 million in a plant that captures the waste methane from a nearby coal mine and turns it into electricity, which the company then sells to the local utility company."<sup>33</sup>



Ocean acidification (OA) and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are harming fisheries and tourist destinations. “Though valued largely for their beauty, coral reefs also ‘can substantially reduce’ coastal flooding and erosion by dissipating the energy of waves hitting the shore,” NOAA said. An April report by the US Geological Survey found that coastal reefs protect economic activity worth \$319 million a year in Florida, \$118 million a year in Puerto Rico, and \$25 million a year in the Virgin Islands.”<sup>34</sup>

According to a GreenBiz article, US beaches bring \$320 billion per year to the economy and supports 1/10 of work in travel and tourism.<sup>35</sup>

Shoulder and high-season (fall-spring-summer) are set to become longer. Outdoor recreation providers can adapt by providing warm-weather activities to supplement the decrease in feasibility of winter activities, such as skiing or ice fishing.<sup>36</sup>

According to a study conducted by Meiho Univeristy researchers, low-carbon operations management is a current challenge to ecotourism. However, the Ecotourism Service Supply Chain Management (ESSCM) is a useful sustainability strategy for low-carbon operations. The case study of Pasikang Leisure Park in Taiwan analyzed in this research shows how many of the park services are based on low-carbon operations: the use of natural rainwater through a ground system to water the gardens, the limited use of water by customers, the absence of TVs, air-conditioners and electronic devices, or the use of home harvested black coffee seeds and indigenous food. These measures reveal that it is possible to integrate a low-carbon operation strategy into the supply chain of ecotourism services.<sup>37</sup>

Researchers from the University of Finland have found that although some major establishments in the tourism sector, such as hotels and resorts, have implemented practices to reduce food waste, food waste in the tourism industry is often underreported.

This is due to calculations that do not include non-traditional establishments, such as Airbnb. Researcher Juho Pesonen remarked, “We need models that describe how food waste is created in tourist households, and how that possibly changes over time. Moreover, we need to identify platforms and intersections where food waste can be addressed, for example through social media. In the end, it all boils down to sustainable tourism and the circular economy.”<sup>38</sup>





Longford, UK  
Photo by Paul IJsendoorn

The International Transport Forum developed the non-urban passenger model to evaluate the impacts disruptive scenarios would have on non-urban transport and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This model comprises two scenarios, the current ambitious scenario which reflects the policies based on the business-as-usual premise, and the high-ambition scenario aimed to reach more advanced transformation through the implementation of new policies (i.e. carbon pricing) and technological developments. As UNWTO seeks to create a high-ambition scenario, its last report on “Transport-related CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions of the Tourism Sector” states that the following mitigation measures can reduce emissions from the tourism sector: increasing the price of carbon, as well as “efficiency improvements and electric vehicles.” Likewise, developments that have the potential to disrupt current emission scenarios include: “low-haul low-cost carriers, energy innovations in aviation, autonomous vehicles, shared mobility, and ultra-high-speed rail.”<sup>39</sup>

A 2017 study of offsets published by the European Union reveals that “85% of the offset projects under the UN’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) to date failed in the objective of reducing emissions.”<sup>40</sup> The Responsible Tourism Partnership questions the capacity of carbon offset initiatives to reduce emissions in an effective and measurable manner if they are not linked to emissions avoidance and reduction.<sup>41</sup> In this sense, innovation and technology—especially in the aviation industry—are necessary to cut carbon emissions.

While carbon-offsetting of tourism impacts is not the answer, is it necessary for unavoidable emissions. Several airlines are working to achieve some level of carbon neutrality, especially for their domestic flights, by bearing the costs of their carbon offsets. JetBlue, British Airways, EasyJet, Air France and Delta are among the airlines working to offset the emissions of their flights.<sup>42,43,44</sup>

The carbon footprint attributed to other travel services apart from air travel is usually neglected.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, there are many admirable carbon offsetting initiatives outside of the aviation industry, including:



### **Global Himalayan Expedition (GHE)**

Through their Impact Expeditions, Global Himalayan Expedition (GHE) is using tourism to set up clean and renewable sources of energy for remote mountain communities. To date, GHE has set up more than 165kW of solar power and generated more than 630 megawatt hours of solar energy, which is powering 110 villages in the remote regions of India. By displacing kerosene lamps with solar energy, there has been a carbon reduction of 8,700 tons from these communities. All GHE expeditions are carbon negative in nature, as the travelers set up the solar energy to eliminate kerosene from the communities. This model has allowed more than 1,300 travelers to explore the Himalayas and the rich cultural heritage without contributing to increased carbon levels.

### **Intrepid Travel**

In 2019, Intrepid Travel announced its commitment to becoming carbon positive by 2020. Intrepid plans to reach its goal through numerous efforts, such as community-based projects and carbon offsets. For example, CEO James Thornton explains, "Together with The Climate Foundation and the University of Tasmania, The Intrepid Foundation is working to raise \$350,000 AUD to set up Australia's very first seaweed platform off Tasmania's eastern coast. Just like natural kelp forests, this floating platform will protect coral regions from bleaching, provide habitat and feed wildlife, cool surface ocean waters and help sink carbon dioxide to the depths of the ocean. While this specific regeneration project may be local to Tasmania, its effects will be seen globally. And if that's not a David and Goliath situation, we don't know what is."<sup>46</sup> To help other tourism businesses on their carbon-free journey, Intrepid Travel offers a 10-step guide to decarbonizing your travel business.<sup>47</sup>

### **Adventure Travel Trade Association**

The Adventure Travel Trade Association, in partnership with South Pole, has developed the Neutral Together program to offer carbon bulk offset purchasing to members. This initiative "allows companies to use a simple calculator to determine the carbon footprint of its tours and business operations. At the discounted cost-per-tonne price, they can then choose whether to financially support a forestry, renewable energy, or cookstove project."<sup>48</sup>

### **Rick Steves' Europe**

Rick Steves' Europe tour operator voluntarily assumed a self-imposed yearly "carbon tax" of \$1 million to offset its emissions. The money will be invested "in climate-smart agriculture and forestry projects in developing countries, as well as legislative advocacy here in the USA."<sup>49</sup>

### **Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort**

In August of 2018, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort became the first certified CarbonNeutral® resort in the Caribbean. On its website, the environmentally-minded resort explains, "Committing to a net zero carbon footprint is an investment. It involves a financial commitment, extensive research when planning capital/facility improvements and it requires that everyone from staff to guests to vendors all share in the promise."<sup>50</sup>

### **Explore**

Explore has become the first UK-based tour operator to offset the carbon footprint of its travelers over almost the entire supply chain (flights, accommodation, and domestic transport). The calculations of the carbon offsetting "are based on a 'worst-case scenario' for each trip, to ensure the amount offset is always over-calculated rather than under."<sup>51</sup>



Launched in January 2020, Tourism Declares is a global campaign that “supports tourism businesses, organizations, and individuals in declaring a climate emergency and taking purposeful action to reduce their carbon emissions.” Those wishing to declare must “Develop a ‘Climate Emergency Plan’” and adopt it within the organization’s executive board, share progress, reduce carbon emissions, work with the Tourism Declares community, and become an advocate for change.<sup>52,53</sup>

Jamie Sweeting (VP of Sustainability) from G Adventures told Vice that “clever marketing and ‘responsible tourism’ are two separate things,” and tells travelers to research companies before booking to avoid “greenwashing” traps. Vice defines “greenwashing” as “disinformation painting something as environmentally responsible.”<sup>54</sup>

“The tourism industry can harm wildlife, plants, and natural ecosystems through habitat destruction, pollution, over-exploitation of natural resources, and visitor traffic to sensitive ecosystems. One approach to mitigate such threats is the application of voluntary sustainability standards, supported by training for tourism enterprises and verified by external audits.” NEPCon’s (Nature Economy and People Connected’s) “sustainable tourism training program and verification process defines 78 criteria (requirements) for environmental and social best practices and has been adopted by more than 200 tourism businesses in eight countries.”<sup>55</sup>

Last-chance tourism vacations may be marketed to Millennials and Gen Z as raising awareness for climate change. There are other alternatives to view places that are disappearing like VR experiences, documentaries, and donating to organizations who protect these places.<sup>56</sup> However, it is important not to minimize the role of travel in individuals understanding climate change impacts. Individuals protect what they love.

