

YEARBOOK

2022  
2023



# DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP



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# A B O U T U S

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The Global Sustainable Tourism Council® (GSTC®) establishes and manages global sustainable standards, known as the GSTC Criteria. There are three sets: Destination Criteria for public policy-makers and destination managers, Industry Criteria for hotels and tour operators, and MICE Criteria for venues, event organizers, and events & exhibitions.

The GSTC Criteria form the foundation for GSTC's assurance role for Certification Bodies that certify destinations, hotels/accommodations, and tour operators as having sustainable policies and practices in place. GSTC does not directly certify any products or services, but provides accreditation to those that do. The GSTC is an independent and neutral USA-registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization that represents a diverse and global membership, including national and provincial governments, leading travel companies, hotels, tour operators, NGOs, individuals and communities - all striving to achieve best practices in sustainable tourism.



The Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) is a globally recognized nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming the way the world travels. Based in Washington, DC but with an international scope, CREST provides solutions, resources, and support to governments, policymakers, tourism businesses, and nonprofit organizations to confront tourism's most pressing issues.

Founded in the wake of the UN's International Year of Ecotourism, CREST initially focused on the role of small-scale ecotourism in empowering communities and conserving precious resources. Over time, our work has evolved to consider how all tourism can be more responsibly planned, developed, and managed across all sectors and geographies. Through innovative field projects, research, consultancies, and advocacy, CREST is taking action to address our world's key threats to securing a sustainable future.



The nonprofit Destination Stewardship Center (DSC) is a growing community of people involved in the intersection between tourism and stewardship of places. Founded as a program at the National Geographic Society, the DSC gathers and provides information on how tourism can help and not harm the natural, cultural, and social quality of destinations around the world. We seek to build a global community and knowledge network for advancing this goal.

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

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The third annual Destination Stewardship Yearbook is a compilation of articles from the 2022-2023 Destination Stewardship Report (DSR), quarterly issues co-produced by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), Center for Responsible Travel (CREST), and Destination Stewardship Center (DSC).

Each issue of the DSR highlights destinations that have embraced effective and holistic management, showcasing best practices in sustainable tourism and lessons learned along the way. The Destination Stewardship Yearbook celebrates the dedication of leaders driving these destinations forward. Together, their stories demonstrate how destination stewardship can foster ongoing positive impacts.

The inaugural chapter features Eggental Valley in South Tyrol, Italy; Nassfeld-Presssegger See - Lesachtal - Weissensee in the Southern Alps, Austria; and Järvsö, Sweden. All of these destinations are certified as sustainable tourist destinations by a GSTC-Accredited Certification Body. The ongoing sustainability journeys of these three destinations reveal their unique approach and longstanding commitment to destination stewardship.

The second chapter delves into community empowerment and collaboration, transforming tourism for local benefit. Highlighting case studies from Panama, Colombia, and Sedona, Arizona, it examines efforts to address tourism income disparities, post-conflict tourism dynamics, and the importance of leveraging local voices for destination stewardship.

The third chapter explores the significance of local partnerships in fostering sustainable destinations, drawing from examples in Slovenia, the Willamette Valley, and Florida. Through collaboration with local communities and stakeholders, these initiatives aim to promote regenerative and sustainable tourism practices.

In the fourth chapter, the focus is on adapting to changing conditions and challenges in tourism. It discusses the unique challenges faced by destinations such as Svalbard, Norway, and Evia, Greece, due to environmental disasters and global changes. Additionally, it explores the urgent need for better destination stewardship in light of increasing tourism post-pandemic, offering practical insights for promoting responsible tourism practices.



# CHAPTER 1

## FEATURED CERTIFIED DESTINATIONS



*Certified Destinations Refers to Destinations Certified  
by GSTC-Accredited Certification Bodies*



Copyright: Eggental

# EGGENTAL, ITALY

## CERTIFIED BY GREEN DESTINATIONS SUSTAINABILITY LABEL SOUTH TYROL

BY JOHANNA KOMPATSCHER, EGGENTAL TOURISM

The Eggental Valley in South Tyrol, Italy, is located southeast of Bolzano and characterized by its impressive landscape and diverse recreational opportunities. With three municipalities and seven villages, it is not only rich in scenery but also culturally diverse. The breathtaking backdrop of the UNESCO World Heritage sites Rosengarten and Latemar adorns the valley, marking them as outstanding features of the region and a gateway to the Dolomites.

The tourism offering in the Eggental is diverse, including 17 high quality hotels with 4 - 4\*, providing guests with premier accommodations. Additionally, 140 small, family-run vacation farms and private renters shape the landscape of accommodations, constituting 65% of all available beds. In total, there are 5,000 guest beds in 217 accommodations, resulting in a density of 24 beds per square kilometer. In the year 2018-2019, the Eggental Valley recorded a total of 160,000 arrivals and 750,000 overnight stays. Approximately 45% of visitors were in the winter months, with the remaining 55% in the summer, highlighting the Eggental's attractiveness as a year-round destination. Despite the diverse offerings and scenic beauty, the valley has preserved its charm, providing visitors with tranquility and ample space.

Covering a total area of 200 square kilometers, the Eggental Valley provides generous terrain for nature enthusiasts. In summer, hikers, climbers, and bikers are drawn to Rosengarten and Latemar. In winter, visitors can explore the two ski resorts, Carezza and Obereggen, while enjoying activities such as sledding, cross-country skiing, and winter hiking. The Eggental Valley also offers outstanding wellness options, with breathtaking mountain views from saunas. Visitors

can witness the fascinating natural phenomenon of Enrosadira, where the mountains, especially the Rosengarten, glow in the warm evening light. For connoisseurs of cuisine and culinary delights, the numerous huts beneath the Rosengarten and Latemar not only offer excellent cuisine but are also architectural highlights.

Eggental has been certified by Green Destinations, a GSTC-Accredited Certification Body, with the Sustainability Label South Tyrol and their GSTC-Recognized standard since 2022. As one of the few regions in Italy that is GSTC Certified, this emphasizes the drive and a crucial step in strengthening Eggental for the future. The "Eggental 2030" agenda reflects this vision, and various projects are in progress to realize it step by step.



Sunset over the Rosengarten. Copyright: Thomas Monsorno

## A few examples to demonstrate Eggental's sustainability journey:

- **Eggental Green Team:** The Eggental Green Team, consisting of representatives from municipalities, tourism organizations, and ski resorts, is a key element for sustainability in Eggental. The members address various sustainability issues. The sustainability officer of the Green Team is in close contact with the partner businesses, motivating and supporting them as an advisor on the path to sustainable development.
- **Eggental 2030 Strategy:** The Eggental 2023 strategy emphasizes multi-year destination management with a strong sustainability focus. The vision is for Eggental to become one of the most sustainable destinations in the South Tyrolean Dolomites by 2030, focusing on year-round natural mountain experiences, expertise in alpine sports, genuine hospitality, regional innovation networks, and economic success with high-quality products.
- **Workshops:** We are dedicated to instilling sustainability principles in businesses across our region through workshops and continuous education programs. Furthermore, the Tourism Cooperative Eggental provides three workshops tailored for businesses and member establishments, emphasizing a holistic approach to sustainability.
- **Biodiversity Competition:** Participants, including both individuals and accommodation providers, have the opportunity to have their gardens assessed for sustainability and receive valuable tips through the biodiversity competition.



Lake Carezza with the backdrop of Latemar. Copyright: Helmut Rier

## We also strive to raise awareness among our guests and encourage them to make their vacation as sustainable as possible.

- It is a priority for us to raise awareness among our guests on-site. At every point of contact, whether in person, digitally, or in our advertising, we emphasize sustainability. We engage guests through various initiatives such as "Tips for a Conscious Holiday Experience," "Experience Eggental Without a Car," "Less Waste, More Nature," and more.
- With the initiative "Travel by Train and Win," we reward guests arriving by train. They can upload their ticket and accommodation details on our website for a chance to win one of 10 "Eggental Boxes" filled with local products and a two night stay. This initiative promotes sustainable travel, contributing to the reduction of CO2 emissions and the preservation of the sensitive nature of South Tyrol.
- To protect our valuable World Heritage, public transportation in the Eggental has been expanded. Guests of the member establishments of the Eggental Tourism Associations exclusively receive the Guest Pass Eggental, providing them with free and unlimited access to public transportation in the Eggental and throughout South Tyrol. We emphasize the importance of guests using public transportation as much as possible to minimize environmental impact.

## We constantly aim to explore more sustainable paths through various initiatives. Some examples include:

- **Eggental Taste Local:** We have launched an initiative that promotes collaboration between agriculture and tourism. Farmers from the Eggental region directly supply hotels and restaurants in the valley with vegetables, eggs, and other products. This helps boost the local economy while proving highly sustainable through short transport routes and environmentally friendly cultivation practices.
- **CleanUp Days:** Every year towards the end of summer, in conjunction annual World Clean Up Day, the SÜDTIROL CleanUP Days take place in areas including Eggental. The main focus of this initiative is collective waste collection, organized by the Patron



The star village of Gummer. Copyright: FotoArmin

association. Nature enthusiasts form small groups to remove litter from various locations, experiencing a communal outdoor adventure.

• **Emission aware skiing area Carezza:** The Carezza ski resort strongly opposes unnecessary energy consumption, in the interest of both the environment and numerous slope enthusiasts. After joining the "Turn to Zero" network in the fall of 2019, Carezza Dolomites annually measures and reduces its corporate footprint. Reduction measures are discussed and optimized collaboratively with employees.

• **Conserving energy with regional biomass in Obereggen:** Obereggen has been consistently embracing sustainability since 2007 by heating the entire village with regional biomass. A dedicated district heating system powered by wood chips, provides the village with warmth year-round, saving 500,000 liters of heating oil annually and minimizing environmentally harmful transports. The facility was environmentally designed, incorporating state-of-the-art smoke gas purification technology. Obereggen demonstrates active protection of its hiking, skiing, and vacation area.

• **Star Village and Bee Learning Trail:** Steinegg and Gummer are proudly holding the title of Europe's first Star Village. With a proactive stance against light pollution, street lamps are switched off at night, replaced by eco-friendly lanterns that illuminate pathways with minimal ecological impact. Additionally, the renowned Bee Learning Trail highlights biodiversity, inviting visitors to explore and appreciate the intricate world of bees while fostering a deeper connection to nature's delicate balance.



Copyright: Nassfeld

# NASSFELD-PRESSEGGER SEE – LESACHTAL – WEISSENSEE, AUSTRIA

CERTIFIED BY VIREO SRL

BY NINA FÀBIÀN, NLW TOURISMUS MARKETING

Nassfeld, Lesachtal, and Weissensee are three regions in the southern Alps, located in Carinthia, the southernmost state of Austria, renowned for their breathtaking nature and pristine valleys. Since the 1960s, these regions have been engaged in sustainability efforts, ranging from bans on motorboat use to foregoing the construction of a thoroughfare along Weissensee. Initiatives have shaped tourism, as well as local living and recreation spaces into a sustainably conceived "world of good living." Along with Tarvisio/Val Canale, the cross-border region in Austria has achieved certification by Vireo Srl, a GSTC-Accredited Certification Body.

## Traveling to the Roots of Good Taste

Beyond its natural beauty, the region lays the perfect table for a culinary journey. If you're a culinary enthusiast, it's likely you've come across the slow food movement - an international initiative that brings together local groups and activists, all committed to a shared vision of making good, clean, and fair food accessible to everyone. Launched in Italy in 1986, the movement has grown to have a presence in over 160 countries around the globe.

The region Nassfeld, Lesachtal, and Weissensee have become the world's first Slow Food Travel Destination. Or rather, they have been made into one, as this pilot project is lead by the food artisans and producers who have long embraced the Slow Food philosophy in this serene. True to the spirit of leisurely enjoyment, they welcome onlookers into their world, sharing their craft and knowledge.

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Slow Food Travel Alpe Adria experiences often go a step further by pulling guests out of their passive roles. Those eager to participate can look forward to meeting welcoming individuals ready to demonstrate how much regionalism, fairness, and sustainability are embedded in their products. Work side by side with them and witness firsthand the skill and attention to detail that go into their food creations.



A realm of diversity for over 170 different fruit varieties created; Old fruit tree varieties cultivated anew. Copyright: M. Hoffmann



During winter, Lesachtal is often isolated by a heavy amount of snow for days, a normal occurrence for its residents. Copyright: Unterguggenberger

## Hiking in Carinthia's Culinary Corner

Beyond the culinary hotspots, nature is the true protagonist. The landscape of the Carnic and Gailtal Alps is among the most untouched in the Alps. Hiking in these alpine regions, where farmers produce the renowned Gailtal Alpine cheese, or strolling through sunny mountain villages and along the shores of Lake Weissensee, turns a journey to the culinary roots into a natural vacation experience.

Indeed, the landscape of Lesachtal is extraordinary. As the most untouched valley in Europe, it captivates anyone who visits—whether exploring quaint mountaineering villages or embarking on a journey to the roots of good taste. Time seems to slow down in Lesachtal, making it perfect for those who consciously seek a restorative escape from the daily grind.

## Lesachtaler Bread

In September 2018, Lesachtaler Bread became the first Carinthian food product to be awarded the "Presidio" seal by Slow Food International. At the Terra Madra Salone del Gusto event in Turin, Lesachtaler Bread received the Presidio Seal, marking it as "especially worth protecting!"

The tradition of bread-making in Lesachtal encompasses grain cultivation and harvesting in a mountain farming region, the requisite knowledge for constructing mills, and baking bread in home ovens. This tradition contributes to the maintenance of the cultural landscape as much as it preserves typical, job-specific dialect terms.

The term "Lesachtaler Bread" refers not only to the craft of bread baking, it also signifies the human interaction with the cultivated landscape (Lesachtal was once known as the valley of 100 mills), traditional grain farming practices, the

corresponding production methods, and the culture of everyday life.

## Lanner Grandma shares the Secret of Lesachtaler Bread

For over 30 years, the senior manager at the farm and hotel has baked the Lesachtaler Bread, renowned beyond the valley's borders. This art of bread baking is now considered an UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, made from fine natural sourdough, local flour, and water following ancient recipes. No one does it better than Rosa Lanner, who also teaches amateur bakers the proper kneading techniques. She shares her knowledge on starting sourdough, choosing the right spices, and many interesting facts about the history of bread baking. Apprentice bakers can then take their own baked bread home, along with the recipe and bread flour.



The Lanner Grandma and the Art of Bread Baking - well-known in the valley. Copyright: W. Hummer

## First Slow Food Academy of the Alps

To gain knowledge on creating, refining, and appreciating healthy foods—which is crucial for sustainable health, environmental well-being, and climate conservation—the first Slow Food Academy of the Alps has been founded. The yearly program delivers an engaging educational experience for those dedicated to nutritious eating. Its core themes focus on teaching about local diets and mindful food consumption at fair prices, closely linking pleasure, health, and eco-friendliness.

Held across various venues in the Nassfeld-Pressegger See, Lesachtal, Gailtal, Gitschtal, and Weissensee areas, these programs are led by expert lecturers and local collaborators. The goal is to understand the positive impact of wholesome foods on humans, animals, and our planet in its complexity and entirety.



# JÄRVSÖ, SWEDEN

**CERTIFIED BY EARTHCHECK**

BY ANNA-LENA WALLIN, DESTINATION JÄRVSÖ

Järvsö is in the heart of Sweden, a 3-hour train ride from Stockholm, with approximately 4000 inhabitants. Järvsö has rich cultural heritage, offering fabulous food, music, dance, art and crafts - all with an emphasis on localism. The town is surrounded by nature with forests, lakes, and a river flowing through the valley. This idyllic place, where tradition and modernity are intertwined, has long been a spot for recreation and hospitality. Järvsö is certified by EarthCheck, a Certification Body accredited by GSTC to certify destinations.

