

Why Take Action Now?

Tourism destinations are vulnerable to shocks, crises, trends, degradation, and changes in visitor patterns, particularly if they are dependent on external factors and sudden shifts occur, such as changes in visitation from specific source markets or extreme weather events. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed these vulnerabilities and, unfortunately, is unlikely to be the last shock that communities face. Identifying and developing strategies to address these vulnerabilities is vital for responding to immediate challenges, adapting to trends and new realities, and identifying new opportunities. Additionally, considering how to address long term potential impacts, such as social and environmental degradation, effects from overtourism, and other threats such as climate change and volatile economic situations, helps organizations build resilience for the future. It's also about

The Port of Seattle's Equity Statement and Vision

The Port of Seattle commits to taking a lead role in regional and national efforts to achieve equity and social justice. We are identifying and dismantling structural barriers to ensure that historically oppressed communities, particularly communities of color, have access to the resources they need to thrive.

Bias and oppression are embedded in our society, systems, and our organization. By failing to acknowledge inequities, we play a role in perpetuating them. We can and must do better. In order to achieve equitable outcomes for all our communities, we must be accountable for equitable policies that ensure racial, social, and economic justice are achieved in strategies, practices, and projects.

Our Vision is to develop a Port that mirrors – throughout its breadth of operations and services and within its leadership structure – the diversity of our community, instills principles of equity in its culture, and ensures a fair and intentional distribution of opportunities to expand economic development and quality of life for all.

Visit the [Port of Seattle's Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#) for more info and resources.

doing the right thing. Residents and visitors alike are demanding more from tourism – more positive and less negative impacts – and there is no time like the present to commit and act!

The Challenges Today and Ahead

In addition to being better prepared to respond to a specific crisis, integrating inclusivity and sustainability into your organization's decision-making and improving the resilience of your organization and destination will also support you to be more successful as you continue to adapt. It is useful to consider a selection of these challenges and concerns reported by tourism destinations and communities across the globe when planning new activities. This will also help to provide context to the guidance provided in this handbook:

- Increase in extreme weather events due to climate change such as wildfire, smoke, floods, extreme heat, lack of reliable snow in mountain resorts, etc.
- Increased tourism and recreation impacts on lands, habitats and cultures, including impacts to Indigenous peoples and lands and Tribal rights.
- Exclusion and inequity (minimal benefits and often more negative impacts) for marginalized and underrepresented people and communities).
- Lack of accessibility for people with different abilities
- Economic leakage (not enough tourism revenue remaining in the destination)
- Low margins
- Seasonality
- Blending of leisure and corporate travel; remote work
- Workforce shortages
- Housing crisis (surge in property values, demand for short-term rentals, lack of housing for residents/workers)
- Overcrowding of hotspot areas
- Changes in demand and market segments
- Strained visitor-resident dynamics

COVID-19 Recovery

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism destinations highlighted the need to strengthen the resilience of the tourism sector against ongoing and

future shocks. The pandemic exposed the fragility of the travel sector as global travel virtually came to a standstill overnight. The subsequent widespread lockdowns resulted in the permanent closure of significant numbers of tourism businesses and drastically impacted the economies of tourism destinations worldwide, especially those where tourism makes a substantial contribution to GDP. And yet, for several communities, the years preceding the pandemic were marked by increasing resentment towards tourism as popular places witnessed extreme overcrowding, locals being priced out, environmental degradation, excess pressure on infrastructure and services, and resident protests, among other things. For some destinations, particularly in outdoor recreation communities like many rural destinations in Washington, the pandemic years marked record visitation and led to, or exacerbated, some of these issues that were rising pre-pandemic. Now, with international travel available again, numbers are down in many places and uncertainty continues to loom.

The disruption of the sector caused by the pandemic also provided an opportunity for the tourism industry to re-evaluate the purpose and management of tourism to ensure that it is resulting in positive benefits for the local community and environment. Many organizations decided to use this opportunity to reset, strengthen resilience to future shocks and create a more balanced tourism product; one that would continue to deliver economic benefits, but also address negative impacts. Building awareness and skills in these areas will enable you to tackle broader issues that impact on the long-term sustainability of your destination and futureproof it against further crises as well as respond and adapt to ongoing changes.