“‘Dollar value is the best way to turn heads to show that nature is valuable,’ says Court Whelan, Director of Sustainability for Natural Habitat Adventures. A new report from the World Travel and Tourism Council shows that wildlife tourism generates five times more revenue than illegal wildlife poaching worldwide. Thanks to tourism, an elephant is worth 76 times more alive than dead; India’s tiger population has increased in major part because a single wild tiger is worth \$750,000 annually in tourism; and several experts agree that gorillas are alive in Rwanda right now because of tourism. Other similar studies abound for pandas, one-horned rhinos, wolves,



Photo by See the Wild : Volunteer with Elephants in Thailand” operated by Global Vision International.

A survey conducted by the Adventure Travel Trade Association and Intrepid Travel in 2019 found that, in terms of climate action strategies, 68% of adventure travel companies report that they sustainably source food by sourcing locally or moving toward plant-based options, 66% purchase from more sustainable suppliers, 57% focus water conservation practices, and 52% use renewable energy sources.<sup>58</sup>

A recent study performed by NYU's Stern's Center for Sustainable Business found that "50% of growth from 2013 to 2018 [in purchases of consumer packaged goods] came from sustainability-marketed products." Products that had packaging marketed as sustainable grew 5.6 times faster than those that did not.<sup>59</sup>

WTTC's 2019 Tourism for Tomorrow Award winners are recognized for their strides in sustainable tourism. Some sustainable practices by the winners include: Bucuti & Tara Resort in Aruba for their carbon neutral certification, SEE Turtles for their sea turtle conservation programs, and Awamaki of Peru for their support of women artisans.<sup>60</sup>

According to WTTC, due to COVID-19, Namibia could lose \$3.2 million in annual tourism revenue and another \$3.5 million in loss of salaries for staff in wildlife conservancies. Tens of thousands of conservation jobs could be lost, such as game guards, conservancy staff, and providers of goods and services.<sup>61</sup>

"The World Economic Forum has ranked nature loss as one of the top global risks.... Nature loss and wildlife consumption are the root cause of the emergence of zoonotic infectious diseases, such as coronavirus, Ebola and HIV/AIDS. Now there are even more pressing reasons to invest in communities that protect nature through wildlife tourism and conservation. COVID-19 recovery packages must include this investment."<sup>62</sup>

## Climate Change and Destinations

*"As arctic glaciers melt at alarming speeds, scientists have predicted that 'some 150 million people are now living on land that will be below the high-tide line by midcentury,' according to The New York Times. Major population areas affected by this direct result of climate change are the East and West Coasts of America, China, Thailand and almost the entire country of Vietnam. The Maldives, an island nation in the Arabian Sea, are also under serious threat as the country comprised of low-lying islands is predicted to disappear entirely by 2045."*

— *Louis D'Amore, International Institute for Peace Through Tourism.*<sup>63</sup>



Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture Dr Ibrahim Didi signs the decree of underwater cabinet meeting. Photo by Mohamed Seeneen (CC BY-NC 2.0) via Flickr, uploaded by Presidency Maldives



In 2008, UNEP, UNWTO, the World Meteorological Organization, and the University of Oxford detailed four general impacts that “will affect tourism destinations, their competitiveness and sustainability.”<sup>64</sup> The report shares adaptation and mitigation frameworks, tools, and practices for the tourism sector. Twelve years later, it is apparent that these predictions are coming true, and include:

## Climate Change Impacts to Tourist Destinations

### Direct climate impacts:

- Increased operating costs in terms of water supply, insurance costs, irrigation, heating-cooling, etc.
- Changes to seasonal demand (i.e. preferences for higher latitudes and altitudes).
- Increases in extreme weather events.

### Impacts of climate mitigation policies on tourist mobility:

- Increased transportation costs.
- Changing environmental attitudes that lead tourists to change their travel patterns (such as flight-shaming).

### Indirect environmental change impacts:

- Changes to water availability, biodiversity, landscape aesthetic, and agricultural production.
- Major gaps in knowledge of regional impacts.

### Indirect societal change impacts:

- Risks posed to economic growth may reduce discretionary wealth available to tourists.
- National and international security risks, which may cause a loss in tourism demand.

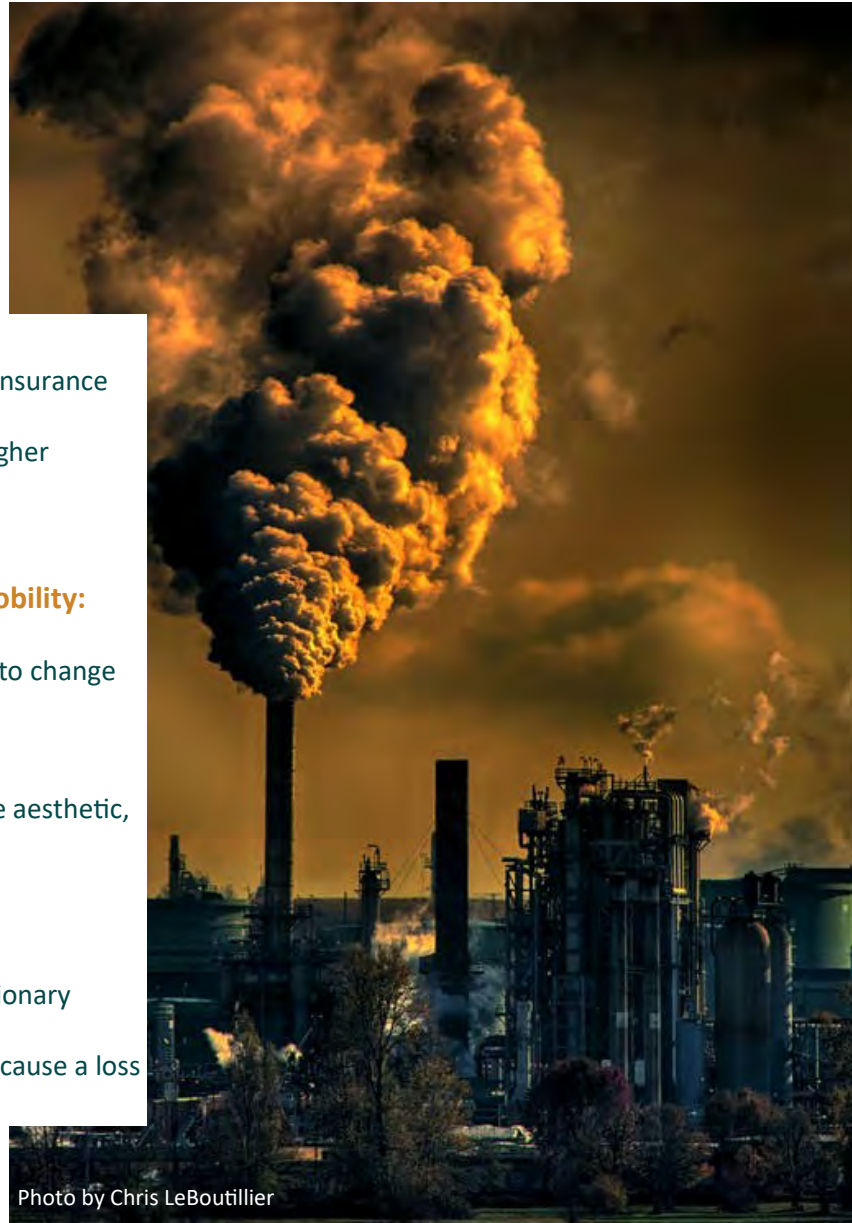


Photo by Chris LeBoutillier

“[Dr. Daniel] Scott collaborated with a research team from Linnaeus University, in Sweden, to develop a Climate Change Vulnerability Index for Tourism (CVIT), which provides a systematic analysis of the vulnerability of the tourism sector in relation to 181 countries. Vulnerability hotspots are found in Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and small island developing states (SIDS) in the Caribbean, as well as Indian and Pacific Oceans. Countries with the lowest CVIT scores are found in western and northern Europe, central Asia, as well as Canada and New Zealand.”<sup>65</sup>

According to the UN Development Programme, climate change poses a heightened risk to small island developing states (SIDS) socially, economically, and environmentally. Overall, SIDS have “26.2% land area less than 5 meters above sea level,” and “29.3% population living at less than 5 meters above sea level.”<sup>66</sup> In terms of what that means for travel, Impact Travel Alliance shares, “In the Caribbean, a high percentage of tourism infrastructure is just above sea level. If sea levels rise by 1 meter, approximately 49–60% of the region’s resorts and 21 airports would be damaged or destroyed. According to a recent IPCC report, this amount of sea level rise could be a reality by the end of this century in a worst case scenario.”<sup>67</sup>





