



**Beyond Green:
The Travel Industry and Meaningful Travel**

@TourismCares

What We'll Cover Today:

- **Tourism Cares in a nutshell**
 - **Defining Meaningful Travel**
 - **The Business Case – Trends, Myths, Opportunities**
 - **Tourism Cares Tools and a Call to Action**
-

Uniting Travel for Good.

Tourism Cares unites the travel industry and is a **catalyst** for positive social, environmental, and economic impact for the people and places of travel.

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WHAT WE DO



**Immersive Events
+ Volunteering**



**Professional
Development
+ Training**



**Meaningful Buyer +
Supplier Connections**



Cross-sector Networking



**Grants to Non-profits +
Social Enterprises**



Sustainability Education

MEANINGFUL TRAVEL

Ensures direct benefits for host communities, protects cultural and environmental assets, and connects guests with destinations in a deeper, **more responsible** way.

Infuse through:

- Food
- Adventure
- Culture
- Shopping
- Transportation
- Accommodations





The Business Case for Meaningful Travel

An aerial photograph of a tropical beach, showing a sandy shore, palm trees, and waves breaking. The image is overlaid with a dark teal color filter.

It's What Our Travelers Want



73%

of travelers want the money
they spend to go back in the
local community



69%

of travelers want to
leave a place better than
they found it



77%

of travelers want to have
authentic experiences that
are representative of local
culture

An aerial photograph of a tropical beach, showing a sandy shore with several palm trees on the left and waves breaking on the right. The entire image is overlaid with a dark teal color filter.

Growing Trends



Community-Led Travel:

- Demand for authentic, culturally rich travel is rising
- Supports social enterprises, Indigenous communities, and local guides
- Builds stronger, more equitable destination economies



Climate Conscious Travel:

- Carbon footprint tracking & offsets
- Slow travel, electric transport, low-emissions choices
- Tour operators creating Climate Action Plans



Accountability and Transparency:

- Travelers want proof of positive impact
- Rise of certifications, third-party reporting, transparency
- Honest storytelling builds trust



Inclusion and Equity:

- Uplifting diverse voices, operators, and access
- DEI in tourism products and marketing
- Accessible and socially conscious design

An aerial photograph of a tropical beach, showing a line of palm trees on the left, a sandy beach in the center, and waves breaking on the right. The entire image is overlaid with a dark teal color filter.

Debunking Myths



Sustainable options are ALWAYS more expensive.

Reality: Sustainable choices can be low-cost or cost-saving

Examples:

- Eating local
- Walking or using public transport
- Staying longer in fewer places



Sustainability Conflicts with Profitability.

Responsible practices can be low-cost, high-impact

Examples:

- Cultural training for staff
- Removing single-use plastics
- Partnering with local communities



Only Adventure Travelers Care About Sustainability.

Travelers across all segments—luxury, cultural, culinary, wellness—value sustainability

Today's traveler wants:

- Transparency
- Local connection
- Purpose-driven experiences



Sustainability Doesn't Fit My Business Model.

Every business can find a sustainability entry point

Examples by sector:

- Urban hotel → reduce energy, source local
- Tour operator → support community-led experiences
- Transportation → offset emissions, improve logistics

Small steps = big impact over time

The Say-Do Gap

Why Travelers Struggle to Follow Through



Travelers Want Sustainability, But Cost and Convenience Still Dominate

Even though sustainability is important to travelers, when it comes time to book:

- Cost remains the #1 factor in travel decision-making.
- Convenience is critical—people book what's easy and familiar.
- Perceived extra effort (e.g., researching sustainable choices) can push travelers toward traditional options.

Sustainable choices need to be affordable, easy, and seamlessly integrated into the experience. NOT an add-on.