Olympia, Wondercamp, Courtesy of State of Washington Tourism

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility (DEIA)

Prioritizing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) in the management of tourism within a destination is an integral component of tourism's sustainability and deserves urgent attention in most tourism destinations. Most people in communities will be impacted by tourism, if not through direct employment by the sector, then indirectly through the shared use of services, businesses, spaces, and infrastructure with visitors. The benefits of tourism are typically not equitable across diverse and underrepresented communities. At the same time, negative impacts often disproportionately impact marginalized communities. For example, tourism and recreation impacts on lands, ecosystems, fisheries, and forests important to Indigenous peoples affect cultural practices and livelihoods. Without intentional diversification of tourism businesses as well as source markets and support for diverse enterprises in the tourism supply chain within destinations, a lack of diversity and equity often persists.

From a visitor perspective, many activities and destinations are not perceived as welcoming or inclusive to all people. "Being welcomed is not the same as being invited." (DBC DEIA Strategy 2023). Many travel experiences are not accessible to people with different abilities, which means that groups already marginalized in society become further marginalized by tourism. Addressing diversity and inclusivity in marketing is one step, but it is one step towards a much broader effort and direct actions that organizations need to take.

Westcott Bay Shellfish Co., Carina Skrobecki Swain, Courtesy of San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility must also all be addressed from the supply side and that will involve assessing your own organization as well as the broader delivery of tourism services and activities across your business or community.

For example:

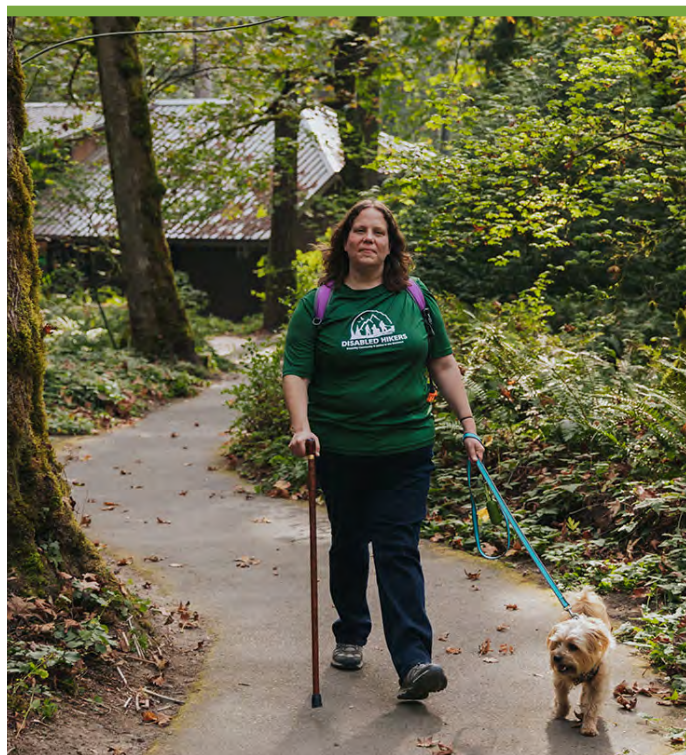
- What are the challenges and barriers to recruiting a more diverse workforce?
- How can you change your organization’s internal policies and procedures to ensure that employment and growth opportunities are inclusive and equitable?
- What kind of training is needed to learn more and identify new strategies?

“Research has shown that by supporting and promoting a diverse and inclusive workplace, companies experience benefits including greater profitability, increased creativity and innovation, and a happier workforce where employees feel free and safe to be who they are. It is good for business, enabling the sector to serve its clients and stakeholders better, and it is the right thing to do.” (World Travel and Tourism Council)

To truly embed sustainability based on the triple bottom line of people, profit and planet, it is vital that tourism is designed and delivered in a way that is equitable and inclusive for all groups in society and creates a space for all voices to be heard.