Photo by UN Women/Ryan Brown via Flickr. (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The 2011 IPPT Lusaka Declaration on Sustainable Tourism Development, Climate Change, and Peace, acknowledges that “African and other developing countries are least responsible for climate change, yet are particularly vulnerable to the effects.” They called on all sectors of the travel and tourism industry, governments and international development agencies, and travelers to “implement socially and environmentally responsible tourism practices... incorporate quadruple bottom line reporting with climate change... actively engage local communities in planning and decision-making... develop Disaster Management Plans... and to be selective in modes of travel,” among seventeen other actions.<sup>69</sup>

The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) has worked with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association, and the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology to prepare a guide for “tourism sector mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery to various types of hazards.”<sup>70</sup>

According to Jesse Marcus, Strategic Communications Specialist with the World Wildlife Fund, mangroves are “one of Earth’s most critical ecosystems, buffering coasts from storm surges, serving as vital habitat for untold marine species, and providing food and livelihoods for local communities. And while mangroves cover only 0.1% of Earth’s land surface, they are one of our most powerful tools in the fight against climate change, storing more carbon per hectare than any other type of forest.” However, in the past 50 years, 50% of the world’s mangroves have disappeared due to “rising sea levels; oil spills and other pollution; demand for timber; and clearing to make way for shrimp and crab fishing, coastal infrastructure, and urban expansion.”<sup>71</sup>

In a report from Coast Adapt Australia, Susanne Becken states “a study from 2014 assessed the impacts of projected climate change on Australia’s tourism industry by examining changes in ‘preferred’ conditions, including air temperature (Amelung and Nicholls 2014). The study projects a southward shift in the most desirable conditions and a decline in the climatic attractiveness of northern locations. The authors concluded that the adoption of a pro-active rather than reactive stance to climate change will maximize the ability of tourism stakeholders to successfully adapt.”<sup>72</sup>

Sarah Perkins-Kirkpatrick at the University of New South Wales says there is no doubt that climate change is a driving factor [behind 2019-20 Australian wildfires]. “We can certainly say it has contributed to the length and severity of this fire season,” she says. In 2008, a report commissioned by the Australian government predicted that from about 2020, global warming would cause Australia’s fire seasons to start earlier, end later, and be more intense. “We knew this was going to happen,” says Perkins-Kirkpatrick.<sup>73</sup>

A study in North Carolina found: “The coastal tourism sector of this industry is large and faces a triple threat of climate change, over development, and in many cases, low sustainability standards. Therefore, it is crucial to provide reliable, accurate and relevant resources for the climate and weather-sensitive portions of these stakeholders in order to guide them in capitalizing on current climate and weather conditions and to prepare them for their potential changes.”<sup>74</sup>

A report from the Indiana Climate Change Impacts Assessment (IN CCIA) “uses climate projections for the state to explore likely impacts for Indiana’s tourism and recreation activities.” Key findings include: 1) Shifts in rainfall patterns can affect recreation and have long-term effects on visitor perceptions. 2) The tourism sector will have to adapt planning and operations to respond to climate change, as well as monitor changing conditions. 3) Planning and building resilience is essential to respond to increasing extreme weather conditions. 4) Businesses should consider the increasing demand for shoulder-season recreation when planning and budgeting for the year. 5) There are increased health risks due to the projected increase in the number of hot weather days in Indiana. 6) Winter recreation will be affected by shorter, warmer cold-weather seasons. 7) Managing natural areas such as parks and trails will become more difficult with these weather changes. There will be more pressure to adapt to shifts in habitat and increased threats of invasive species.<sup>75</sup>

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, a popular travel and outdoor recreation destination, is “improving its public transportation system so that visitors will rely less on private vehicles.” Tourists make up 40% of the riders of cleaner-burning buses implemented by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.<sup>76</sup>

*“[The Slovenian Tourist Board] has made a commitment to encourage sustainable tourism because it helps preserve the environment and our magnificent nature, it drives the success of many companies, and it improves tourists' experience of Slovenia and the quality of life of the country's inhabitants. We are aware of the power of tourism, which can, among many other positive effects, also take the role of promoter of sustainable development and has an impact on the economic and social stability of the country. Climate change is a fact, and the influence of tourism on climate change is also a fact. That is why we should take a responsible approach to tourism, and at the same time develop products that can prove competitive in these new circumstances.”*

**—Maja Pak, Director of the Slovenian Tourist Board.<sup>77</sup>**



Photo by Jill Heyer



In an Outside article, Cassidy Randal advocates that visiting places affected by climate change is educational to the traveler but is also beneficial to destinations. “Mounting studies show that tourism plays a big role in preservation of the natural world... The research on how travel has a positive effect on conservation is still relatively new, and one of the most compelling ways to measure it quantitatively is through people’s willingness to pay to see and conserve our environment.” The article goes on to question: “Could seeing a place actually be worth the 8 percent of global emissions? Especially when that number, while not insignificant, seems diminutive next to the 25 percent of global emissions from electricity and heat production for our buildings and homes or the 24 percent from agriculture and deforestation.”

“The immense opportunity to re-define post COVID-19 travel and tourism to be based more on regenerative principles is starting to be realized. This re-birthing of tourism will require new sets of values, new paradigms, and a dramatic shift from the over-tourism, over-consumption and excessive greed that defined much pre-COVID-19 tourism.”<sup>78</sup>

The European Tourism Futures Institute Report reports the following key trends in tourism management & marketing: 1) the increasing relevance of strategic planning and destination development; 2) the progressing importance of coalition building; and 3) the massive shift to the online marketplace and online marketing.<sup>79</sup>

Ethical Traveler’s “The World’s Ten Best Ethical Destinations for 2020” is a well-researched list of developing nations whose policies and practices have improved to promote “human rights, preserving the environment, and supporting social welfare—all while creating a lively, community-based tourism industry.” Winners include Armenia, Cabo Verde, Costa Rica, Dominica, Jamaica, Mongolia, Palau, The Gambia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.<sup>80</sup>

*Gothenburg (Göteborg), Sweden, dubbed the World’s Most Sustainable City by the Global Destination Sustainability Index, works to communicate sustainability in the atmosphere, rather than taking a more critical approach. “To us, sustainability is very much about making a livable and lovable city. If the people of Gothenburg like living here, then other people will probably like to come here, too.”*

*—Katarina Thorstensson, Head of Sustainability at tourism board Göteborg & Co.<sup>81</sup>*



Maria Eklind, “Streets of Gothenburg” via Flickr. (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).





**Green Destinations' "Sustainable Destination Awards"** recognizes the efforts by countries, local governments, and protected areas to implement sustainable schemes in their destinations. These destinations were recognized for best practices to involve their local communities and reducing and controlling impacts of overtourism in their territories. 2020 winners were:

- 1 Quality Coast Delta (Netherlands) - ITB Earth Award
- 2 Douglas Shire (Australia) - Best Destination of Communities and Culture
- 3 Azore (Portugal) - Best destination of Nature
- 4 Regional Winners: Hoas Conservancy (Namibia) - Best Destination of Africa; North-East Yilan Coast (Taiwan) - Best Destination of Asia-Pacific; Vail (USA) - Best Destination of the Americas; and Slovenia—Best Destination of Europe



Planet Happiness is a non-profit organization focused on analyzing how tourism influences the well-being of the host communities in World Heritage Sites. In this sense, Planet Happiness puts the local's well-being at the center of the debate on tourism development. Some of the current Planet Happiness Pilot Sites are in Vietnam, Turkey, Thailand, Indonesia, Senegal, China, Canada, Malaysia, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Laos, and Mozambique.

Visit Flanders (Belgium) not only defines growth and success in terms of visitor numbers, but also “the primary indicator being the extent to which local destinations and their residents flourish,” and increasing the value of each visitation. The way they reach these goals is by working with partners to “monitor whether, why and how locations flourish, so [they] can continually adjust the implementation of the policy in order to meet the aim of flourishing communities,” and physically mapping where tourism is most successful in the region. Visit Flanders uses stories to market the region, engaging in Flemish people’s passions with international conversations so that the group can, “encourage travel to Flanders without promoting mass tourism,” by creating a perception of a customizable experience to international visitors.<sup>82</sup>

Euromonitor International acknowledges the spike in immersive technology in digital storytelling, such as VR and augmented reality. For example, during the crisis, the Faroe Islands—which typically welcomes 60,000 visitors a year—equipped locals with Go-Pro cameras that would film experiences that potential future visitors could engage with. Additionally, during the pandemic, there has been a spike in people seeking interactions online, and a newfound comfort in video conferencing.<sup>83</sup>

## Tourism in a COVID-19 World

Shifting to the other crisis our world is grappling with, in the following sections we provide an overview of what consumers, businesses, and destinations are experiencing during COVID-19. As the pandemic continues to ravage tourism-based economies, circumstances, figures, and what we know about the virus change daily. Resources such as the UNWTO, WTTC, Phocuswire, Tourism Economics, Tourism Research Information Network (TRINET), the US Travel Association, and Dr. Anna Spenceley provide up to date information.