With a history dating back to the early 1900s, Järvsö has evolved into a dynamic destination offering year-round experiences with opportunities for skiing in winter and biking in summer, both downhill and cross-country. The river running through the valley provides fantastic whitewater rafting as well as fishing, paddling, and beautiful beaches. There's a Wilderness Park actively working on biodiversity, aiming to spread knowledge and conduct research for the conservation of our Nordic animals. It's a dynamic community driven by a strong entrepreneurial spirit. Surrounded by magnificent nature and rich cultural history, Järvsö stands strong with its impressive, decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland, classified as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These historical farms not only tell the story of the area's past but also its unique architectural tradition.

Järvsö's tourism industry is based on family-owned businesses. Dependent on each other, in delivering a great experience to visitors, they see the importance and the benefit of collaboration. The development of the tourism industry in Järvsö is the result of a strategic development plan to create a vibrant countryside and an attractive community. The strategic plan includes not just attracting visitors but

also encouraging permanent residency and entrepreneurship. By focusing on sustainability, with initiatives like the EarthCheck certification, Järvsö strives to reduce its environmental impact while the local economy and the welfare of their inhabitants.

This sustainable approach is rooted in a long tradition of collaboration and shared responsibility. The willingness of local individuals to improve the place that has propelled the community's development forward. By uniting efforts between civil society, the public sector, and the business community, Järvsö has become a destination that's not only attractive to visitors but for those who call Järvsö home as well.



Local food at Järvsö Creperie - one of many restaurants.

In Järvsö's pursuit of sustainability and as part of the process to achieve EarthCheck certification, a "Green Team" was formed, composed of representatives from the business sector, civil society, and the public sector. This cross-sectoral composition underscores the importance of a holistic approach to achieving sustainable development of the area. By including these diverse perspectives, it ensures that sustainability initiatives and strategies are not only comprehensive but also well-anchored in the community.



Celebrations at the local holiday Midsummer Eve.

The future of Järvsö presents challenges, particularly in transport and infrastructure. The direct train connection to the area offers a sustainable travel option, but further innovations are required to make the destination more accessible without a vehicle. By exploring alternatives, such as improved public transport solutions and vehicle sharing services, Järvsö can reduce its environmental impact while making it easier for visitors and residents to explore all that the area has to offer.

With a foundation in collaboration, innovation, and a steady focus on sustainability, Järvsö is well-positioned to meet the challenges of the future. The ambition is to be a role model for how rural destinations can grow responsibly and demonstrate how tourism can be a force for good and well-being, not just for those who visit but also for those who call Järvsö home.

Järvsö is in constant movement. It's a place where history meets the future, where local traditions are integrated with innovative ideas to create unique experiences. Every visitor arriving in Järvsö, whether for a weekend or a lifetime, is invited into a community where the beauty of nature, sustainability, and genuine hospitality are central. It's this distinct combination of attributes that makes Järvsö a desirable destination, where each visit leaves a lasting impression and a longing to return.



Playful family activities year around - mountain biking.

Our pursuit of sustainability is not a solitary effort but a collective journey. Through the EarthCheck certification and other sustainability initiatives, we take concrete steps to reduce our environmental impact and ensure that Järvsö remains a place where future generations can enjoy its natural and cultural riches. This process not only provides us with insights on how we can improve our operations but also serves as a guide for continuous development and improvement.

The future for Järvsö looks bright, with a strong foundation in sustainable development, collaboration, and innovation. As a vibrant and thriving destination, Järvsö is ready to welcome the world with open arms, offer unforgettable experiences, and play a central role in the lives and memories of its visitors. Together, we can ensure that Järvsö continues to be a place where strengthening both guests and residents feel a little better, today and in the future.

For more info about the path of Järvsö sustainability click [here](#).

All photo courtesy of Destination Järvsö.



Playful family activities year around - skiing.

# CHAPTER 2

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## A STEWARDSHIP APPROACH TO DESTINATION MANAGEMENT





# DOING IT BETTER: BIG BAY, MICHIGAN

BY KELSEY FRENKIEL  
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, CONSERVATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY PROFESSIONAL

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4

How does a low-population, outdoorsy locale go about convening a destination stewardship council after the extractive industries it once depended on have wound down? CREST's Kelsey Frenkiel relates how remote Big Bay, Michigan, USA created their own council from scratch. Apparently, a good consultant can help. This is the ninth in the Destination Stewardship Center's "Doing It Better" series on collaborative destination management in the spirit of GSTC's Destination Criterion A1.

## THE OUTDOORS UNPLUGGED: BUILDING A DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL ON MICHIGAN'S UPPER PENINSULA

Sven Gonstead came to Big Bay, Michigan, the way most people do: via County Road 550, the 30-mile expanse that links the town, as if by a thread, to the city of Marquette, Michigan. A driver can do a lot in 30 minutes. He can count the shades of gold and auburn that rise as if ablaze in the distance; he can tweak his mind's radio dial until the static fades and clarity seeps in; he will almost certainly lose GPS signal by about mile marker 20. For some, the distance is a deterrent. For locals, being at the precipice of one of America's longest dead-end roads makes their town special. Says Sven, "On that drive was when I decided I was moving to Big Bay."

Sven is the Chairman of the Big Bay Stewardship Council (BBSC), a non-profit that supports efforts to make Big Bay - a small town located in Powell Township - a wonderful place to live and visit. Sven and other community members, with the help of the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST), built the

organization largely from scratch, with many lessons learned along the way.

## ABOUT THE PLACE

The name Big Bay seems to make an amusing comment on size, with only 800 residents scattered throughout the dense, partial old-growth forest. But what it does not have in population, it makes up for in personality, both culturally and in the natural landscape, with towering trees, booming waterfalls, and abundant wildlife. Its "biggest" asset by far is its location next to 31,000 square miles of Lake Superior; the town counters with almost 2,000 grand, watery acres of its own, interior Lake Independence. Big Bay, and the whole Upper Peninsula for that matter, does not show up on the hand that Michigan residents will raise to depict the shape of the state. The U.P. is a finger that points perpendicular to "downstate" (how UPers - "Yoopers" - refer to the rest of Michigan), and the landmass is actually connected to Wisconsin and nudges into Canada.

Some other things Big Bay has to its name: an

infamous killing depicted in the black-and-white film *Anatomy of a Murder*, with two historic locations featured in the story still operating, the Thunder Bay Inn and the Lumberjack Tavern. It was an early vacation getaway for Henry Ford, who owned 313,000 acres of timberland and a sawmill that still looks out over Lake Independence. The town's bar-goers are also the inspiration for the Big Bay Shuffle, a song and dance coined by actor and musician Jeff Daniels.

Residents can be impressively hardy and capable – entrepreneurs, artists looking for a backcountry muse, and Do It Yourself-ers, some of whom built their own homes or parts of them (sometimes with the intention of going off-grid). They also have a strong sense of community and family, Big Bay being the place where they can spend time with loved ones and truly get away from it all. “Camps,” or rustic dwellings, often without Wi-fi or other amenities, are used as second homes where people can recharge and reconnect with each other



Snowmobiles park at the historic Thunder Bay Inn, seen in the film *Anatomy of a Murder*.

## ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Big Bay Stewardship Council is working hard to protect this unique sense of place, encouraging developments that are good for their micro-economy while also retaining the strength of their cultural and natural environment. This involved, in partnership with CREST, efforts to shepherd more responsible forms of travel. Tourism is already occurring in large numbers. Visitors share Big Bay's trail systems, stay in short-term rentals or the hotels and motels, use boats and kayaks on the lakes, frequent local campgrounds, and take part in seemingly all types of year-round recreational activities, both motorized and non-motorized.

The BBSC focuses its work around six major goals:

- Enhance Sense of Place

- Expand Outreach & Partnerships
- Support Infrastructure & Asset Enhancement
- Provide Entrepreneurial Support
- Support Authentic Experiences & Events
- Measure What Matters

## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Each year, the BBSC conducts planning sessions to determine what activities will be accomplished that year to achieve these goals. They currently have three committees and hope to establish more as they gain capacity: the Steering Committee for overall governance, the Marketing Committee to maintain their partnership with the destination marketing organization Travel Marquette in telling Big Bay's story, and the Placemaking Committee to conduct on-the-ground projects. The BBSC recently achieved non-profit status through the IRS, which means they can accept tax-deductible donations and apply for grants more easily.

To support this project in the early stages and determine that a destination stewardship council was needed, CREST conducted a scoping study to understand the region's opportunities and challenges and collected baseline data about the impact visitors were having on the economy, the environment, and resident quality of life. They also helped to develop a marketing brand, Discover Big Bay, with a logo and associated tagline, “the outdoors unplugged.” The Lundin Foundation and Eagle Mine also partnered on the project as part of their work to strengthen communities where they operate.

The initiative has already ticked the first box for sustainable management of tourism destinations, according to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council's Destination Criterion A1: having “an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism, with involvement by the private sector, public sector and civil society.” This type of cross-sector collaboration has been elusive for even the most developed tourism destinations. Sven explains how they got there.

## BACKGROUND

*You're not originally from Big Bay. What prompted you to move there, and what is so special about it?*

Long story short, I came to participate in the first Noquemanon Ski Marathon in January of 1998. It

was the first time I had spent any amount of time in Marquette County, and I found love. It was incredible. The day after the ski race, I drove County Road 550 from Marquette to Big Bay, and on that drive was when I decided I was moving to Big Bay. It had all the elements I was drawn to on the dead-end road. It was the people that were looking for an alternative to the normal existence in this country, I guess. People that are looking for something a little different... that are looking for more resonance with nature and the water. And of course, I love skiing in the winter. I moved in August 1998.

*What is it about Big Bay that keeps people there?*

A big part of it is the people. It draws folks that are independent and strong. That think of the world in a different way. And we're obviously all drawn to the physical beauty. With Big Bay it doesn't jump out at you right away when you pull in. You will see these places that are amazing after you arrive - Alder Falls, Black Rocks, Yellow Dog Plains, and the Yellow Dog River.... Both [my wife] Marcia and I have so many places we want to visit that we haven't yet. A lot of hidden morsels.

*What are some of the challenges the region faces economically, environmentally, or with tourism or quality of life?*

That's the ironic thing. A lot of the things that draw folks to Big Bay, they preclude economic development in the usual context. We're at a dead-end road, it doesn't really make sense for any manufacturing. It can also be hard to find healthy food in our community. So those things that draw people to Big Bay are the things that can make it difficult to live here. A micro-economy that is successful is a difficult dance. CREST was important in helping us determine

that sustainable tourism could help us diversify our micro-economy. Big Bay was a community that was developed through using natural resources like logging, mining... And some manufacturing thrown in there too. The Ford Mill, the Brunswick Mill. Our roots are in harvesting lumber. There's a lot of environmental issues that have arisen through the years, and today there are significant threats to our natural and cultural resources. The dichotomy of development in the context of our natural environment is interesting. There's a prospective spaceport that could be [here] in Powell Township, and of course there are issues environmentally with that. It feels like there is always pressure to keep developing. We have to figure out how to have a micro-economy that's not going to threaten our way of life. It's a real challenge to re-tool a little bit and look to the future in different ways.

## HOW BIG BAY BUILT THEIR COUNCIL

*How did the Big Bay Stewardship Council get started?*

Things got started when a few community members got together and started talking about what this community can do differently that can carry us into the future. As stated earlier Big Bay has been dependent on boom-and-bust industries, like mining. Thankfully, the Lundin Foundation and Eagle Mine recognize that their presence has the potential to initiate that cycle again. Fortunately, they've been great partners to help us figure out a way that we can buffer this boom-and-bust cycle that has occurred during the last 100 years. Working with CREST, we completed a scoping study and got some baseline data [such as number of people employed by tourism, trail user counts, and funding raised by existing events] to build off of.



*What are some examples of projects that address the above challenges?*

An issue is that we didn't have a conduit for the community to communicate. That was one of the biggest challenges. Folks are doing their own thing, saying, "wouldn't it be great to do this or do that". Without a conduit, it was tough to have an organized effort to a) understand what the community wants as a whole and b) determine what it will take to accomplish those goals and c) follow through and finish them out. It's pretty neat we have the structure [through the Big Bay Stewardship Council] now that we can look to. The Big Bay Fall Fest is a great example. It's a representation of what the BBSC is all about: bringing in everybody from the community, the artists, the gunsmiths, farmers, non-profits, food vendors, and the people of all ages. It's about just being together, initiating the conversation, and understanding that we're in this together.

*Tell us about the people of the BBSC. Who do you have on the Council and why?*

It's such a wonderful and diverse group. I'm excited for the future in that regard. The BBSC at its best is intended to be as diverse as possible. We're doing a good job of that. We have a couple of nonprofits with the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve, Bay Cliff Health Camp. Then we have for-profit businesses like the Thunder Bay Inn. And local government... It's incredible to have something new for this community, where we can have a conversation about what's a sustainable direction that preserves the character of Big Bay.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

*What have been some of your greatest successes so far?*

This diverse group that's well-represented. We're able to really communicate in a way that's productive. Another success, with CREST's assistance, is the scoping study and the baseline data collection that we were able to do. In my opinion, [data collection] is one of the most important things that the BBSC is doing. By keeping tabs on what's going on, we have a shield against any potential overtourism issues that pop up, to make the right decisions going into the future. We're armored with this knowledge. It's becoming more obvious to me how important it is as

our size that has the ability to do that right now. To collect resident input, and use that data to inform our activity planning.

And the Fall Fest. It was like a big old barbecue... It was so great to see everyone hanging out. To be able to support other businesses and people that are starting little projects or hobby businesses, to have a platform for them to try it out, even if it's just a booth at our Fall Fest.

## LESSONS LEARNED

*What are some of the most important lessons you've learned in the 1.5 years that the BBSC has been operating?*

First, the importance of data collection. It's absolutely critical. Second, that we should always be thinking about our capacity and be reasonable [with our activity planning]. We have to always keep in mind what's achievable. The biggest issue is that making a living in Big Bay... that's a full-time job in itself. A lot of people have skill sets to help with what is needed to run an organization like this, but a lot of those people are retired. People come here to relax, to get away from it all, to fish and stuff. There's a limited amount of folks that are willing to help and that can help. It makes it really difficult. But there's a lot of untapped talent and potential in our community. As we grow and people understand the value [of the BBSC], we'll see an uptick in membership and volunteer help. We're thinking about launching a membership model, but we need to do preliminary projects to get people to understand the value of our work first. If they understand that, they'll jump in.

Being such a diverse group, a community that communicates together is going to see greater results. Other communities did not do as good a job communicating early on and they got overwhelmed [with tourism]. And that is a big lesson for us. With Marquette evolving as a tourism destination and the rate it's growing, it's very possible something could happen in Big Bay, and we could get rolled over beyond our capacity. It's good to have data and communication so we can keep tabs on that and react as needed.

