



Center for Responsible Travel

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PRESS RELEASE

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Sustainability Now a Business Imperative, Not a Lifestyle Choice, Concludes New CREST Analysis

WASHINGTON, DC— The 3rd annual meta-analysis by the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) finds “sustained interest among consumers in tourism products and services that protect the environment and respect local cultures” and that “sustainability is becoming much more mainstream within the tourism industry.” CREST’s newly released 2015 report, *The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends and Statistics*, updates earlier editions based on surveys and studies of consumer and industry demand for responsible travel done in the past five years.

According to a 2014 survey, for instance, “some 43% of respondents said they would be considering the ethical or environmental footprint of their main holiday” while, a 2012-2013 Trip Advisor survey finds “the majority of businesses” – 91% -- “agree that operating in an eco-friendly manner is important.” In addition, a 2012 United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) study states that “tourist choices are increasingly influenced by sustainability considerations” and that over the next two decades, “global spending on ecotourism is expected to increase at a higher rate than the tourism industry as a whole.”

Based on the data collected for this report, CREST concludes that today sustainability is not long a life style choice; it is a requirement for business success. “The social and environmental imperative for responsible tourism,” states the report, “is mounting as inequality between the world’s richest and poorest continues to widen and the realities of climate change become even more apparent.” In 2014, for instance, Oxfam research revealed that the world’s 85 richest people control US\$ 1.7 trillion – the same amount as the bottom half (3.5 billion people) of the global population. At the same time, 2014 was, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the hottest year on record, a sign of the increasing impact of climate change. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon argues that tourism, as one of the world’s largest economic sectors, “is especially well-placed to promote environmental sustainability, ‘green’ growth, and our struggle against climate change.”

CREST’s findings coincide with continued growth of international tourism. In 2014, international tourism arrivals reached 1.138 billion, a 4.7% growth over 2013. And 2014 marked the tourism industry’s fifth consecutive year of above average growth since the 2009 economic crisis.

“This CREST analysis documents the strength and resilience of responsible travel among consumers, businesses, and destinations,” says CREST Executive Director, Dr. Martha Honey. “But,” she notes, “it also demonstrates the critical necessity of adhering to sustainable environmental and social practices if tourism is going to help to address two of our most critical global problems, the wealth gap and climate change.”

The CREST study is published and distributed in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and ten other leading tourism organizations and institutions.

Excerpts

- In April 2014, 96% of U.S. travelers stated that they turned off lights and 72% said they turn off air conditioning when not in their hotel room, according to The Statistics Portal.
- According to the American Society of Travel Writers (ASTA), “Responsible travel is moving beyond the confines of ‘eco travel’, ecolodges and other overtly ‘green’ offerings. Increasingly, it is about the ‘how’ as much as the ‘what’ of travel.”
- In 2014, domestic and international travelers made over 292 million recreation visits to the 370 recreation areas administered by the U.S. National Park Service.
- UNESCO forecasts that sustainable tourism will go from ‘alternative’ to ‘mainstream’ within a decade.
- “Sustainability is at the forefront of our business model because of customer demand,” says Bruce Poon Tip, Founder and CEO, G Adventures. He says G Adventures grew its revenue by 42% (around US \$150 million) during the economic crisis because it aligned its business model with sustainability.
- 85% of U.S. hoteliers indicate that they currently have ‘green’ practices in place, according to a 2013 study by TripAdvisor.
- Hilton Hotels worldwide reduced energy use by 13.6%, carbon output by 20.2%, waste output by 26.8%, and water use 13.1% between 2009 - 2014.
- “As market leader, it is incumbent on us to pioneer sustainability change in our sector – a challenge we embrace, in the knowledge that success is critical to the future health of our business and of the industry,” says Peter Long, Chief Executive, TUI Travel.
- The City of Melbourne has introduced an innovative environmental program to help city hotels to cut energy, water and waste management costs.
- According to the April 2013 Travel Guard Update, a whopping 49% of travel agents named Costa Rica as the most popular destination among clients, followed by South Africa (12%), the Galapagos Islands (8%), Peru (7%) and Belize (6%).
- "In a growing number of destinations, the business leaders, citizens, and government authorities are realizing that safeguarding their distinctive sense of place—cultural assets, natural habitats, historic feature, scenic appeal—are essential for reaping the benefits of responsible tourism. A trend to encourage," says Jonathan Tourtellot, Geotourism Editor, *National Geographic Traveler*.

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