*"The COVID-19 pandemic is so fluid that it's hard to say concretely what the travel industry will look like once the world emerges from this crisis. A healthy and safe return for any type of tourism will be the collective result of individual actions taken by travelers, governments and industry players alike, including agents, airlines, hotel chains, cruise lines and tour operators. As always, ITA will be an advocate for sustainable travel innovations in the industry and a resource for consumers who recognize the importance of making sustainable travel choices to the benefit of local economies, environments and communities. What's become even clearer through this pandemic is the link between climate change and the spread of viruses like COVID-19, as well as the impact that pollution has on our bodies to fight these respiratory illnesses. Now more than ever, the effects of climate change are being felt urgently, and every industry, not just tourism, must do their part in becoming more sustainable."*<sup>84</sup>

*—Kelley Louise, Impact Travel Alliance Founder and Executive Director*

San Francisco, CA. Photos by Anas Hinde

Jonathan Tourtellot of the Destination Stewardship Center recommends that researchers can use this lull in tourism to establish baseline data on tourism's environmental impacts. Additionally, some businesses may realize how much of their clientele relies on tourism, allowing us to further map the value of tourism.<sup>85</sup> "Rather than returning to the currently interrupted Age of Wretched Excess, characterized at its worst by floods of cruise ship passengers and squads of day trippers armed with selfie sticks, collaborative destination stewardship councils can work with their citizens to take a new tack. With thoughtful plans at the ready, our recovery could grow instead into a new Golden Age of Tourism, a time of well-managed places and beneficial travel for tourists, for residents, and for natural and cultural preservation."

## COVID-19 and Consumers

Coming out of COVID-19, CREST predicts there will be a drastic shift in consumer travel patterns. Gone are the days of jetting off for multiple short-weekend getaways a year. While a portion of travelers certainly yearn to return to that norm, another portion has experienced an awakening due to the merger of multiple crises in recent years—that perhaps the breakneck speed at which we were consuming life was not sustainable for ourselves or for our planet. Consumers may favor longer and fewer vacations, with long weekends by train or car sprinkled in.

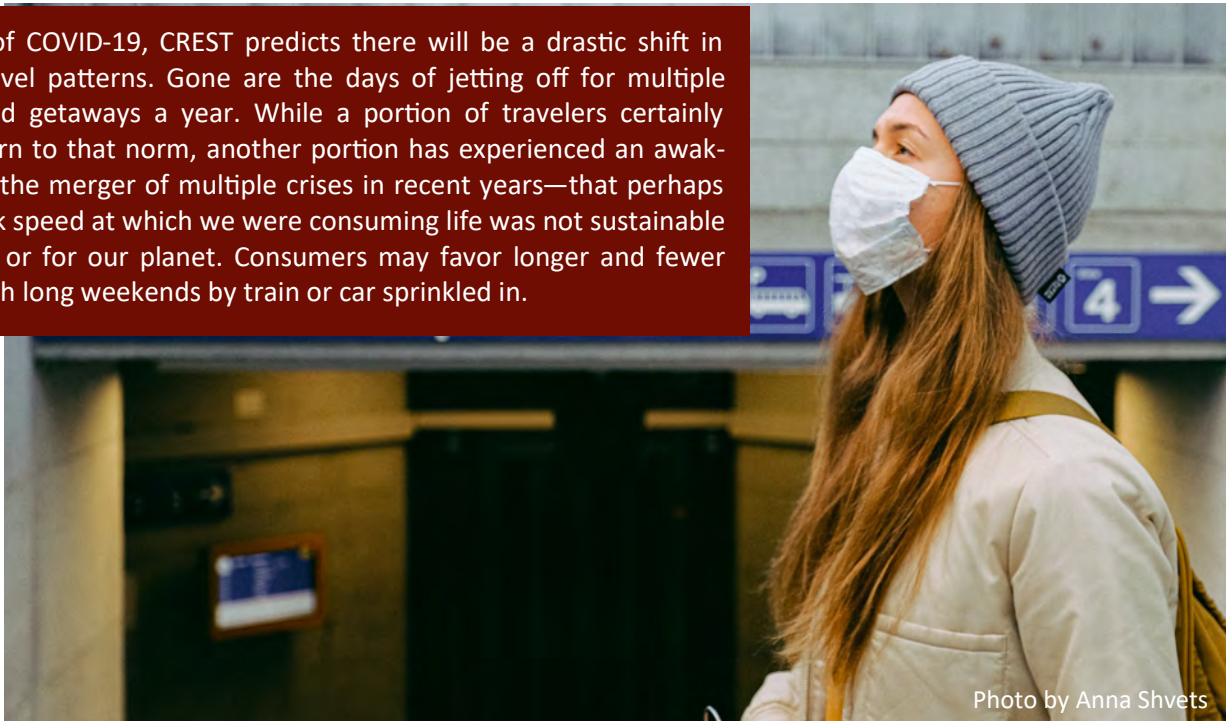


Photo by Anna Shvets

Resonance Consultancy predicts that in the near-term there will be a rise in regionalism and road-tripping in which visitors are more likely to visit drive-to destinations such as national parks. Additionally, there will be a higher willingness to stay in short-term rentals rather than hotels in rural destinations. However, experts predict that due to stricter sanitation procedures, hotels will be more favorable than short-term rentals in urban areas.<sup>86</sup>

A Destination Analysts survey on American traveler sentiment from August finds that 64.1% of travelers responded, “no way—I won’t be flying,” when asked about their feelings around taking a commercial airline flight in the next month. When asked about travel plans next year, “three-quarters of Americans have at least tentative trip plans right now. Just 25% say they have no plans to travel through 2021.” Additionally, travelers are prioritizing trip experiences that involve “spending time with loved ones (68.1%), getting away from crowds (57.6%), and enjoying nature (53.1%).”<sup>87</sup>

“Sojern released data on the impact of the Coronavirus on the attractions industry that shows that many European attractions have turned their attention to their domestic markets, including sharing virtual tours and experiences to stay top of mind. As restrictions are lifted, local attractions – from hiking trails to theme parks – may see a huge jump in interest from their local communities, resulting in more last-minute bookings with shorter lead times – 3/4 travelers are likely to book same-day or the day before.”<sup>88</sup>

In anticipation of increased domestic travel and road trips, Visit California is planning an in-state campaign. Carolina Beteta, President and Chief Executive of Visit California, told The New York Times that, “Road trips are a huge opportunity for California to help jump start the economy... That sense of freedom with personal controls will be ideal for people who want security.”<sup>89</sup>

Will Shafroth, President and Chief Executive of the National Park Foundation, told the New York Times that adjustments when the parks reopen, like a one-way-only boardwalk at Old Faithful geyser, will become the new normal. “The expected surge is an opportunity for lesser-known parks, he suggested. Half of all visits to the 419 units in the system in 2019 were at just 27 parks.”<sup>90</sup>

“With roughly one in five American workers out of a job and perhaps some belt-tightening among those who are still employed, affordability will become even more important for family travel.”<sup>91</sup>



## COVID-19 and Business

*“The industry, too, is in need of renewal, rebalancing, readjustment and redefinition. To emerge from our cocoon as something more beautiful than what went in will require that concepts we have always promoted—authenticity, sustainability, community support—transform from marketing buzzwords into operating philosophies. That’s my hoped-for butterfly effect.”*

*—Arnie Weissmann, Editor-in-Chief at Travel Weekly<sup>92</sup>*



According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) data, “The revised baseline forecast is that international passenger traffic will drop 55% in 2020, compared to 2019. Back in April, the IATA had predicted the drop to be just 46%. Passenger numbers are expected to rise 62% next year, but will still be down almost 30% compared to pre-Covid times, with a full recovery to pre-pandemic levels not on the cards until four years from now.”<sup>93</sup>

STR found that globally, hotel occupancy bottomed out at 18% during the week of March 28, down 77% from the prior year, but it has since increased 124% from this low as of August.<sup>94</sup> Comparing 2019 figures to May 2020 data, “STR found that hotel occupancy [was] down as much as 96% in Italy, 68% down in China, 67% down in the United Kingdom, 59% in the United States and 48% in Singapore.”<sup>95</sup>

Airlines for America data shows that “passenger traffic on U.S. airlines is down 95 percent compared to last year, while international passenger revenues are expected to decrease by more than \$300 billion.”<sup>96</sup>