*What are you most excited about tackling in the future?*

First, working to expand the membership and the



Bar-goers hang out at the historic Lumberjack Tavern.

volunteer core, and watching the organization grow. It will be a slow but steady process. I'm also really excited to actually tackle a larger project [like collaborative trail building or installation of streetlights] that we couldn't begin to consider before the BBSC existed. We didn't have the structure to even think about the bigger picture and tackle a larger project [like collaborative trail building or installation of streetlights] that we couldn't begin to consider before the BBSC existed. We didn't have the structure to even think about the bigger picture and tackle some things that people talked about that would improve our community.

would improve our community. I also think we can support the artists and musicians in our community more. We have many artists here, but there's not a framework for them in the community. They're living here but pursuing their work remotely. We hope to find ways to support them, maybe do an artists-in-residence project or gallery to create an environment that's appealing for artists to live here. I'm excited to see the Fall Fest grow and evolve. Finally, I hope we will be able to assist Powell Township with large projects such as improving curb appeal, a community center, and building a Historical Trail. This will be a great opportunity to bring the community together in a way that embraces its past, helps its future, and provides practical improvements for residents and visitors alike.

You can support the Big Bay Stewardship Council by [making a donation](#) and following along with their work via their website, [bigbaystewardship.org](http://bigbaystewardship.org).

All photos courtesy of CREST.

Keywords: destination stewardship council, community engagement, collaborative planning, rural tourism



## BUILDING A COMMUNITY-CENTERED DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE

BY SAMANTHA BRAY  
PHD CANDIDATE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

Care for communities that make up the fabric of destinations is critical. But how? A destination stewardship approach can help tourism stakeholders - including community members - create their shared future in a collaborative and mutually beneficial way. Samantha Bray, PhD candidate at the University of Waterloo, shares her expertise. This post was originally published on the Center for Responsible Travel's [website](#).

### WHAT DOES DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP MEAN AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Translating the concept of destination stewardship to action requires a structure that supports bringing all of the stakeholders around the table. It also requires giving them a real voice in tourism planning, policy, and management.

While there are many structural models that can facilitate a destination stewardship approach, in this post we will be exploring the concept and importance of destination stewardship and formation and mobilization of destination stewardship councils.

Destination stewardship is defined by the [Global Sustainable Tourism Council](#) as “a process by which local communities, governmental agencies, NGOs, and the tourism industry take a multi-stakeholder approach to maintaining the cultural, environmental, economic, and aesthetic integrity of their country, region, or town.” It is about protecting the very qualities that make a place first and foremost a wonderful place to live, with the added benefit of being a wonderful place to visit.

This is important because a healthy and happy community is needed to support a healthy and happy tourism industry long-term. For too long, tourism development in the name of financial benefit for a few has occurred at the expense of the people who actually spend every day in a place. Their natural and cultural assets, and even their very neighborhoods, become commodified to the point where the community itself cannot enjoy them. Their fundamental ways of life are degraded in the name of more people, more money, more tourism.

Of course, profit is an essential “leg” of the triple bottom line stool of “people, planet, profit.” The [World Travel & Tourism Council](#) reported tourism accounted for 10.3% of global GDP and 330 million jobs (1 in 10) around the world in 2019. Tourism has countless benefits for destination communities, businesses, and travelers. However, we need to use the post-Covid “tourism reset” opportunity to take a hard look at the way things have been done and consider how we can do them better. (We also need [better metrics](#), which is something CREST and colleagues at the [Future of Tourism Coalition](#) and others are working on.)

What we can do now is shift our mindsets to a stewardship approach. Pre-Covid, there was an escalating movement of dissatisfaction among residents of many destinations who had simply had enough. They felt they were not being listened to and that their wants and desires were not part of the tourism development and management equation. Let's dig into how this can be remedied.

## THE DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL APPROACH

While there is no one-size-fits-all model for destinations, with intention and initiative there are several steps a destination can take to shift towards a stewardship approach. The [Center for Responsible Travel \(CREST\)](#), and our friends at the [Destination Stewardship Center \(DSC\)](#), have been compiling and studying successful initiatives for years, and we offer the formation of destination stewardship councils as a model that can work.

In the following section, we share our documented steps to success. A destination need not experience the process in this order, and all may not be applicable for each destination, but our goal is for these steps to be used as a road map whereby the destination can choose its own route.

## INITIATIVE ACTIVATION

The activation phase refers to the point when one or more stakeholders involved in a destination's tourism sector realize the need to do things differently, and mobilization begins.

### Identifying Strategic Timing

When might you consider forming a destination stewardship council? There are three triggers that might indicate the time is right.

- **Need for resilience/recovery:** When initiative needs to be taken to support small businesses, local supply chains, and the greater community following a shock to the tourism system, such as Covid-19, a hurricane, a fire, etc.
- **Local pressure:** When there is a sense of disconnect between residents of a place, the tourism industry, and the current system of destination management.
- **Government/DMO will:** When a government or destination management organization recognizes a shift to destination stewardship is needed, and a new approach may be taken during strategic

planning or fiscal year-end budget restructuring, in tandem with other government departments and their development plans, etc.

### Forming a Planning Team

Once the idea of a stewardship approach has taken root, it is time to form a planning team. This planning team may be very informal at this stage. Key considerations include:

- **Need for a champion:** For a council initiative to get off the ground, there must be a champion who moves the process along and is committed to its success. This leader - or even better, leadership team - must generate enthusiasm for the concept and may be from the public, private, or civil sector.
- **Key participants:** Once the champion has stepped forward, a planning team should be convened. This should be a small group of key stakeholders who clearly would have a role in the early success of the initiative.

### Considering the Council Model

What is the council's scope, and how does it fit into the current systems in place? While you do not have to have the answers to these questions at the very beginning, these are important considerations to make.

- **Identifying [initial] geographic boundaries:** The planning team should consider what the geographic scope of the council might be. It might be based on political boundaries if aligned with the destination perception, or it might be more organic, based on unifying geographic or cultural elements - in effect, the tourism ecosystem.
- **Taking stock of capacity:** The planning team should then conduct an initial capacity assessment. If a destination stewardship council is to be convened, are capacities in place to deliver on its goals and objectives? What capacities currently exist with those who are involved in tourism, and what are the gaps? Capacities may range from knowledge about important issues related to tourism, destination management, and sustainability, to skills like project design, development, and fundraising. How might capacity gaps be filled?
- **Organizational structure:** It is important to consider options for where the council may "live." Will it make sense to integrate this approach into an existing tourism management organization? Will the council form as a branch of a larger

organization, such as a tourism arm of a broader economic development commission? Will we start an entirely new entity? There are several models to offer here, including simply a collaborative committee or alliance to start with. New structures have also emerged from Covid, such as public/private task forces at national levels. More structure can be added as the council develops.

## GATHERING DATA

Now that the concept of a council has support, it's time to collect data to proceed in an informed way. At this point, it may be helpful to engage a third party with knowledge of destination stewardship to help facilitate the following steps. In many cases, those intimately involved in tourism will be so close to the issues at hand that a third party, impartial perspective can be helpful for guidance.

### Conducting Stakeholder Mapping

The planning committee should map out all the potential stakeholders who exist within the destination and could be invited to have a voice in the council. A holistic list may include:

- Public sector (ministers, advisors, civil servants, civil departments, elected representatives, political parties, local government, commissions, international bodies)
- Private sector (corporations, businesses, business associations, professional organizations, business leaders, financial institutions)
- Civil sector (resident groups, seasonal residents, diaspora, media, religions institutions, schools/universities, social movements/advocacy groups, trade unions, local NGOs, national NGOs, international NGOs)
- Marginalized stakeholders who are left out of the planning process (inclusive of racial minorities, persons with disabilities, generational gaps, socio-economic status, LGBTQ+ status, and gender status)



An infographic depicts the different roles of stakeholders. The Private Sector, Civil Sector, and Public Sector each have their own focuses.

This list will likely be evolve over time. Tourists should also be considered stakeholders. While not involved in the council, the council will want to collect data from visitors to inform decisions. Once the council is more fully established, a continuous visitor survey of satisfaction, enthusiasm, and use is recommended.

### Engaging Residents Through Surveying or Forums

Working from the stakeholder map, the planning committee can then reach out to these communities through surveying and/or public forums to seek to find out current perceptions of tourism.

### Holding Community Visioning Sessions

A community visioning session(s) may then be held to share ideas for components that should be included in an aspirational community tourism vision, document core personal values (which can help guide the mission and vision), and consider more specific steps that can be taken in key areas such as:

- Collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships
- Funding and financing
- Natural resources and the environment
- Cultural heritage and the arts
- Business & product development
- Promotion, marketing, and communications
- Public policy and government support
- Quality and service excellence

Before a visioning session begins, it is key for the host to encourage participants to be kind, honest, respectful, creative, and - if possible - to have fun.

## COUNCIL MOBILIZATION

Armed with information and an engaged group of community stakeholders, the time is right to mobilize the council.

### Forming or Expanding a Council

At this phase, the council itself can be formed. Care should be taken to ensure participation in the council represents the nature of the community, with public, private, and civil sector involvement. The planning committee may morph into a steering committee that will help to form the direction of the council, and key gaps may be filled on the steering committee. While the government should be at the table, the council must be structured to ensure it can exist beyond changes in government or loss of any one council member, including the champion.

### Creating a Mission & Vision

In early days, the council should work from the data

collected to develop a proposed mission (overall purpose) and vision (what the future of tourism looks like if the council is successful). The vision may be developed from the resident surveys and outcomes of the visioning session(s). The mission and vision should be circulated for public feedback and can be refined as the council's work progresses.

### Defining Metrics of Success

The council can also look at the data collected to determine what metrics of success should be utilized. Beyond visitor numbers, employment, and economic benefit, metrics of success might include spreading out seasonality, controlling use intensity of assets, local satisfaction with tourism, effects of tourism on communities, sustaining desired-tourist satisfaction, impact on built heritage (historic & archaeological sites), and protecting critical ecosystems. What additional data should be collected from tourism stakeholders to measure the key metrics?

### Developing Shared Goals, Objectives & Strategy

With the mission and vision in mind, in addition to the input from stakeholders, the Council can develop shared goals, objectives, and strategies. The council may choose to conduct another stakeholder survey at this time to ask the community what the council needs to accomplish in the next three years to be successful.

This information can be helpful in establishing goals (specific, objectively verifiable, attainable, relevant, and time-based) and objectives, as well as priorities. Once goals and objectives are developed, it may be helpful for the Council to split off into topical committees, leveraging the expertise of specific council members.

### Planning Activities

The Council committees can then come up with an activity slate to meet the goals and objectives for the next few years. What do you plan to do this year to meet your goals? Next year? The year after? The initial timeline should be short (not more than five years) to allow for the evolution of the council.

Understanding that it may take time for a council to get its feet under it to start raising funds, it is recommended that in the first year, activities proposed cost as little as possible and can be executed through partnerships. Activities proposed should be approved by the full council and prioritized based on impact, achievability, and interest.

While all ideas are important to consider, not all

ideas are realistic, especially within the first few years. Consider creating a "parking lot" for ideas that may not be realistic at the time but can be reconsidered later.



Destination stewardship planning in Big Bay, Michigan. [Photo courtesy of CREST]

## IMPLEMENTATION

With the council's goals, objectives, and activities in place, it's time to put down roots and execute the plan.

### Holding a Catalytic Event to Gain Traction

An opportunity to generate excitement within the council and to gain traction in the community is to hold a catalytic event(s). This event may draw attention to the unique selling points of a place, including cultural, environmental, economic, social, historic, and aesthetic integrity.

Celebrating these offerings makes the community aware of them and attracts tourists who want to linger (versus mass day-trippers). It should also allow council members to work together towards a shared goal, can draw attention to the council's initiatives, and perhaps even raise funds for a specific milestone activity.

### Establishing a Structure

Assuming key players have been involved in the council from the beginning, it's time to officially find a home for the council, as considered during the activation phase. Has the council found a home within a currently established organization, or is it operating as a standalone organization? If the latter, how does it effectively work with established tourism organizations to ensure its voice is considered in tourism decisions?

### Business Planning & Fundraising

The council should consider the best ways to administer the council and fund the activities

proposed. Is government funding an option? Can the council apply for nonprofit status to receive grants? Is a membership model an option? A business plan should be created to ensure sustainable funding.

### **Executive Activities**

The council may choose to adopt a strategic doing approach, a tool of the Agile Strategy Lab Network, which is a collaboration of Purdue University and the University of North Alabama.

The concept of strategic doing teaches people “how to form collaborations quickly, move them toward measurable outcomes, and make adjustments along the way.”

It is ideal for organizations made up of volunteers utilizing a “plan > do > plan > do” methodology of executing identified projects, pursuing only a few activities at a time before taking on more.

The council should continue a cyclical process of collecting and analyzing data from stakeholders (ideally annually), planning, and implementation

### **Joining the Destination Stewardship Movement**

The Future of Tourism Coalition, and those who have signed up to its 13 Guiding Principles, are focusing on building a more resilient, regenerative, equitable, and

sustainable tourism economy. We’ve set out a vision for the decade ahead and are developing a toolkit based around 3 drivers for transition, where fundamental changes in how tourism is planned, developed, and managed will create the necessary foundations to make our vision a reality: destination stewardship and stakeholder engagement, managing tourism’s impacts, and local and sustainable supply chains.

In the first webinar of the Resetting Tourism series, put forth by the Future of Tourism Coalition, CREST and the DSC discussed innovative forms of governance and collaboration that will enable a more holistic approach to tourism management and development. We also touched on how it will bring new skills, resources, and levers for change, which will help develop resiliency, community contentment, and each destination’s unique intrinsic appeal.

Regardless of which model a destination uses, a good stewardship approach – one rooted in community – will help to ensure everyone has a stake in the future of tourism, laying the foundation for a collaborative and holistic approach.

Keywords: collaborative approach, community engagement, destination management, destination stewardship council



# NATIONWIDE TOURISM CHANGE: SLOVENIA SHOWS HOW TO DO IT

BY HANNAH BROMM WITH DR. JONATHON DAY  
PURDUE UNIVERSITY'S SUSTAINABLE TOURISM & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL LAB

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4

We often see great accomplishments in destination sustainability by individual towns, counties, and even sizable cities. But how to get an entire country to adopt a comprehensive stewardship program? Hannah Bromm, with Dr. Jonathon Day, describes Slovenia's award-winning solution for achieving systemic national change.

## SLOVENIA TOURISM'S NATIONWIDE GREEN SCHEME

Leaders seeking to establish sustainable tourism programs often face a challenge when trying to do it across regions and political boundaries. Yet Slovenia has created a program that has been adopted by communities throughout the country, creating an "ecosystem" of some 60 sustainable destinations.

The Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism (GSST), an initiative of the Slovenian Tourism Board, is the largest sustainable tourism program in the country. Launched in 2014, this program aims to introduce sustainable practices to Slovenian tourism and encourage both tourism service providers and destinations to embrace sustainability in their operations. Since its inception, the certification program has grown to include over 200 members, comprising 59 Slovenian destinations, and numerous accommodations and other service providers.

### KEY PROGRAM TAKEAWAYS

- Slovenia has created an internationally recognized program that enables destinations to properly evaluate and achieve their sustainability

objectives through an established set of criteria.

- Importantly, the program has been broadly adopted across the country, creating an "ecosystem" of sustainable destinations.
- Importantly, the program has been broadly adopted across the country, creating an "ecosystem" of sustainable destinations.



Slovenia's Green Destinations

## BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

An important step in encouraging adoption of sustainability programs is to provide clear guidance on the tasks required to achieve them. In this case,



Ljubljana's recycling bins and bicycles attest to Slovenia's green policies.

the GSST includes a certification program that uses the globally-recognized criteria of the European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS) and Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) as a framework that encourages destinations to achieve a "Slovenia Green" label of Platinum, Gold, Silver, or Bronze. Service providers can obtain similar certifications in these categories: Accommodation, Park, Travel Agency, Attraction, Beach, and Cuisine (see accompanying "Gourmet Route" story).