Feeling Welcome: The concepts of safety & belonging and cultural competency

We all know that welcoming people is at the heart of the hospitality and tourism industry. If a person doesn’t feel



Port Angeles, Courtesy of Traveling While Black

welcome in a store, or a restaurant, or a hotel, would they ever go back? It’s customer service 101. But what does providing a welcoming atmosphere entail? Simply saying “everyone is welcome” and leaving it at that without checking if people really do feel welcome is potentially having an adverse impact on some of your visitors – and residents alike.

Why? Feeling welcome is more than just customer service. It’s about feeling safe, both physically and mentally, and about a sense of belonging. In tourism we place a lot of emphasis on ensuring guests will be safe physically, and therefore will *feel safe* (mentally) from physical harm. But what is meant by emotional safety? Feeling emotionally safe is to *feel comfortable to ask questions, share concerns, and show up as your full self* ([The Mountaineers: Emotional Safety eLearning Course](#)). The Mountaineers, right here in Washington, provides an e-learning course on this very subject, recognizing that to have more successful and safe experiences in the outdoors, for all people, they needed to invest in training their leaders on the concept.

Sometimes this concept is met with a reaction, such as “Everyone is welcome in the outdoors.” But it’s not enough to be told all people are welcome. It must be demonstrated through action. [Read more: Meet BIPOC Groups Working to Make Outdoors Accessible.](#)

Hear from Washington’s Chevon Powell about the history of why Black and other People of Color sometimes feel unwelcome in the outdoors, her personal journey, and what she and others are doing about it.

Marissa Solini Photography,
Courtesy of Disabled Hikers

Creating welcome sometimes means being explicit in your communications, and marketing, like statements about inclusivity right on your website or signs at your entrance. But it also means doing the work to ensure the leaders and the frontline staff delivering the experiences understand the concepts, the importance, and are able to deliver that welcome.

Language is an important component of this too.

Sometimes communities hold events, festivals, or promote activities to residents. But often these are promoted only in English. In places where other languages are spoken, promoting events and activities in other languages signals to speakers of those languages - residents and visitors alike - that they are welcome.

What about cultural competency? How does that improve the welcome that is delivered?

Building cultural competency is another part of creating a welcoming atmosphere for diverse, multicultural and other marginalized groups including Indigenous people, LGBTQ+ community members and people with disabilities. It's about being empathetic and challenging your own assumptions. Sometimes it translates into simply being more polite because you are more aware of, and appreciative of, differences, and therefore a little more careful about what you say and how you say things. Cultural competency needs to be learned, it's not something we're born with, particularly if we live in a place that is not very diverse. It requires a definitive commitment to learning and being vulnerable. So,

Cultural Competency is not a soft skill, it is a must skill. (Destinations International)

*Cultural Competence is the ability to understand, communicate, and effectively interact with people across cultures, also known as Cultural Intelligence, Cultural Fluency, or Cultural Quotient. **Cultural Competency encompasses being aware of one's own world view, developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences, and gaining knowledge of various cultural practices and world views. Within the travel and tourism industry, and our everyday lives, being able to understand and communicate with people of various cultures is a must skill. Cultural Competency enables you to establish and build professional relationships with partners, suppliers, buyers, vendors, colleagues, and everyone you come into contact with.***

Read more: [What is Cultural Competency and Why it Matters to Your Business](#)



Roslyn Cafe, Carina Skrobecki Swain, Courtesy of State of Washington Tourism

we need to spend some time diving into our biases, assumptions, and the best part of being in the tourism industry – experiencing the glorious diversity of humanity – and all the cultures we may not have had the opportunity to interact with before. From an Indigenous perspective, this also means learning about the land you're on, what Indigenous cultures are in or close to your location, who the Tribal government is, and what their guidance is in regard to tourism impacts on their land and cultural traditions. More on this in the coming sections.

Defining each aspect of D, E, I and A

“Elevating the importance of DEI and ensuring it is woven into the core of the industry is vital for the future of travel and our workforce. As we rebuild the travel industry following the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential for our future growth and success to support programs that increase diversity and upward mobility throughout and across all sectors of the industry.” (US Travel Association)

In the context of tourism, the terms diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility carry specific meanings.