Photo by Tranmautritam

The impacts on travel businesses have been devastating, and countless anecdotes could be shared about economic downturn, employment loss, and strict new cleaning and public health protocols offered by tourism businesses as they scramble to offer a compelling and safe holiday. Anna Pollock’s essay on regenerative recovery aptly states, “Over the past two months, business survival remained the preoccupation of most tourism-related businesses as entrepreneurs up and down the country adapted to an immediate 40% loss in international traffic that had accounted for 20% of the nation’s exports. As one entrepreneur recently and understandably stated: Thinking about re-imagining a better tourism at this time is like calling in an architect instead of the fire service while it’s burning down.”<sup>97</sup>



It is clear that a sustainable approach is necessary for the long-term. A recent BlackRock research analysis on how environmental, social, and governance (ESG)-committed corporations have “fared far better than others so far during the Covid-19 crisis” found that, “Companies with strong profiles on material sustainability issues have potential to outperform those with poor profiles...in particular, we believe companies managed with a focus on sustainability should be better positioned versus their less sustainable peers to weather adverse conditions while still benefitting from positive market environments.”<sup>98</sup>

“As we recover from the pandemic, businesses around the world will be looking to rebuild in a way that puts their people first and protects the communities and the environment on which they rely,” says Chris Turner, Managing Director of B Lab in the UK. “B Corps have already inspired thousands of businesses to be a force for good, and the example they set is now more important than ever.... B Corps provide a model for a regenerative economy that works for all.”<sup>99</sup>

Playa Viva in Mexico responded to the pandemic by updating guests on life in the town of Juluchuca. The community-minded resort has organized a fund in which people can donate \$40 to “sponsor a dispensa (food basket) for a family in need.”<sup>100</sup>



Bucuti & Tara, COVID-19 Training



Permaculture at Playa Viva, Mexico

In a personal article, “Travel Like a Peacemaker,” author and co-founder of MEDJI Tours, Aziz Abu Sarah, reflects on how travel experiences impact how people interact with each other and can be “an essential peacemaking strategy.” In this time, Abu Sarah says that we can practice travel at home through attending online seminars and listening to stories on podcasts and livestreams. “The first decision we made at MEJDI Tours upon the shutdown was starting a livestream to connect our travelers with storytellers from all over the world.” Abu Sarah says that, “if we get into these habits at home, and learn to listen to other people’s voice, especially those we that aren’t usually on our radar, we will be more likely to travel differently when physical travel is possible again.”<sup>101</sup>



Photo by Erik McLean



The City of Chicago has worked with five hotels to open up 2,000 beds to “isolate people who are mildly ill with Covid-19, fear they’ve been exposed or are awaiting test results.” The hotels will be staffed with both hospitality and healthcare workers.<sup>102</sup>

The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) has launched Hotels for Hope, “a national database to connect hotel properties with the health community to help them meet their growing demands.”<sup>103</sup>

Airbnb has expanded its Open Homes program, which was started in 2012 to offer free emergency housing, by 100,000 hosts to offer free rentals to first responders. The company has invested \$20 million in the program and has opened donations to the Open Homes fund. Partnership organizations will help disburse funds to benefit relief workers.<sup>104</sup>

## COVID-19 and Destinations

*“The Travel Foundation has been collaborating with partners to advocate for recovery support packages that incentivize green and social (as well as economic) outcomes. There is an opportunity to use recovery packages to invest in destination infrastructure and tourism product development that focused on strengthening the local supply chain, to stimulate the economy while protecting valuable resources. For instance, Europe is building a recovery fund (dubbed the new ‘Marshall Plan’) which may pay out as much as €375 billion to the tourism sector. This huge investment can be used to target green infrastructure and ‘smart’ technology upgrades and place social and environmental conditions on business loans, and there is already some discussion about how this might be realised. ‘The idea of a Marshall Plan is excellent and could be extended outward to the need for a global focus on financing the recovery,’ says Megan Epler Wood, principle author of the Invisible Burden report. ‘But to do this successfully will require the correct governance and understanding of the real costs of managing tourism. At present, governance and measures of success that go beyond branding, demand, and gross economic impact are lacking. The decisions to be made require an accounting of the holistic costs of managing tourism at the destination level.’ Information that will be useful includes the cost of visitor demand on natural resources, municipal services and infrastructure, and a better understanding of risks to cultural, environmental, and social assets that come along with growth. At the Travel Foundation, we developed a ‘sustainability risk profiling’ methodology, which companies like TUI have used to help identify and mitigate current and future risks when investing in destinations.”*

**—Jeremy Sampson, Chief Executive Officer for The Travel Foundation<sup>105</sup>**



Experts from Resonance Consultancy predict three “roads to recovery:” quicker, staged, and delayed recovery. In each scenario, some destinations and businesses will be able to recover quicker than others, as recovery rates and patterns are reliant on many variables.<sup>106</sup>

#### Quicker Recovery:



A steady, upward recovery slope starting with the opening of essential travel, with a take-off at regional travel, with smooth upward slope toward national and international travel. Experts predict that regional and resort destinations with a high healthcare capacity and recover and a strong historical drive to market will likely have quicker recovery. Experts suggest that destinations like the Finger Lakes, Texas Hill Country, and Cape Cod are among these destinations.<sup>107</sup>

#### Staged Recovery:



Experts predict this to be the most likely scenario for most destinations, hotels, and resorts that have a mixed composition of visitors. Recovery may come in waves and stages, and experts suggest that managing and marketing strategies must align with each stage and the start and stops of those stages (for example, when regional travel begins before a stage when regional travel slows and national travel begins). Experts predict that non-hotspot cities that have a strong regional market—such as Portland, Oregon, Asheville, NC, or Richmond, Virginia—states and provinces with strong regional drive-to markets—such as the Carolinas, Washington, Oregon, Maine, Colorado, British Columbia, and Ontario—and finally resort destinations with strong regional fly-to markets, such as Hawaii and Los Cabos (with regular visitors from California), or Puerto Rico (with regular visitors from the East Coast), will recover first.<sup>108</sup>

#### Delayed Recovery:



The worst-case scenario, delayed recovery, would be restrained by policies that do not allow for travel. This would most likely be in places where 80% of the typical market is international, making recovery difficult until international travel is allowed. The most likely destinations are places like the Caribbean and Pacific Island Destinations, which are international-intensive, and cities like New York City, New Orleans, Madrid, and Milan, which are hot-spot destinations.<sup>109</sup>

Resonance Consultancy suggests that priorities for destination management in early recovery stages include creating policies around delivering a healthy stay, adapting to a shift in funding, adjusting the roles and responsibility of DMO/DMMOs, and rebuilding destination experiences.<sup>110</sup> To rebuild the destination experience, efforts should focus heavily on rebuilding and salvaging lost and suffering businesses in the restaurant and retail sectors, as well as in culture, arts, entertainment, and sports. A focus on small tourism, such as nature, parks, and outdoor activity, is important as these activities may be viewed as ideal experiences for health and safety during reopening.<sup>111</sup> Resonance Consultancy discusses the changes in DMO/DMMO mission and funding that organizations will begin to experience in early recovery stages. Before the pandemic, overtourism created a condition which leaves many destinations with massive supply with no business. The traditional funding model for DMOs relied too heavily on recent business to fund future business. Experts emphasize the importance that, during this new recession, funding models must change to ensure diversification and continuity.<sup>112</sup>



“Park Ranger stands ready to greet visitors at Isle Royale National Park.”  
National Park Service/Valerie Martin

Experts emphasize the importance of revisiting funding formulas and sources for DMOs, especially with the complete loss of lodging taxes during pandemic restrictions. Resonance Consultancy suggests that government agencies and economic development agencies could be included in this funding, and DMOs should diversify reliance on hotel tax models, which have historically been an issue during recessions.<sup>113</sup>

“In the United States and Canada, 95 percent of Destination International’s members get funding from [lodging and tourism-related] taxes.” A Destinations International survey found that, during the early months of pandemic lockdowns, some organizations experienced a decrease in revenues of 90–98% by early April, and that more than 50 percent of DMOs surveys said they “could not go beyond six months without additional funding.”<sup>114</sup>

Glenn McCartney, Professor of Tourism Management at the University of Macau, says that “now is the time for DMOs to make the case for themselves more than ever, particularly the policy-shaping role they play in many destinations.” However, “in proving their value, DMOs must also move sharply away from the mindset that ever-increasing arrivals — and thus ever-increasing hotel taxes — is a valid *raison d’être*. That unsustainable mindset, which led to overtourism in some places, has now also revealed itself to be extremely risky in the context of coronavirus.”<sup>115</sup>