*"The GSST ensures a framework with very concrete criteria that need to be followed by the destinations if they want to achieve the bronze, silver, gold, or platinum label," according to Maša Klemenčič, project manager for the GSST.*

Program members, representing both products and destinations, are provided with a manual that outlines the rules on obtaining, maintaining, and renewing the Slovenia Green label. A designated GSST project manager provides additional support and education to destinations and service providers. In addition to training, those participating in the program receive access to promotional support, access to cooperative marketing opportunities, and grant funding

opportunities, all of which allow for ongoing success and growth. Importantly, achieving certification allows destinations and providers an opportunity to be recognized for their ongoing performance improvements. However, Slovenia's GSST program itself has also received international recognition for its success, further incentivizing participation from destination communities and tourism products across the country. As Maša notes:

*"For Slovenia tourism as a whole, the GSST has given us direction, so sustainability and green tourism are not just a national strategy, but individual destinations and businesses have also started following this philosophy".*

## LEARN MORE ABOUT SLOVENIA'S TOURISM APPROACH

- [Green Scheme of Slovenia Tourism](#)
- [Slovenia's National Strategy](#),
- Recognized in 2018 by National Geographic's online "In the News" as the [World's Most Sustainable Country](#)

This story was submitted by Purdue University's Sustainable Tourism & Responsible Travel Lab. It demonstrates GSTC Destination Criterion A4: **Enterprise engagement and sustainability standards** and two key U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

SDG 12: **Responsible Consumption and Production**  
SDG 17: **Partnerships for the Goals**

Source for this story: [Slovenia Tourism Board](#)

Keywords: national strategy, certification program, sustainable development, destination management, cooperative marketing



# CULTIVATING COMPREHENSIVE DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP WITH GSTC CRITERION A4

BY RANDY DURBAND  
GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL (GSTC)

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

Sustainability in tourism destinations requires not only the commitment of government and nonprofit organizations, but also the work of the private sector to maintain places in ways such that they can be enjoyed for years to come. DMOs need to encourage that. Randy Durband, CEO of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, explains how GSTC's Destination Criterion A4 offers guidance.

## CRITERION A4: ENTERPRISE ENGAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS

Destination stewardship requires good public policy and strong private sector practices. The Destination Management Organization (DMO) has a role in both, not just the first.

The DMO needs to provide guidance and encouragement to the private sector to operate more sustainably. That is the focus here: the DMO encourages continuous improvement on the sustainability practices of the businesses that are directly serving the visitors.

What makes a destination "sustainable"? It's public sector-provided infrastructure – roads, parks, clean and safe water, clean and efficient energy – and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, but also the types of products and services produced and offered by businesses.

Sustainable consumption in tourism is far more than tangible products, such as food and souvenirs purchased by the visitor. Consumption in tourism includes more money and time spent on services than on physical products. Those services include

accommodations, transportation, guiding and interpretation, and the attractions visited. A broad view of sustainable tourism products and services is needed, one that looks at the core elements that all visitors require.

Businesses serve the visitor directly. Businesses operate the physical facilities and modes of transport that visitors use. They also provide most of the less tangible services and experiences.

Criterion A4 of the [GSTC Destination Criteria](#) and its Performance Indicators underscores that DMO's must take an active role in engaging with the private sector. This is needed to encourage more sustainable forms of services and experiences. Let's look at the text:

### **A4 Enterprise engagement and sustainability standards**

*The destination regularly informs tourism-related enterprises about sustainability issues and encourages and supports them in making their operations more sustainable. The destination promotes the adoption of sustainability standards, promoting the application of GSTC-I Recognized standards and GSTC-I*

Accredited certification schemes for tourism enterprises, where available. The destination publicizes a list of sustainability certified enterprises.

#### Performance Indicators for Criterion A4:

1. Evidence of regular communication of sustainability issues to tourism-related businesses (media, meetings, direct contact etc.).
2. Sustainability support and advice to tourism-related business - available and promoted.
3. Number and percentage of businesses certified against tourism sustainability standards (and whether GSTC recognised/accredited), with targets for wider outreach.
4. Evidence of promotion of certification schemes.
5. List of tourism-related certified enterprises, kept up to date.

This criterion calls for an active role by the DMO in encouraging and/or requiring businesses to operate more sustainably. DMOs can do so in a variety of ways:

- Awareness-raising through seminars, newsletters, classroom training, etc.
- Incentives for good performance, such as discounts in tourism promotion activities for businesses with evidence of sustainable practices
- Subsidies for good performance
- Mandates for good performance

In other words, carrots and sticks, with as many carrots as possible ... but sticks when necessary. Examples of carrots, that is, encouragement, incentives, and subsidies:

- Costa Rica's national government operates a tourism business certification scheme for sustainability, and provides discounts to certified businesses for presenting their business at international trade fairs and other forms of international promotion.
- Singapore set a target that 60% of hotels gain certification to the GSTC framework by 2025 and are encouraging businesses to adhere to the goal in a variety of ways.
- Jeju Island, a province in South Korea, set targets for full conversion to electric vehicles (EV's) that included several years advance notice before an eventual mandate that will require all rental car companies to convert fully to EV's in their fleets.

An example of mandates comes from Türkiye, where the Ministry formed an agency to develop and

operate a Green Tourism program. Included in this is a mandate that all hotels in the country gain certification by GSTC-accredited Certification Bodies by 2030. Those hotels not in compliance will be subject to losing their business licenses enforced by Türkiye's central government. But the mandate is softened by the implementation of a stepwise scheme. This allows for each hotel to climb a ladder to certification via two steps. The hotel provides evidence of compliance to the national standard at each step (the national standard complies with the GSTC Criteria formally through the GSTC Recognized program). This process must be completed between 2022 and 2030.

#### MAKING IT VERIFIABLY SYSTEMIC

It's useful to break down systematic approaches to sustainable tourism into these elements:

- Attributes - such as greenhouse gasses, energy, plastic, fair labor practices, cultural heritage preservation, ecosystem conservation, animal welfare.
- Measurement - as shorthand for measuring, evaluating, rating, scoring, and reporting.
- Verification - providing evidence that you are managing and making improvements on the attributes you claim to be improving. This can include awards or certification, or any form of reporting that is reviewed to some degree by external and impartial parties - i.e., objectively verifiable. (Self-assessments or any form of "self-verification" are not truly verification - let's call it "talking about yourself.")

DMO's should not be boastful if their local businesses are striving for improvement in only a very few attributes. "We recycle" is a wonderful claim, but are you doing anything else?

Are you measuring and benchmarking and rewarding improvement? Are you measuring how much actually gets recycled in those lovely bins scattered about? Are the businesses seeking external and impartial verification of their claims? The guests can see the recycle bins, but they cannot see back of house whether the sorting continues; that requires external verification through auditing.

All of these are essential.

And, let's be honest: Even if a DMO is doing great work on complying with GSTC-D Section A on Sustainable Management, if they are not

encouraging and rewarding excellence by the businesses within their jurisdiction, can they make any claims of sustainability as a destination? I think not. Criterion A4 is vital to the compliance of Section A in its entirety.

A “sustainable destination” should be a combination of both DMO and the private sector achieving this recognition together. In other words, the DMO and other public agencies must collectively score well on Section A of GSTC-D - AND the private sector should have gained high percentages of strong, meaningfully verified progress on their journey to sustainability. Hotels should have their buildings certified by LEED, BREEAM, or similar and their operations certified by a GSTC-Accredited Certification Body. Tour operators, agencies, and transport companies should have high percentages of clean energy vehicles in use and should be certified sustainable themselves. Other businesses are part of

B-Corp, constantly working to increase their scores.

We at GSTC are working on systems to count hotels at destinations in order to determine the percentage that are certified sustainable. We'll seek ways to do the same for Destination Management Company (DMC)'s, such as local inbound operators and transport providers. This relates directly to Performance Indicator “3” of Criterion A4.

Criterion A4 speaks to all of the above. How many of a destination's businesses are seriously addressing what number of attributes? Are they properly measured, with external verification? Without such significant metrics, a destination's claim to being “sustainable” rings rather hollow.

Keywords: enterprise engagement, GSTC Criteria, sustainability standard, systematic approach, sustainable management



## A MALAYSIAN DISTRICT COLLABORATES LEST TOURISM RUN WILD

BY CHER CHUA-LASSALVY  
BATU BATU RESORT

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

Why would a place with relatively manageable tourism create a sustainable travel destination coordination group? While many destinations around the world are reeling from the impacts of over-tourism, including environmental degradation, a few are heeding the warning and proactively putting a plan in place. One such is the Mersing District in the Malaysia state of Johor, just north of Singapore. Cher Chua-Lassalvy discusses what it took to rally the district's numerous, varied stakeholders and create the collectively managed Sustainable Travel Mersing Destination Coordination Group.

### MERSING? WHERE'S THAT?

I have a friend who goes by the name Mersing Guy on Facebook. He was born and bred in Mersing and runs the local recycling business in town. Mersing Guy (true to his name) loves showing his visiting friends the hidden gems in his beautiful home district. A few weeks ago, we stood in front of the gold-domed Masjid Jamek looking out across the charming coastal town and beyond to the coral-ringed islands that dot the emerald sea. Mersing Guy always says that he is truly lucky to call this place home. It is a sentiment I have heard echoed many times from locals and it is easy to understand why.

However, the natural beauty of the area is a double-edged sword. It attracts tourists like bees to honey, but the ecosystems in Mersing's mainland and islands are also extremely fragile and susceptible to damage from human pressures. This biodiversity is not only the pride and joy of the local communities but also a key contributor to their livelihoods and well-being as a source of tourism revenues, employment, coastal protection, and food resource. Furthermore, an influx of tourists and unmanaged growth of tourism

development could have an effect on the current, much-loved, laid-back way of life, cultural assets, and land use. Herein lies the often-seen challenge of balancing the benefits of tourism with the desire and need to protect these wonderful landscapes.

Mersing District is located along the east coast of peninsular Malaysia's southernmost state of Johor. It is the third largest district in Johor and encompasses a land area of 2,838 square km (including the offshore islands). Mersing is most famous for its eco-diverse islands described in the *Lonely Planet* as:

"a constellation of some of Malaysia's most beautiful islands. Of the cluster of 64 islands, most people only know of Pulau Tioman, the largest, which is actually a part of Pahang. This leaves the rest of the archipelago as far less-visited dots of tranquillity." [The Lonely Planet](#)

Besides the islands, Mersing is host to other natural wonders including long stretches of untouched mainland coastal beaches, mangrove-lined rivers, and pristine and little-visited rainforest reserves. Endau-Rompin National Park in the north of the District is

the second largest national park in Peninsular Malaysia, encompassing 870 square km and protecting the only remnant of native lowland tropical rain forest in southern peninsular Malaysia and mainland Asia.

Given its rich nature and biodiversity, Mersing attracts both domestic and international tourists. However, according to the Mersing District Council, Mersing remains comparatively undiscovered, with the District receiving approximately 250,000 tourists per year pre-Covid, a little lower than the 270,000 tourists registered annually at the better-known, single island of Pulau Tioman in nearby Pahang.



The stunning hilltop mosque, Masjid Jamek Bandar Mersing, illuminated at night. [Photo courtesy of Chan Hyunh Photography]

## WHY DOES MERSING NEED A DESTINATION COORDINATION GROUP?

As Mersing sees relatively little tourism, one questions the need for the district to have a destination coordination group to focus on sustainable travel. Many local stakeholders including government, businesses, and residents nevertheless recognise that without guardianship and management, our fragile ecosystems risk being damaged. Many of us have seen how mass-tourism and over-tourism destroyed natural wonders in destinations close to us. We did not want this to happen on our own turf and wanted to put measures in place to manage tourism sustainably.



Image courtesy of Majlis Daerah Mersing, Think City Malaysia and KakakTua Guesthouse & Community Space

Word map based on the question asked via an online survey of Mersing's community "What is your favourite thing about Mersing?" An exercise undertaken as part of Cultural and Bio-Asset Mapping of Mersing 2020.

A study commissioned by the East Coast Economic Region Development Council on the Endau Rompin Park concluded that "a more holistic, landscape-scale approach should be adopted, with Endau Rompin forming part of a wider strategic economic zone based around sustainable tourism and land management".

## HOW SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL MERSING CAME ABOUT

In 2019, the idea of a mixed stakeholder sustainable destination working group was mooted to the Mersing District Council (Majlis Daerah Mersing) by several local stakeholders. The group would be led by the Council, and lined-up into the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism Arts and Culture's National Ecotourism Plan 2016-2025 which proposes that Destination Coordination Groups (DCGs) be set-up across the 60 eco-tourism clusters across the country.

As a local stakeholder group composed of government, NGOs, private sector, and community leaders, our working group developed and took the proposal to set up a Mersing DCG to multiple meetings across government agencies at Federal, State, and District levels as well as to receive the blessing of the Johor Palace, which houses the royal Sultan of Johor.

In mid-2019, after six months of presentations, awareness-raising and persuasion, Sustainable Travel Mersing STM DCG was founded. Its aim is to support the development and growth of tourism that allows communities and businesses to thrive alongside healthy ecosystems. As a stakeholder group, STM uses the Global Sustainable Tourism Council Destination Criteria to guide its work. The goal for the destination is to become certified as a sustainable destination by 2025.

## THE WORK

STMDCG has since created work plans based on priorities guided by the four pillars of GSTC's Destination Criteria. The on-ground work has included:

- Development of a DCG and Secretariat with Terms of Reference in place
- Scheduled monthly meetings to brainstorm strategy, work plans, apply for funding, and present work completed
- Holding town halls and focus group discussions for local stakeholders and collecting input, thoughts and opinions on sustainable tourism in Mersing
- Collating feedback and relevant available information, then using these to create priorities for STM
- Co-writing the first iteration of a sustainable tourism strategy largely based on the GSTC's Destination Criteria. The strategy is currently out for consultation.
- Collectively applying for funding on a collaborative basis to meet the aims of STM.

In addition, individual government departments, NGOs and private sector participants also continuously push forward with individual projects around marine and terrestrial conservation, stakeholder engagement, up-skilling, capacity building, creating guidelines, and mapping, which collectively add to the goals of STM.



Launch of Cultural and Bio-Asset Mapping of Mersing 2020 Project by Majlis Daerah Mersing, Think City Malaysia and KakakTua Guesthouse & Community Space. [Photo courtesy of KakakTua Guesthouse]

Whilst Covid has delayed outputs and progress of STM, the activities and advocacy so far have resulted in some subtle changes. For instance, the Malaysian government increasingly cites and labels Mersing district as an eco- / nature tourism hub within Malaysia. This has resulted in steps by various players, including a pilot project by Majlis Daerah Mersing in partnership with a local university for an online tourism registration, monitoring, and governance portal. Though still in its early stages, it highlights the government's will and interest in

managing tourism and its impacts. There has also been increased interest in Mersing from external agencies and funders in supporting post-Covid economic recovery, in particular the development of resilient, sustainable, and community-led tourism in the District.

## CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

STM's progress was greatly hampered during the two years of Malaysian Covid lockdown. In addition to being unable to meet physically as a working committee, we were also set back because we could not conduct training and stakeholder consultations in a community uncomfortable with digital interfacing.

Besides the Covid years, the work across multiple stakeholders and varied geographical landscapes has posed various challenges. However, these challenges have provided us with some important learnings outlined below.