Closing the Say-Do Gap



- Make meaningful travel the easiest or default choice
- Highlight the travel experience
- Use real time impact metrics
- Educate without overloading
- Don't make sustainability an opt-in

How We Can Integrate Meaningful Travel

Start simple



- Partner with a local business or nonprofit
- Make one small sustainability shift
- Add an interactive experience

Reposition Your Marketing & Messaging

Emphasize the experience, weave in impact



- How will the experience enrich the tour, enhance the stay, deepen understanding of place, be memorable?
- Don't market sustainability as the selling point if you don't have the right audience
- When you talk about impact, use digestible insights

Make it the Default

Part of standard itineraries and/or offerings



- Make meaningful travel the easiest or default choice
- Include in all programs
- Make part of brand story
- There's something for everyone and always something to find
- Use your resources



Tools to Support Integrating Meaningful Travel



Where to, Wanderer?

My Lists

Destination Marketing Organizations

Community Tourism

Shopping

Meals & Food

Indigenous Tourism

Touring - Multi-Day

Accommodations

Touring - Adventure Eco Tour

Touring



THE MAP IN ACTION

#MeaningfulMiami

@TourismCares

Mr. Tai

Mr. Tai's Electric Boats,
Bangkok

Bringing the tranquility of
nature to the busy canals of
Bangkok



Image courtesy of EF



Keymia

Key2Mia,
Miami, FL

Shining light on often untold and
unseen cultural history.

Image courtesy of Recommend

Mabel Norman Cerio

Middletown, RI

Sparking the curiosity to
explore the outdoors



MEANINGFUL TRAVEL MAP



Tour Operators + Travel Advisors:

Incorporate into your new/existing itineraries



DMOs:

Build a Map to promote your sustainable tourism options



MICE:

Incorporate a community day with partners into your event



Hoteliers:

Encourage your guests to visit featured Impact Partners



Informed Travelers Become Better Stewards



MEANINGFUL TRAVEL CHECKLIST



Travel isn't just about where you go — it's *how* you go. Meaningful travel is about positively impacting the communities you visit and the environments you explore, while enriching your experience. Use these practical tips to guide your journey and learn more about what it means to travel meaningfully at tourismcares.org/meaningful-travel. Plus, remember to consult your travel advisor for additional ways to further your trip's impact.

1. Supporting Local Communities

- ☐ Choose locally-owned hotels, restaurants, shops, and experiences, especially those mindful of their own positive impact.
- ☐ Buy handmade products directly from local artisans and co-ops, and share their work with friends and family back home.
- ☐ Dine at neighborhood restaurants, attend local festivals, and take tours led by community-based organizations.
- ☐ Support non-profits or social enterprises through donations, purchases, or visiting their spaces to learn more.

2. Protecting the Planet

- ☐ Bring your own reusable water bottle, shopping bag, and containers to reduce plastic waste.
- ☐ Use public transportation, walk, or bike when possible to lower your carbon footprint and live like a local.
- ☐ Choose accommodations with visible environmental commitments, and conserve water and electricity.
- ☐ Visit nature conservation efforts, marine sanctuaries, or reforestation projects that welcome visitors to support their mission.

3. Respecting Cultures and People

Learn with Tourism Cares

At Tourism Cares, it is our mission to unite, inspire, and activate the tourism industry to benefit the people and places on which our industry depends. Whether an individual or company is just beginning their sustainability journey or ready to take the next step, our educational resources are designed to meet them where they are, offering the knowledge, ideas, and support they need to make a meaningful impact.



Explore Tourism Cares' online educational courses at your own pace. Covering topics from sustainability marketing to destination stewardship, this digital training will enhance your sustainability knowledge and practices in travel.

Sustainability
Courses



Led by industry experts, Tourism Cares' webinars offer engaging and interactive sessions that provide valuable insights, best practices, and practical tips to help attendees navigate their sustainability journey and make a positive change in the travel industry.

Explore our
Webinars



Guided by seasoned travel executives, Tourism Cares' Sustainability Workshop Series offers structured learning sessions to expand participants' knowledge and empower them to develop a tailored sustainability plan.

Learn More



Educated

Travel Pros

Sell Better

Experiences

MAKE A COMMITMENT



Actionable Steps

- **Partner Locally for Impact**
- **Enhance the Experience**
- **Tell the Story**

Final Thought:

You don't have to do everything at once, but taking small steps today will help your business stand out in a changing industry.

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