Tim Fairhurst, Secretary General of the European Tourism Association, told Skift, “I think one of the interesting feelings about the current time is that competition has become a bit more subordinate to a much more creative, collaborative approach... So I think there’s a very good chance that we’ll see much more innovative good practice sharing initiatives... DMOs are absolutely instrumental in helping support recovery and some of that is going to be around preparing the ground ahead of time.”<sup>116</sup>



MMGY Global advises that, as industry marketing begins to show signs of returning, it is important for marketers to maintain close, empathetic relationships with local communities in crafting reopening strategies.<sup>117</sup> MMGY recommends that destination marketing organizations begin or continue to measure community and resident sentiment.<sup>118</sup>



Anna Pollock, Founder of Conscious Travel, states that regenerative New Zealand recovery includes: “demonstrable leadership; a closeness to and love of nature; [and] a diverse culture influenced by indigenous values.”<sup>119</sup>

In late May, the Interior Department faced criticism for announcing reopening plans without releasing data on employee COVID-19 cases—information that other agencies have disclosed. Additionally, concerns arose around encouraging visitors to visit indigenous communities, such as in areas surrounding Grand Canyon National Park. Indigenous communities have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, and an influx in visitors could further the community’s vulnerability.<sup>120</sup>

However, the need for indigenous tourism recovery is critical. Early in the crisis, Keith Henry, CEO for Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) says, “As of December 2019, Indigenous Tourism was a 1.9 billion dollar a year industry, recently outpacing even mainstream tourism with a growth of roughly 20% per year. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, in a matter of weeks we’re forecasting losses – at minimum – of \$900 million in direct revenue, 500 businesses closing and 12,000 jobs being cut.”<sup>121</sup> The Indigenous Tourism Forum of the Americas, organized by the Organization of American States (OAS) and the George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies (IITS), is planned for October 2020 and seeks to “bring together community, tourism and government leaders to discuss development needs and priorities, to generate dialog around tourism, and to empower Indigenous people so that collectively, they can amplify their voices in the cultural conversation and better determine their own fates and futures.”<sup>122</sup>

Social distancing may ease the threat of overtourism degrading the environment in some destinations, but others rely on this traffic to fund their environmental efforts. “In parts of Africa, for example, safaris and park admission fees fund conservation. Without those sources of revenue, poaching has been up in South Africa and Botswana.”<sup>123</sup>

Stories of wildlife emerging into once-populated places and photos of quiet sites that are typically bustling with tourists have spread online as peaceful and hopeful outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, researchers warn that the long-term economic and environmental effects of the sudden halt on travel are not as positive as they may seem. Wildlife wandering out of their habitats could be a sign that their own ranges are too small due to habitat fragmentation.<sup>128</sup>

There are some lessons that can be learned from the observed effects of the lack of human interaction with nature, such as: closing large stretches of beach during sea turtle nesting season, subsidizing replenishing fish stocks by paying fishermen with government aid, growing hedgerows on farms or leaving yards unraked to replenish native bee populations, and implementing visitor-free times in national parks to “keep the environment from being loved to death.”<sup>129</sup>



Serengeti National Park, Kenya. Photo by Oleg Mani

The Aldabra Atoll is a raised coral atoll in the Seychelles that became a World Heritage Site in 1982. It is known for its giant tortoises, its rich marine biodiversity, its huge seabird colonies and its lack of human disturbance. “Aldabra is part-financed by entrance fees for the SIF-managed UNESCO World Heritage site Vallée de Mai on Praslin and by external project funding.”<sup>130</sup> However, due to the current COVID-19 situation, Dr. Fanny Douvère (UNESCO’s Marine Programme Coordinator) states that: “We need to be particularly worried about those sites that are heavily dependent on tourism revenues to finance some of their operations. In the Seychelles, for example, Aldabra atoll is not sure how it’s going to continue with its monitoring because it’s entirely financed by revenues from tourism. As soon as tourism revenues fall apart, a lot of sites cannot continue their conservation, or at least part of it.”<sup>131</sup>



In early recovery plans, destinations and travel companies have created virtual tours, such as the Faroe Islands remote-controlled virtual tours, Japanese Onsen Bath experiences available on YouTube, and Child Studio's Casa Plenaire—which is a virtual vacation home available to view on Instagram.<sup>132</sup>

Potentially, cruise ships could dock on one Caribbean destination instead of the usual trips to multiple islands. “Ships, too, may be deployed differently,” said Ross Klein, a sociologist at Memorial University in Newfoundland and a cruise-industry expert who, since 2002, has run CruiseJunkie.com. He foresees ships being stationed at islands in the Caribbean, rather than traveling port to port. “If there’s illness on board, you can walk off and fly home,” he said of this hotel-like model. “While at sea, you’re captive.”<sup>133</sup>

Cape Town, South Africa’s new campaign delivers a long-distance relationship theme: “We Are Worth Waiting For!” The campaign video shows love letters and postcards from the city to maintain the attention from international travelers.<sup>134</sup>

As many communities are severely impacted because of COVID-19, future travel that supports local communities and destination recovery will be more important than ever. Supporting charities and nonprofits in communities that help heal destinations will be fundamental. For example, through Kind Traveler’s Give + Get hotel booking model, travelers have the opportunity to support destination-specific charities that address food poverty, homelessness, public health, education, and disaster relief, as well as environmental and wildlife sanctuaries that depend on tourism foot traffic.<sup>135</sup> Funding for such organizations is essential, as many charities that depend on foot traffic, events, and other fundraisers have lost critical funding due to COVID-19. To encourage domestic tourism, Kind Traveler is partnered with 30 “Kind Hotels” and 19 charities based in California alone, has joined Visit California’s call for responsible tourism, and is actively promoting the tourism board’s new messaging advancing its Responsible Travel Code, RESPECT.

## COVID & Climate Change



*“Whilst COVID-19 impacts will eventually lessen, climate change places an increasing pressure on socio-ecological systems, and will continue to do so even more in the years to come. We should not lose sight of other challenges that lie ahead and acknowledge that, given the current situation, the transition curve to a low carbon economy may become steeper, exposing our communities to greater transition and physical climate risks. Actors engaged on climate action should regard the current experience with COVID-19 as a warning for our climate reality: we know that failure to invest in the infrastructure and systems needed to respond to change costs lives.”<sup>136</sup>*

—Acclimatize

CarbonBrief seeks to find the emissions consequences as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. However, researchers find that currently, forecasting the impact of the pandemic on global carbon emissions is nearly impossible, namely due to infrequent reporting by different bodies and the uncertainty of how long lockdowns will last. It is also difficult to attribute changes to the pandemic because of other potential reasons why fossil-fuel demand has fallen, and the recent plummet of oil prices. Many forecasts seek to compare the fall in emissions to other events like the 2008-2009 global financial crisis or the SARs epidemic. However, there is “plenty of data to draw on that points to significant, though uncertain, changes in CO2 emissions, as a result of the coronavirus crisis.”<sup>137</sup>

Despite a slight reduction in CO2 emissions, the atmospheric CO2 concentration will still rise and have little impact on long-term changes.<sup>138</sup>

In an op-ed published in Foreign Policy, former US National Security Council Senior Director, Jason Bordoff, stated that “COVID-19 may deliver some short-term climate benefits by curbing energy use, or even longer-term benefits if

economic stimulus is linked to climate goals — or if people get used to telecommuting and thus use less oil in the future... Yet any climate benefits from the COVID-19 crisis are likely to be fleeting and negligible.”<sup>139</sup>

“In the initial aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008, global CO2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion and cement production decreased by 1.4 percent, only to rise by 5.9 percent in 2010. And the crisis this time could have a longer-term impact on the environment — at far greater cost to human health, security, and life — if it derails global efforts to address climate change.”<sup>140</sup>

Economic stimulus packages for pandemic recovery can include investments and prioritizing in low-carbon energy or energy-efficient technology, especially for assistance in carbon-intensive sectors.<sup>141</sup>

Experts find that the COVID-19 pandemic is an opportunity to question the volume-growth model that is often used by international tourism organizations and recognize the industry’s vulnerability to climate change.<sup>142</sup>

HyperGiant climate advisor Noam Bar-Zemer warns against finding hope in the fact that CO2 emissions will drop billions of tons due to global lockdowns. The greenhouse gas crisis is a massive, complex problem that requires long-term solutions.<sup>143</sup>

Human Rights Watch reports that, in the US, the EPA has decided to “not penalize companies that fail to comply with federal monitoring or reporting requirements if they could attribute their non-compliance to the pandemic. And in recent days it announced a rollback on car emissions rules that were a central piece of US efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”<sup>144</sup>