- Ground-up initiatives can get off the ground if there is enough patience, perseverance and will.
- Every location needs a different approach to sustainable tourism, but we can learn deeply from other destinations journeying on the same path.
- We currently run STMDCG without a full-time project management team. All participants give their time voluntarily. To forge ahead in the journey towards certification, we feel that we need a funded full-time project team to truly propel the project forward. We feel that this needs to be led by a project manager with one or two junior officers.
- Human connections are key. It is a top priority to have STM's aims more widely disseminated to tourism operators, resort operators, owners, and other community stakeholders. We believe this is best done through a mix of more formal town halls and focus groups as well as small group informal meetings and coffee or "makan" (eating in Malay) sessions.
- A diverse stakeholder engagement team is essential, as different ethnic or gender groups in communities feel more comfortable speaking to different members of the group.
- Co-creation with multiple stakeholders can be a lengthy process requiring a lot of patience, however this leads to joint ownership of the project's directions and is a worthwhile exercise.
- The diverse mix of landscapes (islands, rainforest, mainland coast) creates challenges, and we are still grappling with how to best tackle them. For

now, we include trips to remote small islands and indigenous communities (which can be costly) as well as mainland stakeholders.

- Creating a recognised DCG working on sustainable tourism has amplified interest in Mersing as a sustainable tourism destination. This has brought increased funding and projects focused on biodiversity conservation and responsible tourism into the area.

Today as I finish off this article, we have come out of

our first physical post-Covid STMDCG meeting here in Mersing. How wonderful to finally sit around a table, eat local snacks, connect on a human level, and physically put our heads together again. I look forward to post-Covid reopening with optimism and hope the work we are planning will make Mersing Guy proud.

Keywords: destination coordination, community engagement, stakeholder collaboration, biodiversity, ecotourism

# CHAPTER 3

## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND COLLABORATION IN TOURISM





# PANAMA TOURISM TO EMPOWER LOCAL AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

BY IVÁN ESKILDSEN  
MINISTER OF TOURISM, PANAMA

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

Inequity in distribution of tourism income is a major problem in much of Latin America, especially for indigenous communities. Now Panama is taking tangible steps to fix that, beginning with ten pilot projects and a focus on nature and tradition. Iván Eskildsen, the nation's Minister of Tourism, explains.

## OUR NATIONAL PLAN INTENDS TO PRESERVE AND REGENERATE ECOSYSTEMS AND ANCESTRAL TRADITIONS

As Panama aspires to become a world-class sustainable tourism destination, local communities need to be considered at the very center of the tourism phenomenon, or sustainability will not be achieved. This philosophy is at the heart of Panama's Sustainable Tourism Master Plan.

Panama is a crossroads of extraordinary biological and cultural diversity, connecting the two American continents and two great oceans. Panama is also one of only three countries in the world that is "carbon negative," absorbing more carbon than it emits. More than 30% of Panama's land and marine territory is protected, and 7 indigenous, Afro-descendant and mestizo peoples protect the natural and cultural diversity of this international hub.

The Panama Sustainable Tourism Model has been launched by the Tourism Authority of Panama (ATP) to establish tourism as a powerful tool to empower local and indigenous communities, so they can preserve and regenerate Panama's rich and diverse ecosystems, as well as Panama's cultural heritage, including ancestral practices at risk of disappearing. Local communities need to be the true guardians of

the earth, and of their ancestral traditions.

The Panamanian Foundation for Sustainable Tourism (APTSO) and the ATP, have established the [Panama Alliance for Community Tourism \(PACT\)](#), to work alongside local communities to implement this philosophy.

## PACT: A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

The PACT project is reaching the end of its first phase, working with 10 pilot communities that reflect the cultural diversity of Panama in its main expressions: Indigenous, Afro and mestizo (Spanish heritage): Mata Oscura, Achote, Bonllik, Santa Fe, Jurutungo, Soloy, Rio Caña, Bastimentos (Bahía Honda), Isla Cañas, and La Pintada.

These communities were selected based on a series of objective criteria that recognized their tourism potential, as well as a sufficient level of preparation that would allow them to reach a "market ready" status in the shortest possible time. With these communities, a diagnosis of their current degree of development was carried out by the PACT team; they participated in training sessions and workshops, and a catalog was prepared with information on the most attractive tourist experiences offered by the 10 communities.



King of the Naso people, Reynaldo Alexis Santana, is said to be the last indigenous king in the Americas. [Photo courtesy of Panamá por Naturaleza]

The diagnosis identified both terrestrial and aquatic trails as well as activities that would highlight the communities' nature and biodiversity. It also recommended improvements and investments needed for trails to join the '1000 km of Trails' project, a national network of trails developed by the ATP to integrate local communities to tourism development.

Also, the diagnosis identified investments needed for the communities' attractions to be better prepared for visitors. Some of these investments have already been made to improve the visitor experience; other community needs in infrastructure will be submitted to the government's Social Cabinet. This includes needs for improvements in water systems, community lodging, energy efficiency, among other proposed improvements. These infrastructure needs will also be presented to NGOs and international organizations that have available funds focused on biodiversity protection, and empowerment of local communities, to achieve the outlined roadmap for the pilot communities.

## MARKETING COMMUNITY TOURISM

In parallel to the preparation of these local communities, marketing strategies are being worked with these local communities, especially through the integration of the communities' experiences in the tourism catalogs of national and international tour operators.

To accelerate this integration process, a Community Tourism Experiences Innovation Contest was launched together with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), offering attractive prizes to the most innovative experiences in community tourism. As a part of the contest, we are facilitating alliances between community providers

and tour operators, through different workshops and training sessions.

To position these community-based experiences in the international markets, Panama has been focusing in the adventure travel market. In February 2022, Panama hosted Adventure Next Latin America, with the theme: "Community-Climate-Connection". In this event, the 10 representatives of the PACTO pilot communities held a leading role in promoting these community-based experiences directly to dozens of media representatives, international tour operators and businesses. Panama continues to engage with the Adventure Travel and Trade Association (ATTA), bidding to host other international events as a strategic priority to market these community-based experiences, targeting to attract the adventure travel market (valued at \$683 billion in global spending per year according to the ATTA).

## THE PANAMA SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MODEL AS AN OPEN-SOURCE TEMPLATE

In Latin America and many other parts of the world we share a common reality: we have incredible wealth when it comes to biodiversity and cultural diversity, but at the same time we have a terrible distribution of income. We see the Panama Sustainable Tourism Model as a great opportunity to improve the quality of life of rural communities, through the sustainable development of their natural and cultural resources. Even though the work with local communities is just finalizing its first phase, we are starting to see positive results from the initiatives described above. Some national and international tour operators are integrating these community-based experiences to their catalogs, and are beginning to bring tourists to these communities. We are optimistic that these results will mature in time, and as this happens, we will be committed to share this Sustainable Tourism Model as an open-source template, which can be replicated in other countries committed to the development of local communities and the regeneration of the planet's ethnic and biological diversity.



Panama Community leaders at ATTA's AdventureNext Latin America 2022 Conference, hosted in Panama City. [Photo courtesy of Panamá por Naturaleza]



# TOURISM IN COLOMBIA SAILS TOWARDS PEACE

BY ARVEY ALFONSO GRANADA CALDERON  
RETROCICLAS MTB TOURS COLOMBIA

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

Jungles once controlled by FARC guerrillas are now being explored by tourists. What does tourism look like in Colombia post-conflict and how has it transformed the lives of communities? Arvey Alfonso Granada Calderon explains.

## REGENERATIVE TOURISM: A STRATEGY FOR RECONCILIATION AND THE PURSUIT OF PEACE

There have been many years of conflict in Colombia; however, the situation has changed to the point of seeing tourism projects with a community foundation, which have been developed in territories where it was not possible to transit years ago. Nowadays, it is possible to sail across a jungle river beside people without masks, telling their real names and stories, thanks to the "industry of human encounters".

Colombia is known globally for the smoothness and quality of its coffee, the flower supply, tropical fruits, and the home of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's yellow butterflies. It is one of the most multicultural and biodiverse countries in the world. (Side note: 2,000 bird species have been reported, occupying the first position in the ranking of bird species per country.) It is, however, also known for the infamous load of narcotraffic and the armed conflict, an issue which is gradually disappearing thanks to peace agreements and the resilience of Colombian people.

This is where sustainable and regenerative tourism has come in, playing a role in helping the territories

build an economic model based upon trust, in which its habitants manage their assets and build projects through communal work, creating a wholesome and transforming experience. They do so, sometimes without realizing it, using the guidelines of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals: with the objective of having a decent job and promoting an economic growth for their families and territory (Goal 8), decreasing the poverty index (Goal 1), protecting the ecosystem through the development of touristic activities aligned with conservation (Goal 15), and therefore regenerating trust among the actors of conflict, RECONCILIATION, in pro of a long-lasting peace (Goal 16).

Reconciliation seems something difficult to do, especially in countries where violence has existed in all forms. Nonetheless, in this act, restoring and recovering the relationships once broken, starts the real sustainable development. There is no goal in having exceptional tourist attractions and infrastructure without the respect, calm, and welfare of territorial peace.

In Colombia, different projects are being carried out to teach its own people, and foreigners, that tourism is an excellent strategy for reconciliation and the

pursuit of peace. This is how “Opportunity Territories” by the Colombian Association of Responsible Tourism (ACOTUR) was born. It promotes the touristic supply of six municipalities denominated “Emerging destinations”: Guapi, El Tambo, Villagarzón, Vista Hermosa, La Macarena, and San José del Guaviare. These territories have been harshly impacted by violence and today they are an example of sustainable and regenerative tourism through reconciliation, ecological restoration, culture rescue, and economic reinvestment.



## IN LA MANIGUA, ROWING FOR PEACE

In the rural area of the municipality of San Vicente del Caguán, inside of the state of Caquetá, just over the tide of El Río Pato, a rafting tour agency “Caguán Expeditions” was born. With the help of several organizations such as United Nations and WWF, two things became possible. First, they created a sports team made up by ex-members of the no-longer-existing guerilla “FARC” and inhabitants of the territory. This team is led by a woman, Leidi Lorena Leiva, a contestant of the world championship of

Rafting in Australia, 2019. Second, they set up an annual rafting festival for people all over the world to come to this beautiful place to descend its beautiful rivers and know first-hand how the reintegration into society is helping to build the country.

In its third year, carried through in the first week of November 2022, the festival took place for five days, three of which included rafting in the rivers. The most significant aspect off this festival, apart from the scenic beauty of the territory (especially on the second day descending on Pato River in “Los Cajones” section), is hearing from those who lived the horrors of the war in the past and now play on the side of virtue, goodness, environment protection, communal work, and development of a sustainable and regenerative project.

The most touching and hopeful aspect is to see children and teenagers, the new generation of these territories, dream about becoming guides and working within the tourism’s value chain.

In conclusion, the best way to chart the impact of reconciliation and peace in these territories and how a touristic activity serves as canal for it to condense, it is synthesized in an art image by “Matador”, a well-known Colombian cartoonist, “La Paz a Punta de Remo” (Peace Through Rowing): *“Because it will always be better for the world, a lot of people contributing to society, than a lot of people destroying it. In other words, it is better for the world, more people with an Oar in Hand, than with a gun.”* Arvey Granada.

Keywords: community-based tourism, community empowerment, tourism impact, reconciliation



# TO MARKET STEWARDSHIP, USE LOCAL VOICES

BY HOLLY PRIEVO  
GLP FILMS

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

We last visited Sedona, Arizona in our Spring 2021 (Vol. 1, No.4) issue, to report on their plan for getting a handle on overtourism. It's still a struggle. Here, Holly Prievo of [GLP Films](#) describes how a strategic video campaign that enlists local support and participation can shift a DMO from destination promotion to marketing stewardship - a model for any destination.

## VIDEO STORIES FEATURE LOCAL PEOPLE IN BID TO HELP OVERRUN SEDONA, AZ

How can we widely communicate the need to preserve a remarkable destination suffering from overtourism without drawing more people to it?

In our 2021 work with Sedona, Arizona, that was exactly the question. GLP Films works with destinations to strategize and work toward sustainability goals using storytelling. Sedona, its community rife with resentment and its fragile ecosystem threatened by the feet of millions, was hoping to raise awareness about the consequences of irresponsible tourism through a video campaign deployed in a manner that could educate current visitors without leading to more.

These conflicting concerns make solutions for any single issue difficult, and certainly satisfying all would be a challenge. But it was clear that destination stewardship was needed to improve environmental & social conditions while upholding the local economy that is so heavily dependent upon tourism.

## OUR PROCESS - THE MISSING PIECE

Pursuing responsible destination management starts with community input. In the case of Sedona, getting the local community on board for any communication plan was imperative, as friction from tourism had made the local community critical of anything resembling marketing. The campaign was contingent upon raising the understanding of the benefits of tourism throughout the local residents, and bringing the community into the conversation to garner a sense of involvement, ownership, and pride for Sedona, not only as a magical landscape but as a destination that upheld environmental standards to protect it.

Sedona was already deploying environmental campaigns to educate visitors and residents alike on environmental stewardship. However, GLP recognized the need for an emotional lift to the messaging. Involving local champions and voices allowed us to tie in the community and provide another perspective to viewers, personalizing the messaging. These authentic voices of local champions would connect viewers with the human side of the destination and elevate the sense of reverence visitors might experience for the landscape, instead of just presenting them with facts and rules.

## PRE-PRODUCTION

In order to find and select champions for the campaign, as well as get buy-in from the community, it was essential that our team made ourselves accessible and open up the lines of communication with the local community. Throughout the pre-production process, we solicited community input. Our scouting trip, community “town hall” meetings, and in-depth interviews with champions and local stakeholders uncovered concerns and informed the direction for the campaign.

Incorporating listening tools helped reduce misconceptions about the project, allowed community members to voice their concerns and have them addressed where possible, and become part of the conversation for a campaign that had everyone’s best interests in mind.

## POST-PRODUCTION

Understanding the concerns of the community regarding marketing Sedona further, a Town Hall was held to premier the trailer, [The Soul of Sedona](#), and reiterate the purpose and use of this campaign. Conscious of the community’s trepidation towards the work, we collaborated closely with [Visit Sedona](#) to communicate the intentions behind the campaign as well as provide an opportunity for residents to ask questions and voice their concerns. We discussed how the videos were to be used, who the intended audience was, and how it would alleviate strain on the landscape, then opened up the floor for the community members to have an open discussion about their concerns and expectations.

## RESPONSIBLE DEPLOYMENT

This particular campaign was geared toward marketing stewardship, not the destination. In order to do this, our approach was centered on:

1. Pulling in voices of the local community, instead of featuring visitors and travelers.
2. Highlighting the emotional messaging and storytelling to invoke a sense of reverence, respect, and responsibility toward preserving the landscape.
3. Promoting the campaign on location, specifically on hotel channels, or to those already booked to visit Sedona, instead of on travel platforms where the videos might encourage more bookings and visits.

Throughout our work with Sedona, we discovered

that Sedona’s main problem was one of balance: an economy dependent on tourism in contention with an ecosystem compromised by too much of it and a beleaguered local community inconvenienced by it. By pulling in locals, relying on their voices for an emotional lift for the campaign, and careful placement of the messaging and campaign assets, we were able to balance the varied and somewhat conflicting needs of the destination.



GLP works closely with local organizations like the Sedona Mountain Biking Academy. [Photo courtesy of Rob Holmes]

One element that could have made the campaign more successful, we believe, would have been documenting and measuring the sentiment of the community members pre-project to post-project. Although town halls and open communication were prioritized throughout the process, further qualitative analysis through surveys would have been helpful to measure the community’s perception of the campaign before and after, and ultimately, its effect on the local ecosystems and perception of tourism in the region.

Our final product consisted of three videos, two-to-three minutes each, focused on the three key drivers for tourism identified by Visit Sedona - outdoor recreation, spiritual transformation, and the arts.