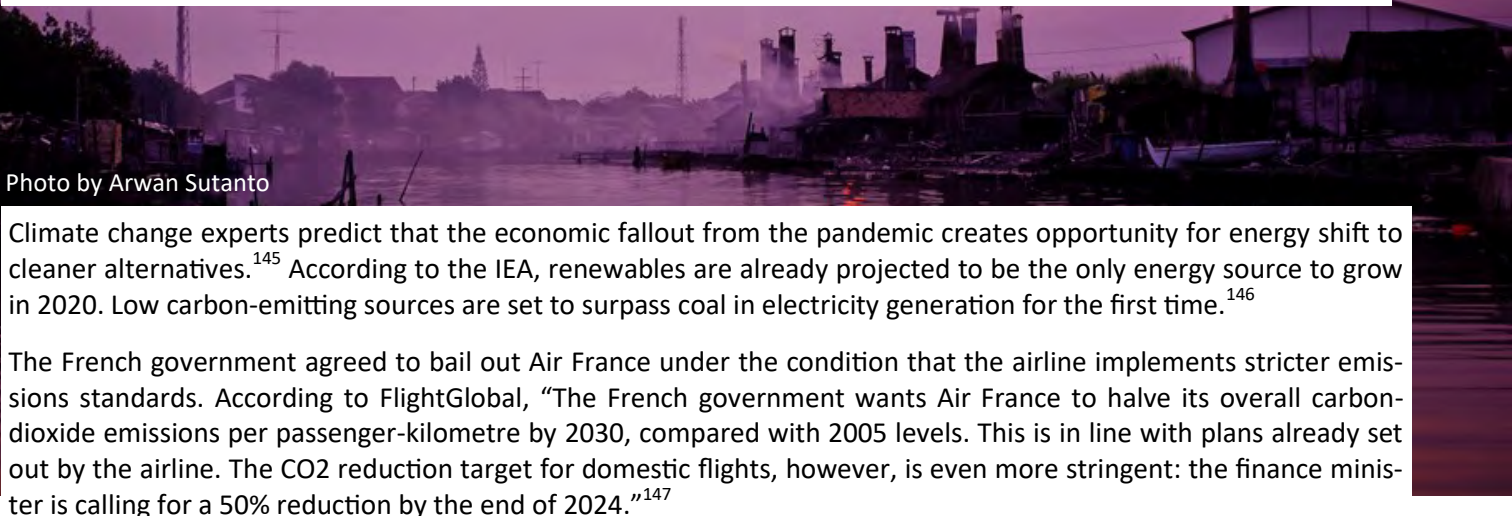


Photo by Arwan Sutanto

Climate change experts predict that the economic fallout from the pandemic creates opportunity for energy shift to cleaner alternatives.<sup>145</sup> According to the IEA, renewables are already projected to be the only energy source to grow in 2020. Low carbon-emitting sources are set to surpass coal in electricity generation for the first time.<sup>146</sup>

The French government agreed to bail out Air France under the condition that the airline implements stricter emissions standards. According to FlightGlobal, “The French government wants Air France to halve its overall carbon-dioxide emissions per passenger-kilometre by 2030, compared with 2005 levels. This is in line with plans already set out by the airline. The CO2 reduction target for domestic flights, however, is even more stringent: the finance minister is calling for a 50% reduction by the end of 2024.”<sup>147</sup>

Climate change may lead to increased spread of infectious disease. “Climate change has already made conditions more favorable to the spread of some infectious diseases, including Lyme disease, waterborne diseases such as *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* which causes vomiting and diarrhea, and mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever. Future risks are not easy to foretell, but climate change hits hard on several fronts that matter to when and where pathogens appear, including temperature and rainfall patterns. To help limit the risk of infectious diseases, we should do all we can to vastly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit global warming to 1.5 degrees.”<sup>148</sup>

Forced environmental behavior as a result of COVID may lead to “spillover effect.” “Many of these temporary sustainable shifts have been incidental side effects of our response to the danger of the virus, rather than being motivated by our concern for the planet. However, if we continue to walk and cycle more it may mean we will take up other pro-planet behaviours, which environmental psychologists term the ‘spillover effect.’ For example, recycling plastics may foster our identity as someone who cares about protecting our planet, which in turn could make us want to eat less meat.”<sup>149</sup>

Euromonitor International believes that the “healthy living” trend has accelerated during the pandemic. Consumers prioritize physical and mental wellbeing, are more aware of eating plant-based diets (with the knowledge that the virus originated with animal products) and use preventative health apps more frequently.<sup>150</sup>

With the expected uptick of nature-based tourism due to COVID, greater exposure to nature may lead to pro-environmental behaviors. “Research indicates that this greater immersion in nature may also change our attitudes toward the environment. Matthew White, an environmental psychologist at the University of Exeter, conducted a large-scale study prior to Covid 19 which found a positive correlation between **our exposure to the natural world and pro-environmental behaviours like planting trees** or managing hedgerows for birds. There is also evidence suggesting a **causal link between time spent in nature and more sustainable behaviour**, though this is less well documented.”<sup>151</sup>

*A study by Stefan Gössling, Daniel Scott, & C. Michael Hall in The Journal of Sustainable Tourism puts it best: “This rapid assessment has provided an overview of the ongoing crises up to the end of March 2020, and discussed how it compares to earlier crises. With the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgent need not to return to business-as-usual when the crisis is over, rather than an opportunity to reconsider a transformation of the global tourism system more aligned to the SDGs. This raises a considerable number of related questions and research needs, i.e. whether the pandemic will support nationalism and tighter borders even in the longer-term; the role of domestic tourism in the recovery and the longer-term transformation to more resilient destinations; the behavioral demand responses of tourists in the short- and longer-term, including business travel and widespread adoption of videoconferencing; the financial stimulus and its consequences for austerity and climate change mitigation; as well as the world’s perspectives on the SDGs. Specifically, with regard to the latter, the pandemic raises questions of vulnerability, as low-paid jobs in tourism have been disproportionately affected by the crisis and early indications are the tourism impacts in lower income countries will be disproportionately considerably greater. COVID-19 provides striking lessons to the tourism industry, policy makers and tourism researchers about the effects of global change. The challenge is now to collectively learn from this global tragedy to accelerate the transformation of sustainable tourism.”<sup>152</sup>*

## Lessons from COVID-19 for Curbing Climate Change

As we look towards shaping a new future, we must reflect on the lessons learned. As António Guterres, UN Secretary-General states, “COVID-19 has put the lives of billions of people around the globe in turmoil, inflicting grave suffering and destabilizing the global economy. It has exposed the fragility of our societies and economies to shocks, and it has laid bare deep inequalities that threaten the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The only answer is brave, visionary and collaborative leadership. The same leadership is needed to address the looming existential threat of climate disruption.”<sup>153</sup>

Acclimatize outlines 5 honest truths about climate change and COVID-19:

1	2	3	4	5
COVID-19 demonstrates the challenges and implications of failing to address systemic risks.	Science does not give a one-word or one-number solution.	Uncertainty about the future does not mean we do not know what to do.	Building flexibility and adaptiveness is needed in all aspects of our society.	Climate change is still the greatest threat to our planet, and any recovery plan to COVID-19 must include a response to climate change. <sup>154</sup>



Despite the heartbreak and suffering our industry has faced, we must remain hopeful and emphasize the importance of capitalizing on this moment. Guy Bigwood, Managing Director of the Global Destination Sustainability Index says, "At the GDS-Index, we strongly believe that the crisis gives us an enormous opportunity to stop to rethink and redesign the future. To not repair the old, and patch what's already broken, but to reflect and reimagine the new. To rebuild a regenerative and resilient tourism and events economy that works for everyone. An industry that generates jobs and spreads prosperity inclusively and fairly. A resilient, vibrant, and flourishing industry, that grows in harmony with, and not against, nature and its boundaries. An industry that regenerates cities, people, and the nature around us."<sup>155</sup>

The UN Secretary General, António Guterres, offers six climate-related actions for countries to take in shaping pandemic recovery:



- 1** Deliver new jobs and businesses through a green and just transition while accelerating the decarbonization of all aspects of the economy.
- 2** Use taxpayers' money to create green jobs and inclusive growth when rescuing businesses.
- 3** Shift economies from grey to green, with using public financing that makes societies more resilient.
- 4** Invest public funds in the future, to projects that help the environment and climate.
- 5** Consider risks and opportunities for your own economy, as the global financial system works to shape policy and infrastructure.
- 6** Work together as an international community to combat COVID-19 and climate change.



Photo by Erik McClean

In a livestreamed conversation with TED's Chris Anderson, Bill Gates stated, "That idea of innovation and science and the world working together — that is totally common between these two problems, and so I don't think this has to be a huge setback for climate." Gates also expressed hope for future climate strategies because the pandemic response shows global cooperation and data and science sharing.<sup>161</sup>

Researchers believe that the COVID-19 pandemic may allow the industry to reconsider the logic that more travel is better, that is sometimes used by organizations within the industry, and in turn, lower the industry's emissions. For example, airlines may stop using older, inefficient aircraft due to a lack of passengers, businesses may turn to video conferences in place of long-haul travel, and passengers may avoid non-essential flights.



Nassau, The Bahamas Photo by Javon Swab

Artificial Intelligence startup, HyperGiant, created an interactive tool called “ACES: A post Covid Emissions Simulator,” which predicts emissions if various pandemic-induced behaviors become permanent. “For instance, if 30% of the workforce is working from home, air traffic is reduced by 50% and people eat 15% less meat, according to the tool that eliminates 18 billion tons of carbon dioxide, which is 38% of the way towards the changes dictated by the Paris climate accord.”<sup>162</sup>

The future of the COVID-19 and climate crises lie within the hands of humanity. As Daniel Wilkinson and Luciana Téllez Chávez of Human Rights Watch note, “The real impact of the coronavirus crisis on climate could depend ultimately on choices made regarding how governments want their economies to look when they recover—and, in particular, how much they will continue to rely on fossil fuels. Meeting the Paris Agreement’s central goal of limiting global warming will require reducing this reliance.”<sup>163</sup>

## The Role of Responsible Travel in the Future of Tourism

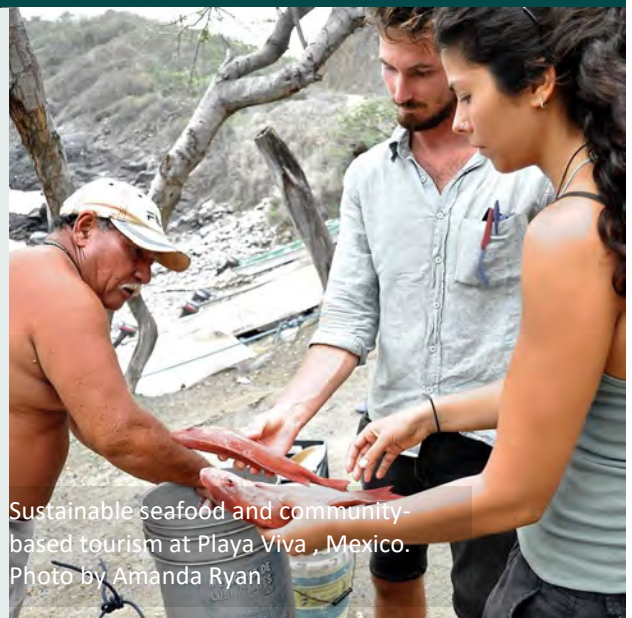
The tourism industry now has the opportunity to reset. What does this actually mean? Randy Durband, CEO of the GSTC, reiterates in Skift, “Tourism is often resilient, and travelers will travel again, but the industry must adjust. This pandemic has exposed the fragility of tourism. It is likely the world will experience several “false restarts,” where people begin to travel and the virus spreads again.”<sup>164</sup>

As we plan for the uncertain future ahead, now more than ever before, sustainability—*meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs*—is the competitive advantage for both destinations and businesses moving forward. Sustainable tourism, at its core, requires public, private, and civil sector engagement in tourism decision-making, allowing for community buy-in and continuity of tourism management. The focus should first and foremost be about making a destination a wonderful community in which to live, with benefits of it becoming a wonderful place to visit. Sustainable tourism should enhance quality of life for residents and prioritize protection of the unique sense of place that makes a destination special. For too long, the pressure has been focused on the consumer to make changes to lead us to a better future. The consumer certainly has a role to play, and they are increasingly voting with their dollars for better actors. However, in order to achieve change at scale, the changes must be made by governments and businesses.

CREST and other responsible tourism advocates often call on destinations and businesses to move away from quantity of visitors and GDP in favor of quality of visitors and profit left within the tourism destination’s economy.

### Better measures may include...

- percentage of renewable energy used;
- number of small, medium, and micro-enterprises supported;
- number of local people trained and employed, including in managerial positions;
- percentage of food and beverage sourced from local and sustainable suppliers;
- reduction in amount of food waste, plastics, and other single use items sent to landfills;
- and amount of land and marine assets protected.



Sustainable seafood and community-based tourism at Playa Viva, Mexico.  
Photo by Amanda Ryan

It also means thinking critically about the types of visitors targeted and considering if the types of tourism they desire are really in the long-term best interests of your community. Durband goes on to say, “Sustainable tourism is really just another term for good management of tourism. If brands want to sustain themselves for the long term, they need to manage for the long term. That includes building cash reserves. Listening to customers. Preparing for the next crisis. Choosing responsible suppliers. Protecting their assets which includes the destinations they visit, and that includes responding to residents’ concerns about too many visitors in certain parts of their cities.”<sup>165</sup>

Photo by Griffin Wooldridge

But, while these concepts are all well and good, we understand that getting from point A to point B is not easy. **Recognizing that a new model of tourism is needed, how do you actually get there?** CREST is a founding member of the Future of Tourism Coalition: a group of six non-governmental organizations that have come together to stand united in an appeal for change. CREST is joined by colleagues at the Destination Stewardship Center, Green Destinations, Sustainable Travel International, Tourism Cares, and The Travel Foundation, with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) serving in an advisory capacity.



The Coalition released its Guiding Principles for a new future of tourism in June (see list in appendix, page 43) and is working with Signatories to understand challenges and opportunities for sustainable tourism. Following listening sessions through fall 2020, the Coalition will provide resources to meet identified gaps from public, private, and civil sector organizations. Supporting information to help Signatories meet Guiding Principles will be added periodically.

As part of our Guiding Principles, we recommend following global best practices for destinations and businesses as established by the GSTC. In January, the GSTC announced the release of the first revision of the GSTC Destination Criteria. GSTC Destination Criteria v2.0 (GSTC-D v2), “includes performance indicators designed to provide guidance in measuring compliance with the Criteria.” This year’s revision is the result of GSTC’s global efforts to consult experts and the public. Destinations complying with the Criteria, “contribute towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.”<sup>166</sup>

To further support these efforts, on an upcoming survey about tourism’s contributions to sustainable development goals, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “2020 will mark the beginning of the decade of action towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and we have 10 years left to make the future we want. Tourism plays a vital role in the achievement of the SDGs and we believe the outcomes of this survey will contribute to further empower tourism stakeholders to incorporate sustainability measures and policies in their daily work and objectives.”<sup>167</sup>





## Key Takeaways

The facts and studies of this year's *The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics* report are, at times, quite concerning. However, similar to the adversity of 2020, this meta-analysis also reveals many uplifting glimmers of hope. CREST remains confident that the tourism industry has the tools and resources to confront the COVID-19 and climate crises. Through heartbreak and suffering, we can reflect and prioritize what matters most to us, and through collective action and innovation, we can build a more resilient, responsible sector for future generations.



COVID-19 has shown us that drastically reducing air travel is not the silver-bullet answer to neutralizing the climate threat. A multi-faceted approach is required. Government policy, business operations, and consumer choices must focus on decarbonizing the travel industry through renewable energy, regenerative processes, sustainable development and building practices, climate-smart agriculture and circular economies, and reductions in waste.



Destinations must include residents in tourism decision-making. Communities must be decision-makers on how and when tourism returns for a return to truly be successful. Prioritize following destination criterion A1 of the GSTC to establish destination stewardship councils. This model prioritizes public, private, and civil sector engagement, allowing for community buy-in and continuity of tourism planning and management.



Destination management and marketing must be fully integrated. Identify the type of tourism markets that most greatly benefit the environment, people, and economy of your community, and communicate the right message to engage those markets.



Collaborate with and learn from other destinations that are managing crises well. Many destinations are making admirable advances in public health and climate-friendly policies and practices. *Ask. Share. Collaborate.*



Recognize that your competitive advantage as a destination or company equates to a healthy environment, culture, and linkages with the local community. Follow the Guiding Principles established by the Future of Tourism Coalition.



Consumers must demand change at scale and vote with their dollars. An awakening has occurred, and travel can provide an educational experience that will help travelers bring lessons home. Consumers will protect what they love, and destinations and businesses must pick up the mantle of creating deep connections with visitors that will benefit all involved.

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This report has been prepared in collaboration with the following organizations:



IMPACT TRAVEL  
ALLIANCE



International Institute  
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American Society of  
Travel Advisors



ADVENTURE TRAVEL  
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