For any given destination the cost for a video campaign is driven by many variables, starting with the budget of the film partner and then the scope of work, location, deliverables, schedule, and so on. Video is a powerful tool for education and beyond. It’s a medium that allows complex messages to be distilled and delivered compellingly using both audio and visual cues, creating an experience around the message, and showing instead of telling.

Keywords: visual storytelling, environmental stewardship, local champions, community engagement, responsible messaging

# CHAPTER 4

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## LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DESTINATIONS





# SLOVENIA'S GREEN GOURMET TOURIST ROUTE

BY JANA APIH & SARA MAVRIČ  
GOODPLACE

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4

Expanding the [Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism](#) inspired Jana Apih and Sara Mavrič of [GoodPlace](#) to create a new step toward putting the Slovenia Green concept into practice. Here they describe how uniting stakeholders committed to a greener future can transform sustainability principles into memorable and tasty experiences for visiting bicyclers and hikers, who thereby support responsible local businesses.

## A DELICIOUS WAY TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY, EDUCATE THE VISITOR, AND BENEFIT COMMUNITIES

You're bicycling along the [Slovenia Green Gourmet Route \(SGGR\)](#). In this green pocket-size country the landscape changes fast. Around each corner you'll find a new local story, an untouched forest, romantic vineyards, or a vibrant town. In just one day you can wake up with a spectacular view of high mountains, fill your lungs with fresh cold air, smell the mountain flowers; then bike along the wild Soča river, observing shepherds looking after their stock and stopping by a local farm to taste fresh cheese; and finally ride through vineyards at sunset. Dinner is a special treat at a high-end restaurant offering an innovative, surprising menu of local items. The day will stay with you – a taste of Slovenia.

The SGGR is an innovative product based on principles of responsibility. The route emphasizes the sustainable and gastronomic features of the country and brings benefits to local providers and communities. Slovenia being declared a European Region of Gastronomy for 2021 encouraged us at GoodPlace to create a green-certified cycling/hiking itinerary that takes advantage of the rich

gastronomic offerings of diverse Slovenian regions while rewarding the sustainability efforts of Slovene tourism stakeholders.

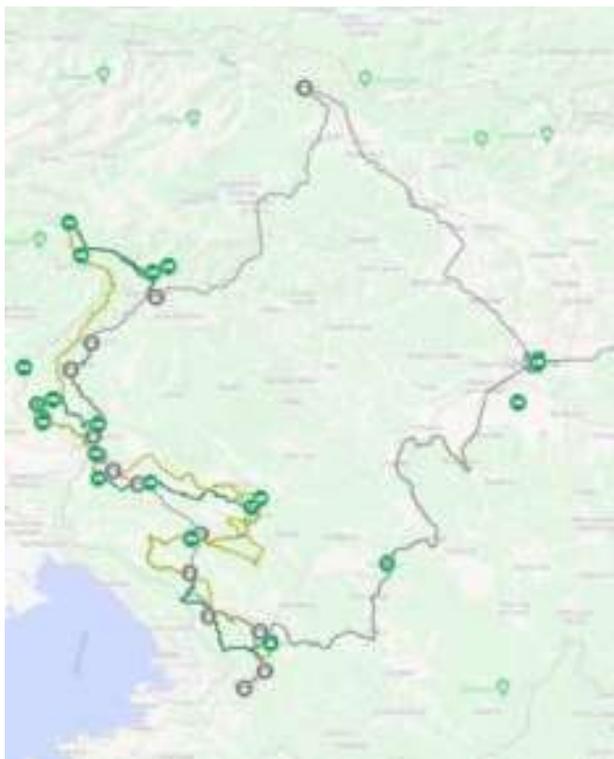
## SLOVENIA GREEN

The SGGR is one of three completely "green" routes: Alps to Adriatic, Capitals Route, and the Gourmet Route. We believe these three to be the first and only such designated tours in the world, as they exclusively connect destinations that have been awarded the Slovenia Green certificate. We created the concept of the [Slovenia Green Routes](#) for members of the Consortium Slovenia Green (CSG), an informal body connecting destinations and businesses united by being certified under the Slovenia Green brand.

The Slovenian Tourist Board assigned GoodPlace to help develop this national certification programme, the [Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism](#). Almost 60 tourism destinations (which account for almost 80% of all tourism arrivals in Slovenia) and 164 tourism businesses have joined the Green Scheme as of May 2022, committing to a green future and sustainable tourism development. ([See accompanying story](#))

The Green Scheme provides the base for three

slovenian initiatives aimed at encouraging responsible tourism development: (1) Green Scheme certification, (2) Training and tools, (3) Green Products. Having helped develop the Scheme, GoodPlace now acts as an accredited partner responsible for evaluations and development. The whole spectrum of the Green Scheme allows us to continually evaluate the sustainability of destinations and tourism businesses through the certification program.



The western portions of the SG Gourmet Route.

## GREEN GASTRONOMY

In the case of SGGR we sought to promote local supply chains, local businesses, and local stories that convey the authenticity of green Slovenian tourism. Our aim was to find an authentic local experience in each destination - honey producers, farmers, markets, special events, even a chocolate producer in a monastery. Then we would seek to connect local tourism businesses and include local providers from non-tourism sectors to build the story of each destination. We've identified several examples of good practice in the field of gastronomy in Slovene destinations, especially in the aspect of short local supply chains.

One ambassador for putting local supplies on a Michelin plate is Ana Roš at two-star Hiša Franko in Kobarid. She identified a wide range of local farmers, dairy suppliers, beekeepers, and other producers, as well as locals picking forest products. She keeps surprising customers with innovative cuisine.

transforming local tradition and local ingredients into high-end culinary experiences. We recognized a great potential for further development in this area

This led us to the next step - introducing solutions for destinations and tourism businesses to improve their sustainability. While upgrading the Green Scheme, we introduced a special label, Slovenia Green Cuisine, with additional criteria and a new (gastronomic) module for destinations. It emphasizes promotion of local supply chains and relations with local producers, guiding them in their further development. Last and most important, as a result of these sustainability efforts members of Consortium Slovenia Green have created story-telling responsible tourism experiences - cycling through hops fields, a day at a karst farm, wine tasting in Ljubljana, and more (see [www.slovenia-green.si](http://www.slovenia-green.si))



Bicyclers tour through vineyards in Tomaj.

We prepared the SGGR in collaboration with ten Slovenia Green destinations and numerous local tourism businesses. The route ties together gastronomic destinations with rich culinary offers, wines, and Michelin-starred restaurants. The trail follows country byways and forest roads, goes through vineyards and fields, and is suitable for cyclists of all levels. Bicycles take travellers to places that cannot be explored by other means of transport and to tourism providers in less accessible locations, hence creating business opportunities for small entrepreneurs in these locations. (See video - 28 minutes.)

Biking combines well with travelling by train, a sustainable form of transport that brings the east and west of the country closer. All Slovenian trains now provide special places for the bikes. Easy train-and-bike travel enables the SGGR itinerary to capture the diversity of Slovenian gastronomic destinations and include a wide range of tourism businesses.



At Hiša Franko, Valter Kramar ages cheeses for up to 4 years.

Tourism providers promoted in the itinerary are small family-run accommodations and restaurants that have sustainability certificates and authentic boutique experiences removed from most famous tourist spots - tree house accommodation, glamping in forests or storied hotels in cities. The route can be customized for visitors by a professional travel agency [Visit GoodPlace](#). Alternatively, travellers can organize their own tours by downloading a free e-book and navigation pack, which includes GPX tracks, Google map with points of interest, restaurants, accommodations, and [tips for green travel](#).

In summary, the SGGR enhances local businesses and enables destinations to promote and monetize their

Local stories and gastronomical specialties. It benefits the environment with sustainable transportation while reaching providers located in less accessible locations. It educates travellers on sustainable travel and the uniqueness of Slovenian destinations and their gastronomy. Creating tourism products that illustrate the sustainability efforts "pulls" the visitors into the scene. When sustainability is only communicated as a primary focus, an abstraction without a concrete product to demonstrate it, guests cannot recognize its true value. This way, they see how the concept of green routes rests on the efforts of destinations and tourism businesses and exemplifies their commitment to sustainable tourism development in practice.

We believe the inclusion of the local communities and tourists into the co-creation of tourism products is crucial. The support and satisfaction of the local community is the core of successful sustainable tourism development. Communities will support tourism if they benefit from it. Giving the locals new business opportunities is an important step towards responsible tourism development, creating added value for both residents and tourists.

Keywords: green gastronomy, local collaboration, authentic experiences, responsible tourism, tourism products



# REGENERATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY

BY THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY  
VISITOR ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

Overcoming community divides and pandemic challenges, the Willamette Valley Visitor Association has been working to change the conversation, rebuild trust, and spark connections within their community. The Willamette Valley Visitor Association talks more about their work, including the barriers they've faced and how they're working to overcome them.

## A VISION OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY

The Willamette Valley is a vast and bountiful landscape sandwiched between the Cascade and the Coastal mountains in northwestern Oregon, USA. Stretching nearly 150 miles long and 60 miles wide, the Willamette Valley offers an abundant agricultural scene, including a world-famous wine country. Hiking, cycling, and adventuring of all kinds are available to visitors, and the Willamette Valley is home to the first nationally recognized water trails in the northwest. Fed by mountain tributaries south of Eugene, the Willamette River flows northward for nearly 200 miles before emptying into the Columbia River near Portland.

Nearby communities, ranging from quaint and sleepy towns to large, diverse cities, rely on the river and the local environment to produce its unique and authentic experiences that draw tourists to explore and enjoy. And, just as important, its environment relies on all its communities to protect and nurture its bounty and diversity.

That is why the Willamette Valley Visitors Association (WVVA), and its Executive Director, Dawnielle Tehama, have developed a mission to raise awareness for the Willamette Valley as a premier destination for travel and tourism through a regenerative and sustainable lens. Tehama's motivation for regenerative practices includes sustainability and stewardship.

Together with its partners, WVVA is making strides to develop programs and resources to make regenerative and sustainable practices part of the culture. By working together, communities and visitors can keep natural resources abundant through everyday practices.

The Willamette Valley Visitors Association is proud to be an early adopter of the Transformational Travel Council (TTC), joining globally recognized change-makers and conscious travel experts to commit to offering transformational experiences. The TTC believes meaningful travel starts from the inside out. The visionaries at the TTC are working to deepen connections to discover meaning through travel

experiences to foster personal fulfillment through compassion, stewardship, equality, and belonging. In partnership with the TTC and other partners, WVVA is creating a wealth of resources for frontline staff to bring this vision to life throughout the Valley. The culmination of this program will be the Regenerative Places Program and result in a white paper that will guide the Valley for the foreseeable future in regenerative and community work.

Some barriers within the cultural and social landscape presented valley-wide challenges, including the deeply rooted divide between the Indigenous and other underserved communities that had not been part of prior conservation efforts. WVVA knew we needed to work hard to build trust and transparency to be able to responsibly bring the cultural conversation forward into this work. We also faced modern racism and social injustice within our towns and need to be able to support and uplift marginalized communities to be seen by all as part of this Valley. Their stories need to be told by them.

In addressing those barriers, Tehama says WVVA brought disparate community members together: "If we can make initial connections, like introducing organic farmers with restaurants and lodging properties who want to use their products," says Tehama. "Eventually they can see the value of these relationships and make connections and changes on their own."



Winemakers harvest their grapes at Durant Vineyards in Dayton, OR. [Photo courtesy of Rebecca Barnhart]

Through requests for Tribal meetings, in-person discussions, and outreach to various partners and communities, WVVA collected the stories of history, hardship, and future goals from those that wanted to share. We made it clear that as the holders of this knowledge, they owned these stories, and we were grateful to be able to learn. In addition, we also began to look at advocacy efforts for our farm workers, and focused on shining a light on contributions our LGBTQ+, Hispanic, Black, and Indigenous neighbors have had on the Valley.

Part of the conversation, Tehama says, is also about convincing business owners that it can be profitable and showing visitors how to connect with destinations on a long-lasting level. "If WVVA can convene those conversations and grow the community, we can reach the ultimate goal: bringing a quality, qualified visitor to a business or region who wants to give back, spend money, and be enriched in some way."

Some deep set attitudes, including people still not understanding what sustainable and regenerative tourism and what real stewardship is, were also challenging. "There can be an attitude of, 'this is the way we've always done it, so this is the way it should be,'" Tehama says, "without understanding the long-term, irreparable damages if we don't make changes on an environmental level."

On top of these barriers, unprecedented and unforeseeable challenges in the past two years (including a global pandemic that forced an economic shutdown, and wildfires that caused a local crisis), also threw Tehama and her team for a loop. But they swiftly made efforts to be efficient with marketing strategies in order to aid local businesses and communities in need, including actively making marketing and PR calls, and call outs to the community in e-news. We collected one-sheets for updates when available and made ourselves available to attend partner meetings to ensure we are seen as a supporting entity. We also no longer write stories on our own, we make the call to enlist the assistance of community members that are directly tied to the subject we are writing about.

They focused on nurturing communities from a business perspective to ensure they're viable, thriving, self-sustaining. In addition, they also focused on the diversity and inclusion of communities: finding more clarity and a better understanding of who lives here, what the history is and ensuring various community members feel like they have a seat at the table.



The Foster Lake Reservoir and its outlets provide stunning views.  
[Photo courtesy of Rebecca Barnhart]

“If we don’t know who we are and the diversity of our programming, our communities, and our valley,” says Tehama, “and if we’re not being inclusive of those storytellers and community members and generations of people, then we shouldn’t be doing what we do.”

The diversity and inclusion of WVVA’s corporate policies and procedures are driven by the diversity of

their staff, and the diversity and inclusion of their communities.

WVVA’s Regenerative Places program in partnership with the Transformational Travel Council will wrap up in late 2023 and offer new pillars of project work that can be implemented valley-wide. Their destination development pieces are changing from typical grant funding to a more collaborative process where facilitating conversations and ensuring sustainability are incorporated helping connect tourism to a real place.

Whatever happens as part of that process, Tehama and her team will ensure it has a community-centric focus moving forward and they are nurturing connections and facilitating conversations to address ongoing and future challenges so that their tourism industry can improve the lives of everyone it touches.

Keywords: community engagement, collaboration, diversity and inclusion, regenerative travel



# PARTNERING FOR DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP IN FLORIDA

BY DR. BROOKE HANSEN  
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VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

In much of the U.S., state DMOs remain focused on marketing and don't address stewardship efforts. Who, then, will? Dr. Brooke Hansen describes the initial success of two partnership arrangements incorporating the hospitality industry in the greater Tampa Bay area.

## BEAUTIFICATION NONPROFITS TAKE THE LEAD

Two Keep America Beautiful Affiliates in west central Florida have taken up the role of leading destination stewardship by collaborating with several key partners.

Destination stewardship is integral to upholding the triple bottom line of sustainable tourism, but to be successful, it needs to promote participatory governance, inclusion of diverse stakeholders and residents, valuation of ecosystem services, and integrity of culture and place. It also needs to align with global integrative frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Tourism 4 SDGs platform. The Destination Management Action Plans (DMAPs) created by the Hawai'i Tourism Authority, for example, have been exemplary but not every state, including Florida, will have its DMO leading the stewardship efforts. Each state needs to evaluate its assets and find the right path.

## A PATH FORWARD FOR FLORIDA

In Florida, key stakeholders have come together to

discuss and plan how we can engage with destination stewardship. Partners include non-profit organizations such as Keep Pinellas Beautiful and Ocean Allies, local DMOs, chambers of commerce, businesses with sustainable products, and academic programs such as the University of South Florida Sustainable Tourism Program, where I serve as Director.

After assessing other models of how destinations are promoting stewardship (or not), we have come up with a program for Florida that could provide a roadmap for other locations. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection already manages the state's Florida Green Lodging Program, but does not have the capacity to oversee a statewide comprehensive destination management plan.

## TWO COUNTY-LEVEL PROGRAMS SET AN EXAMPLE

The initiative we all developed resulted in the Hospitality Eco-Partnership program, led by Keep Pinellas Beautiful, and the Sustainable Tourism Development Plan, launched by Keep Pasco Beautiful. Both received seed funding from the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council. Students from

USF's Sustainable Tourism Program have worked as interns in the development of these projects where I have served as a consultant since their inception. While still in their initial stages and only a few years old, the programs are providing momentum and data to develop a statewide sustainable destination management action plan based on the successes of this model along Florida's Gulf Coast.



Keep Pinellas Beautiful Executive Director Pat DePlasco and volunteer Kelly Clark running the BeBot, a beach cleaning robot. [Photo courtesy of Dr. Brooke Hansen]

## HOSPITALITY ECO-PARTNERSHIP," LED BY KEEP PINELLAS BEAUTIFUL

Keep Pinellas Beautiful (KPB) has the resources to mobilize tens of thousands of volunteers across the county each year to clean up litter, remove invasive vegetation, plant native gardens, and educate at outreach events. The initiative they have developed aims to work with the hotel industry to encourage more sustainable operations and involve tourists in more sustainable behaviors. The Hospitality Eco-Partnership program is focused on hotel management, staff, and guests in promoting environmental protection, conservation, and volunteering. The program includes:

- Environmental Education - Staff education and training on stormwater debris and coastal environments.
- Adopt-Your-Coast - KPB provides the training and supplies for hospitality partners to host four (or more) cleanups a year at a nearby stretch of coastline.
- Group and Special Event Cleanups - KPB provides additional supplies, support, and presentations for large group and special event cleanups (e.g., corporate groups, weddings, conferences, etc.).
- Eco-Experience Tours - During 2021 four "net-zero" educational tours were organized highlighting key ecosystems, stormwater

- management, and local culture. In 2022, I led one of the Eco-Experience tours to Egmont Key, the outermost island in Tampa Bay, where we had hospitality workers, visitors, students and locals join us for an educational clean-up on the island in support of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11.4 focused on safeguarding the world's cultural and natural heritage. I also highlighted SDG 13 Climate Action as half of Egmont Key, a popular tourist destination only accessible by boat, has already eroded into the sea, bringing many cultural heritage sites with it.
- Cigarette Litter Prevention Program - KPB cigarette receptacles are provided for hospitality properties.
- Social Media Promotion - Assistance is provided for electronic event promotion on KPB's social media pages.
- Sustainability Training - Education is provided by trained Keep Pinellas Beautiful staff on certifications, opportunities to reduce plastic pollution, and a sampling of eco-friendly products (e.g., pocket ashtrays, reusable straws, compostable containers). I have devoted most of my time as a consultant with the program developing sustainable certification "menus" with my students, to be used in the program with both hotels and restaurants so they can see what pathways they can follow from ocean-friendly certifications to B Corps.

As of Aug. 2022, the program has on-boarded three official hotel partners, hosted 26 eco-experience programs, engaged 770 volunteers, and abated roughly 2,053 pounds of litter.



USF Volunteer Sheila Sullivan with her collection of 1000 cigarette butts during a cleanup project. [Photo courtesy of Dr. Brooke Hansen]

## “COMPANIES FOR A CAUSE,” LED BY KEEP PASCO BEAUTIFUL’

Launched in 2020, this program has focused on developing a platform to reach out to tourism businesses and assist with their transition to sustainable practices. Many people and businesses want to become more eco-friendly but struggle with where to start. Keep Pasco Beautiful created Companies for a Cause to help local businesses in the hospitality industry increase their sustainability efforts. The project was launched by Kristen King, Coordinator for Keep Pasco Beautiful and a graduate of the USF Sustainable Tourism Program. Kristen used her time in the program to hone the concept and has since hosted over a half dozen USF students to help expand the initiative.

In addition to running numerous cleanups throughout the year, Keep Pasco Beautiful provides education on how to prevent waste from entering local waters and ways to reduce trash at the source. To join the tourism program, companies need to acknowledge what sustainable activities they are currently doing while pledging to work on additional goals to change their behaviors. In return, Keep Pasco Beautiful promotes the businesses as sustainable partners through social media along with listing them on the website.

There is no charge for companies to participate in Companies for a Cause. They must commit to at least five strategies that they have implemented or pledge to prior to the end of the year. There is an annual recertification process that includes addressing additional ways to become more sustainable. Businesses receive a window cling to promote their participation in the program.



Dr. Brooke Hansen and Sir Dr. Adam Carner of USF, promoting destination stewardship at the 2022 Florida Governor’s Conference on Tourism. [Photo courtesy of Dr. Brooke Hansen]

The guidebook provides some sustainable strategies businesses can adopt, as well as more information about the Companies for a Cause program. To date, four companies have joined the program and with more USF interns being placed with Coordinator Kristen King, that number is projected to grow.

## EXPANDING THE KAB MODEL AROUND THE STATE

Our goal is to use these two programs as models and create a destination stewardship blueprint led by Keep America Beautiful Affiliates across the state of Florida with the support of academic programs and other partners. The successes of the programs so far and the potential to expand throughout the state are motivating us forward and were presented at the 2022 Keep Florida Beautiful Annual Conference.

Keywords: sustainability initiatives, community engagement, environmental education, industry partnerships, stewardship efforts

# CHAPTER 5

## ADAPTING TO CHANGING CONDITIONS AND CHALLENGES





# SVALBARD OVERHEATING

BY ARILD MOLSTAD  
AUTHOR, PHOTOJOURNALIST, CONSERVATIONIST, CONSULTANT

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4

With its coal mines now closing, Norway's polar archipelago of Svalbard faces a unique set of threats: disrupted tourism, rising temperatures, and increased international vying for arctic control. Yet its extreme location also provides a unique set of opportunities for reviving tourism, according to this Communiqué from Arild Molstad.

## BREAKING NEWS FROM THE ISLAND OF THE POLAR BEARS

The inhabitants of Spitsbergen - all two thousand of them - don't have to pore over the United Nations' climate change reports to feel that something's not right.

On the only populated island in the Svalbard archipelago, a mere 90 minutes' flight from the North Pole, bursts of rain are beginning to appear in February. Tourists who fly from distant continents to the "capital" of Longyearbyen to explore the majestic mountains on snowmobile under the Northern Lights may instead find themselves back in their hotel rooms, waiting for colder weather, watching sled-drivers return their frustrated howling huskies to camp. Midwinter rain is bad news all around in Spitsbergen: For dogs' paws caught in slippery tracks; for reindeer trying to scratch their way through frozen surfaces to forage for edible moss and lichen; for surprised tour operators caught out by inaccessible slushy terrain.

## RISING TEMPERATURES

"This ain't supposed to be happening," sighs a tour

guide, downing a pint of foamy Mack's Beer in a popular bar, where some of his old drinking buddies are nowhere to be seen. As coal mining is being shut down permanently, their sooty, grimy, exhausted faces remain only as black and white photo portraits on the wall, mementos from a colorful history now fading away. Some of the gritty facades that once gave Longyearbyen its one-company-town atmosphere have yielded to erosion- and avalanche-proof housing.

The melting of Svalbard is not happening in a hurry. For decades the archipelago will remain a bucket-list destination for travellers looking for adventure, remoteness, and the spectacular, unforgettable beauty of the black granite mountains topped by glittering ice, their glaciers sloping towards fjords and valleys like bridal veils.

But the metrics are scary. The archipelago is the fastest-melting place on earth: Since 1971 the temperature has risen by 4 degrees Celsius, five times higher than the world average. In winter the increase is 7 degrees. An astounding +22°C was recorded last summer. Which means that ecotourism, which in the last decades was seen as Svalbard's sure-fire alternative to a doomed coal mining industry, is

facing an uncertain future. This comes at a time when this distant destination has been struggling with a post-pandemic decline in visitors, who even prior to 2019 didn't stay long, most of them cruise passengers doing short day excursions.

## TOURISM GOES GREENER



Dog sledgers pass beneath a shrinking glacier. Photo: Arild Molstad

That is why Ronny Brunvoll is burning the midnight oil these days. As the leader of Visit Svalbard, he is in charge of an expert team updating the Svalbard Tourism Master Plan. It is important work, fraught with challenges, many of them political. The 1920 Svalbard Treaty was based on compromises between eight nations, one of them a weakened Russia in the aftermath of WWII.

The treaty conferred sovereignty upon Norway, but declared the archipelago a visa-free zone, meaning anybody willing to work is welcome. Local laws are dictated by the arctic weather, safety, and environmental concerns. Now, against the background of rapid climate change and - until the pandemic struck - growing tourism, Norway's government in Oslo is prescribing a strict regimen that curbs visitors' movement anywhere on the islands.

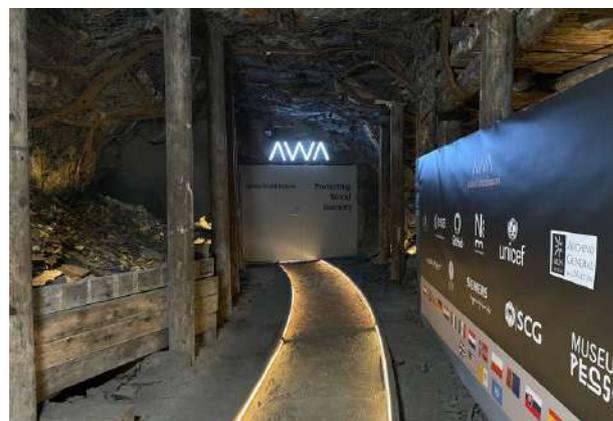
Above all, that regimen will hit cruise tourism hardest, imposing a ceiling on the number of passengers per vessel. No final decision has been made yet, but the limit will likely be set to between 200 and 500 passengers, effectively putting a stop to conventional, polluting large-cruise-ship traffic. What will be allowed: expedition-class motor vessels. But even they will face strict rules as to where and when they can organize shore excursions.

"We must find ways to keep them here longer," says Mr. Brunvoll, who is conscious not only of the per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions burned during the long journey from the mainland by ship or plane, but of the need

to find employment for Norwegian citizens. One way to do so is making it compulsory to hire locally trained guides who are familiar with the terrain - and armed for protection against polar bears looking for food scraps as their traditional habitat is threatened by shrinking ice. No ice means no place from which bears can catch seals. "The bears are easier to spot now," a wildlife guide told me. "But remember, they'll spot you long before you see them."

## GLOBAL SAFETY VAULTS AS ATTRACTIONS

The tourism challenge is a delicate balancing act. Recently, more visitors have been drawn to Spitsbergen's Global Seed Vault - a repository of seeds from mostly developing nations, should they face a famine, natural catastrophe or acts of war. Nearby another vault has recently been dug into the permafrost - the Arctic World Archive. Here nations' institutions are depositing rare, invaluable artifacts, data, documents, and art, digitalized on tape guaranteed to last for 1,000 years.



The Arctic World Archive is built into the permafrost. Photo: Copyright AWA

Now there is talk about building a visitor center to welcome visitors to both vaults. If that happens, it would likely be an attraction that could prolong the average tourist's stay. The center would function as a drawing card for narrating the colorful, exciting story of Svalbard, from the early 17th century arrival of fearless trappers and fisher folk to the transformation into a tight-knit community, situated in a place once considered remote, but now caught in the middle of a modern version of the colonial powers' "Great Game." Today ambitious nations are jockeying for position and access to oil and gas, precious minerals and huge fish stocks, as the Arctic Sea soon will become ice-free.

Keywords: arctic tourism, climate change, ecotourism, tourism regulation



# DISASTER RECOVERY IN EVIA, GREECE

BY MARTA MILLS  
TOPOSOPHY

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

After disastrous wildfires in Northern Evia, Greece, the placemaking agency TOPOSOPHY assessed the damage to Evia's tourism and researched lessons learned from various other disaster-struck destinations. Marta Mills of [TOPOSOPHY](#) explains what they have done to help Evia build a sustainable recovery and how other destinations can benefit.

## FIRE DESPOILS A GREEK ISLAND. NOW WHAT?

'I will never forget the sound of the fire and the picture afterwards of the place where I grew up and live', said Giorgos Maroudes, president of the Trade Association of Rovies, a seaside village on the island of Evia. In August 2021, Northern Evia - the northern part of Greece's second largest island, Evia, and a place of unique biodiversity - suffered one of the worst natural disasters in the country's history. "As expected, tourism, one of the most important revenue sources of our area, was one of the sectors most heavily impacted," he reported.

[TOPOSOPHY](#), an international placemaking agency and GSTC Member, was hired by the National Reconstruction Committee of Greece on the Recovery and Regeneration of Northern Evia (the NRC) to provide a roadmap for a sustainable recovery adapted to the characteristics of the place and based on an analysis of the responses from other destinations who have experienced natural disasters.

'The scale of the disaster was unprecedented in our history, so the NRC was a unique initiative in the country's planning tradition', says Dimitrios Georgiou

from TOPOSOPHY, responsible for research and managing the Northern Evia project. 'The response had to be bigger, more holistic and more people-centered than had been seen before.'

Understanding what has worked and what hasn't in the past was essential to develop a plan adjusted to Northern Evia's unique characteristics and needs. During its heyday, Northern Evia was a popular holiday destination for global stars such as Maria Callas and Greta Garbo, mainly because of the thermal spa. Evia also has a rich history and heritage spanning from ancient to medieval times and present, as well as unique biodiversity and local production that remained under-utilized.

In addition to the wildfire's impact (e.g. destruction of forests, historic olive groves, honey production, livestock, etc.), further challenges included lack of distinct brand/identity, population decline, and negative effects of the pandemic.

To respond in the most effective way, TOPOSOPHY's team conducted a benchmarking study and spent a few weeks in Northern Evia to conduct formal and informal interviews and check what would work in this particular place. This

engagement on the ground and stakeholder input helped with creating the final study. The subsequent benchmarking research would help Northern Evia to recover.



Pre-fire, a diver in Rovies explores north Evia's rich biodiversity and marine life. [Photo courtesy of Argonauta Diving Resort]

## RESPONSES BY OTHER DESTINATIONS

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, it typically takes an average of 16.2 months for a destination to recover from a natural disaster; however, wildfires can take anything from just one month to 93 months. Toposophy's benchmarking research found that successful responses vary from dedicated strategic plans and funding structures to location-specific initiatives undertaken by community groups and local influencers. For example,

- In response to the wildfires of 2020 in Oregon, Global Family Travels, in partnership with First Nature Tours and Cascade Volunteers, launched experiences of regenerative tourism in areas of Oregon that suffered the most, while the destination created conditions of safety by providing an interactive dashboard with information about the air quality etc. after a customer survey.
- Following the earthquake of 2015, Nepal developed an efficient social media strategy that targeted a more adventurous group of visitors and replaced the negative sentiment with a more optimistic one, as well as a "see for yourself" strategy by organizing press and celebrity trips.
- In Italy, after the earthquake of 2012 in Emilia Romagna, the influential chef Massimo Bottura created a special risotto cacio e pepe recipe with parmigiano during a livestream session that helped to sell a stock of 360 thousand pieces of parmigiano cheese. The relaunch of All Saints' Day Festival with the support of volunteers also

- helped drive tourists flows and demonstrate a destination which is ready for business.
- The tsunami of 2004 was an opportunity for Sri Lanka to rethink its strategy, target markets, and offerings, and subsequently, separate the destination in tourism zones. The destination created packages for added-value niche groups, while launching the "Bounce Back Sri Lanka" campaign directing visitors to areas not affected by the tsunami.

## GUIDELINES FOR A DESTINATION AFFECTED BY NATURAL DISASTER

Based on the benchmarking analysis and many formal and informal consultations on the ground with local stakeholders, Toposophy provided actionable guidelines adapted to the conditions of Northern Evia. Some of these recommendations included:

- Develop new inventory of nature-based tourism products as well as tourism based on assets not affected by the disaster, such as sea and gastronomy experiences.
- Launch a domestic tourism campaign with a well-rounded events calendar to highlight the readiness of the destination for business.
- Develop a place brand through participatory processes - important for recovery and resilience building.
- Provide an educational program with tailor-made consulting and peer-to-peer elements to upgrade quality and effectiveness of crisis response, and to increase social cohesion and resilience to future shocks.
- Develop programs to tap into new trends or niche groups such as a pilot program for attracting digital nomads and reuse of abandoned industrial heritage, along with wider placemaking goals such as reversing demographic shrinkage.



Northern Evia's lush, green landscape - before the fire. [Photo courtesy of Dimitris Georgiou]

## HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

According to Giorgos Maroudes of the seaside village Rovies, “The wildfires highlighted precedent weaknesses. The reconstruction requires both short- and long-term measures and planning for a quick recovery and enhanced resilience. The TOPOSOPHY study shows that this is feasible, based on successful practices from all over the world.”

## WHAT CAN OTHER DESTINATIONS LEARN FROM THIS?

The key takeaways that other destinations can apply include:

- The involvement of the local community is crucial for the effectiveness of recovery efforts. Transparency and honesty are very important to nurture trust.
- Tourism recovery efforts should be combined with other dimensions such as restoring biodiversity and cultural heritage.
- The effectiveness of communication initiatives depends on a mix of factors such as the message carrier (e.g. influencers related to the area affected or a real visitor), the communication timing, and the tone/content of message (honesty, safety, positive news, progress).

- Regarding recent disasters, perceived safety from the COVID-19 pandemic has been more important when selecting a destination than the impact of a natural disaster.
- Data-driven approaches that may include customer perception surveys, social listening, and local professional consultation enhance effectiveness and well-informed decisions.
- Educational initiatives such as seminars, toolkits, and/or consultation increase resilience and create competitive advantage.

## TALKING ABOUT DISASTER RESPONSE

We can all learn more from other places willing to share their experiences. For example, the mayor of San Jose has some useful insights on a new community task force that is tackling the climate crisis in California, and we can learn from scientists in Australia how to use the data from past bushfires to better prepare for future hazards. TOPOSOPHY’s Common Ground podcast series (Episode 3 ‘Climate Fight: Meet the Frontliners’) tackles the topic of how these destinations cope with natural disasters.

Keywords: tourism recovery, natural disasters, disaster response, community engagement, benchmarking



# A REVEALING OCEAN VIEW OF TOURISM

BY ARILD MOLSTAD  
AUTHOR, PHOTOJOURNALIST, CONSERVATIONIST, CONSULTANT

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

A “High Level” international Ocean Panel has come out with a blunt change-your-ways-or-else report aimed at the customary models for coastal and marine tourism. Norwegian journalist and consultant-participant Arild Molstad sums up the content and opines about its implications for any destination with a port and a coast.

## A POWERFUL CALL FOR REGENERATIVE TOURISM ON COASTAL DESTINATIONS

“The very thing that draws people to coastal and marine destinations continues to be threatened by tourism itself. The unprecedented pause in global tourism has provided a unique opportunity to reassess and reset.” So states a recent report on international coastal zones - [Opportunities for Transforming Coastal and Marine Tourism](#).\* Co-authored by the 17 nations\*\* of the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (Ocean Panel), the tourism report has indeed done some reassessing, with observations and recommendations relevant for coastal destinations everywhere.

The report doesn’t mince words, calling “the current model of coastal and marine tourism ... inherently unsustainable, characterised by high levels of economic leakage, seasonality and vulnerability.” Don’t be misled by the abundance of marine references. The tourism report is not a message in a bottle from the swirling Garbage Patch somewhere out there in the Pacific.

Marine and coastal tourism represents approximately 50% of the total sector globally, including

infrastructure, impact, visitation, and spending.

Considering that magnitude, the report should be seen as much more than a critical view from somebody just “...sittin’ at the dock of the bay/ watchin’ the tide roll away,” as Otis Redding sang.

## BACKGROUND

As a seafaring nation with one of the longest coastlines in the world, it fell to Norway to take the initiative in launching a fast-track action plan to safeguard the oceans from escalating pollution, accelerating climate change, and rapid loss of biodiversity.

Three years ago Norway’s government invited 13 countries to form a multi-sector ‘coastal coalition’ to spearhead and embrace a more sustainable, holistic approach to industries such as fishing, shipping, food production and finance. Marine-related tourism was also an obvious choice for this list: By 2030, according to the report, coastal and marine tourism will become the largest ocean economic sector.

The idea of the Ocean Panel was conceived in 2017 in a meeting between the former president of the World Resources Institute, Andrew Steer, and

Norway's Minister for Climate and Environment, Vidar Helgesen. Present at the conference was John Kerry, who has since been a strong supporter of the initiative, which was initially financed by Norway.

Headed by a "High Panel" of professionals, and with the World Resources Institute as a secretariat, the Ocean Panel subsequently brought in many tourism experts, including me. In 2019 we were all looking forward to going to work in brainstorming and problem-solving sessions on all continents. That didn't happen.

What happened was Covid-19, triggering instead innumerable digital encounters over two years across all time zones. Confronted by the implosion of coastal tourism everywhere - we realized that the otherwise catastrophic coronavirus crisis came with some silver linings.

It would give us time to:

- a) identify and diagnose structural weaknesses in the traditional tourism industry,
- b) find ways to address the acute needs of nearly one million tourism workers whose future livelihoods were jeopardized, and
- c) build a more sustainable tourism model for ports, bays, beaches, fjords, inlets, archipelagos, islands and coastal communities, where counting visitors as a prime measure of success must end.



John Kerry. [Photo courtesy United Nations]

In April 2022, international delegates from the private and public sectors, plus youth leaders and philanthropic organizations announced major commitments worth more than \$16 billion to protect ocean health at an ocean conference in the Pacific island nation of Palau, a member of the Ocean Panel initiative. In his keynote speech, John Kerry, now the U.S. special presidential envoy for climate, told the audience: 'We're starting now finally to act with the urgency that the moment demands, even as we understand that we have to accelerate even more.'

## A CIRCUIT BREAKER

The report launched at the Ocean Summit this summer put it this way: "The global pandemic... offered a circuit breaker to reflect on traditional forms of coastal and marine tourism that are no longer sustainable or viable." The pandemic, the

report stated, became a "unique and timely opportunity for bold action" that gave the industry and the public sector "a chance to change and reshape the sector" through political leadership.

I find much of the wording in the report (digesting the 12-page Executive summary is a good start) to be remarkably clear and topical, hitting most of the marks where global tourism so far has failed. In particular I welcome the use of the term regenerative, as it goes beyond 'sustainability' with its emphasis on *'rebuilding and restoring damaged or depleted ecosystems, communities and traditions.'*

## A REGENERATIVE APPROACH

The regenerative concept makes an important link to the threat that has been called 'the twin brother of climate change' - the speeding decline of global biodiversity. It also makes reference to traditions and community values, significant when many of the 50-plus marine World Heritage sites are besieged by mass tourism.

The report strongly encourages a more systemic, holistic approach to tourism in places where water meets land, from ports to all types of coastal shorelines. This struck me: Isn't it about time that we begin to view ports as portals, that is, entry points where marine and terrestrial ecosystems, e.g. National Parks and Marine Protected Areas, communicate and connect - sustainably as well as synergistically?

When the report makes an important reference to the tourism industry's "invisible burden" I am reminded how many of the sharpest industry experts and advisors have been at work. Their thinking appears in such summarizing assertions such as "... the economic gains from tourism are not distributed equally, with large foreign companies and tour operators typically receiving disproportional benefits. When comparing the true socio-economic impacts, the costs of attracting and retaining mass tourism arrivals often outweigh the benefits."

## A TRANSFORMATION NEEDED

The report calls for a transformation of tourism. Existing financial and incentive structures will need to be revised, requiring innovative financial mechanisms to ensure a just transition. The economic damage of the pandemic to tourism-dependent destinations calls for new funding packages, fiscal policies, and non-traditional lending arrangements. As examples, the

report describes user and entry fees, conservation and environment taxes, concession fees, plus the use of “blue bonds” and conservation trust funds, lease arrangements and protected area charges. Such a paradigm shift will require investments and monetary stimuli.

What the High Panel calls the “the underutilisation of tourist fees” can represent a vast source of revenue for conservation initiatives to strengthen resource management and help raise revenues locally.

One would be to “undertake value chain analysis to align strategies and interventions to eliminate leakage and boost local economic prosperity” - proposed in various EU regions. This is a hot topic in a country such as Norway, where polluting cruise vessels will likely no longer be welcome in the fjords by 2026. An intervention of this magnitude will clearly pose a challenge for a cruise industry facing turbulent times, with frozen assets and an increasingly debated Big Cruise business model. This is prompting urgent demands from fragile Caribbean and Mediterranean destinations “to re-think and re-imagine tourism.”



Large cruise ships such as these in St. Maarten will face more restrictions in countries such as Norway, which plans to protect its fjord ecosystems from megaship pollution. [Photo: Jonathan Tourtellot]

## NEW SERIES OF WORK SESSIONS PLANNED

In Norway, the nation’s 2017 “Road Map to Sustainable Tourism” will likely be revised and updated. Since the nation remains a major financing source for the Ocean Panel, its prime minister will co-lead upcoming High Panel meetings.

Will the report trigger enough courage and resources to transform a tourism industry ripe for reform? Or will “build back better” recede into merely “build back” - the way Otis Redding’s song ends: “Nothin’s gonna change/ everything still remains the same”?

If so, an enormous amount of wisdom and energy has been misspent.

*\*Full title: “Opportunities for Transforming Coastal and Marine Tourism” Towards Sustainability, Regeneration and Resilience.] An excellent 12-page Executive Summary report is available, giving an overview of the core messages in 132 pages report (which would have benefited greatly from a more thoughtful selection of photos, with captions, to illustrate and underscore more of the cases covered in the main text). The report is accompanied by a collection of Expert Perspectives on how to enact the shift to a sustainable, more equitable tourism sector, across the value chain.*

*\*\*This year (2022) the US, France and the UK came on board, joining Norway, Australia, Ghana, Canada, Chile, Fiji, Mexico, Indonesia, Palau, Kenya, Namibia, Japan, Portugal, Jamaica. All 17 nations met this June in Portugal at the pandemic-postponed (twice) Ocean Summit.*

Keywords: regenerative approach, ocean panel, climate change, policy adoption, coastal destinations



# THE RISING TIDE RAISES ALL BOATS – HOW CAN WE ALL BE BETTER DESTINATION STEWARDS?

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Tourism is roaring back as pandemic-era restrictions fade away and destinations welcome visitors again. But how can destinations and businesses promote help create more responsible stewards? Dr. Rachel Dodds, Professor at Toronto Metropolitan University, shares a few practical steps.

## TRAVEL IS DIFFERENT NOW

When I took my daughter to Disneyland last past spring, I noticed two things: how many people there were and how much garbage was being produced with single-use *everything*. My daughter, however, noticed how many cool rides there were and how hard it was for me to find vegetables on menus.

As we travel, or host travelers, we all experience something different. Travel is different post-pandemic and some of us are more aware than ever about the issues that affect our planet.

## TOURISM IMPACTS

With tourism numbers almost reaching pre-pandemic 2019 levels in some destinations, other destinations are experiencing too many tourists. Others, meanwhile, are still struggling to attract them. Tourism can be a force for good as it can raise awareness of other cultures and environments and bring needed dollars into many economies. Tourism can also, however, create many negative impacts in destinations.

One impact is increased carbon into the atmosphere. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, tourism is responsible for approximately 5% of global emissions and approximately 22% of all transport emissions. One long-haul flight is about equivalent to driving a car for a year. Another key impact for destinations is the strain on communities and resident quality of life. When too many people visit a place at the same time, this can result in overtourism. This phenomenon has been defined as “*the acceleration and growth of tourism supply and demand, the use of tourism destinations’ natural ecological goods, the destruction of their cultural attractions and negative impacts on their social and economic environments.*”

The need for destination stewardship and more responsible travel is clear:

- There are more people: From 1950 to 2022 the world population increased from 2.5 billion people to over 8 billion in 2022.
- There are more people travelling: Pre-pandemic tourism numbers increased 56-fold from 25 million in the 1950’s to over 1.4 billion in 2019.



Supporting local merchants is one key step that visitors can take to practice responsible tourism. [Photo courtesy of Norbert Braun]

- Travel is resource consumptive in terms of carbon, energy, waste and water. For example, it is estimated that cruise passengers can generate as much as 1 kg of waste per person per day.
- Many tourism workers are low paid with few breaks and uncertain schedules. Many hotel workers in all-inclusive resorts make less than \$1 per day and often work seven days a week. Some cruise workers make no salary at all. This is not responsible tourism.
- Many places are suffering from overtourism - more visitors than a place can handle.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN TERMS OF DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP?

Destination stewardship means all stakeholders creating a shared future that is collaborative and mutually beneficial. In other words, it is about examining who benefits and at what cost.

All stakeholders (government, visitors, businesses, Destination Marketing Organizations and non-profit groups, and residents) have a role to play but let's focus on how **destinations** and **businesses** can engage tourists in their destination stewardship goals.

A few practical steps include:

- Show your visitors what's really happening in your destination. Be honest and share your challenges about conservation and/or inclusion and ask for their help.
- Always show value. Asking someone to turn off their lights is often seen as a corporate money saving technique. Suggesting to visitors where they can see the stars better when they turn off the lights is a value add.
- Invite critiques from the visitor's point of view. As

Albert Salman, CEO of Green Destinations once suggested 'ask visitors what would they tell the Mayor.'

- Ask visitors to behave more responsibly and put in place guidelines to ensure they do so. Campaigns like Amsterdam's Enjoy Respect Campaign was very successful in sharing with visitors what was acceptable behaviour.

According to a recently released book: [Are We There Yet? Travelling more responsibly with your children](#), it is about providing solutions rather than focusing on the problem. Travel can be a force for good and so we need to remember the positives such as understanding other people and cultures, spending money in the local economy and protecting and conserving the places we love.

Destinations can encourage visitors to undertake a few practical steps to make travel more responsible:

- Travelling in offseason or to places less loved to avoid overtourism
- Taking the least carbon intensive route - even Google will now calculate your transport footprint
- Booking on sites that benefit the local community including: Fairbnb, Ecobnb, Book Different, Sabbatical Homes, etc.
- Support local. There are many local tour operators, restaurants and experiences where the money goes straight into the local economy rather than 'leaking' out to foreign owned business. Check out Lokafy, Travel like a Local, and more
- Do your research and ask questions. What is the responsible tourism policy of the accommodation you are staying in? the tour operator you are booking with?

If all stakeholders take responsibility for their actions and become destination stewards everyone gains from it.

For more information, check out <https://sustainabletourism.net/> or find out more about how to be a better individual destination steward in terms of planning, packing and traveling in [Are We There Yet? Traveling more responsibly with your children](#).

Keywords: responsible tourism, overtourism, post-pandemic, support local, destination steward

# DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP

YEARBOOK  
2022 - 2023



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