Diversity in Tourism

Diversity in tourism refers to the representation and engagement of a wide range of people with varied backgrounds, identities, and characteristics in all aspects of the tourism industry, including tourists, service providers, and destinations. It encompasses differences such as cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, age, ability, and socio-economic backgrounds among those who participate in and contribute to the tourism experience.



Courtesy of Miles Hike Club

Travel Unity is a US-based non-profit organization that works with organizations in the world of travel to broaden their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts, including aligning with best practices for DEI. In 2020, Travel Unity assembled over 100 individuals and organizations from inside and outside the travel industry to collaboratively engage in a process to create living standards for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the world of travel and tourism. These Standards are meant to engage the travel industry in an ongoing dialogue and encourage the sharing of best practices in DEI. Resource: [Travel Unity Standards](#)



Mead, Greg Balkin, Courtesy of State of Washington Tourism

Blacks in Travel & Tourism is a membership organization that designs and delivers programs, initiatives and training focused on advancing opportunities for Blacks in travel and tourism and building better destinations. It is an initiative of the Cultural Heritage Economic Alliance whose vision is to create broader access, diversity, inclusion and equitable opportunity for small BIPOC businesses to fully participate and profit in the global travel and tourism industry. Through their Diversity Tourism Academy they offer masterclasses for small travel and tourism businesses and tourism professionals to access tourism business enhancement and readiness trainings to help build sustainable businesses.



Courtesy of Miles Hike Club

Tourism Diversity Matters (TDM), founded as the collaborative leader of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives and concepts that can address the gaps of ethnic disparities and provide decision-makers in the tourism and events industry access, resources, and tactics to develop more effective Diversity & Inclusion strategies that will engage and retain a diverse workforce. TDM focuses on four primary pillars of activity to benefit the Tourism Industry: Apprenticeships, Workforce Development, Diversity Equity and Inclusion, Research and Data. The team and partners can work with all sizes of organizations, from small community DMOs to large companies, providing assessments and advice to help tourism organizations reach DEI goals.

Equity in Tourism

Equity in tourism involves ensuring fairness, justice, and equal opportunities for all individuals involved in the industry. This includes addressing historical and systemic disparities that might exist among different groups of people. An equitable tourism approach seeks to provide equal access to benefits, resources, and opportunities regardless of factors like socio-economic status, race, or gender.

Inclusion in Tourism

Inclusion in tourism focuses on creating an environment where all individuals, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, feel welcomed, respected, and valued. It involves actively involving people of all backgrounds in decision-making processes, designing experiences that cater to their needs, and fostering a sense of belonging for both tourists and those working in the tourism industry.

Accessibility in Tourism

Accessibility in tourism pertains to making travel experiences, destinations, accommodations, and activities available and usable to everyone, including those with disabilities or different needs. This involves removing physical, cognitive, and informational barriers to ensure that all individuals can fully participate and enjoy tourism offerings.

These concepts collectively contribute to creating a tourism environment that is not only diverse and inclusive but also strives for fairness, equal opportunities, and broad access. When these principles are effectively integrated into the tourism industry, they enhance the quality of experiences for all, provide economic opportunities for diverse communities, and foster a sense of harmony and mutual understanding among people from different backgrounds.

See the section Taking Action to Improve Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility for detailed guidance and resources on this topic, including Washington-based organizations to partner with and learn from.

Impacts on Indigenous Lands and People

Tourism can have both positive and negative impacts on Indigenous lands and people, and these impacts can vary widely based on factors such as the type of tourism, the cultural context, and the specific practices of the tourism



Courtesy of Visit Issaquah

industry. Therefore, it's important to understand the specific context in your tourism destination to start taking action right away to reduce negative impacts tourism may be having, and work towards positive impacts.

Tourism is often seen as a positive because it provides employment, income and entrepreneurship opportunities as well as can be a source of cultural celebration and pride for Indigenous communities. It can also lead to increased awareness about diverse Indigenous cultures, traditions, and issues, leading to better understanding and relationships among visitors and locals alike.

On the other hand, what often happens is that tourism has both exploitative effects and destructive attributes, including commodification and misrepresentation of Indigenous cultures, as well as degradation of sacred sites, undermining the spiritual and cultural significance of places that have been important since time immemorial. Another potential negative impact tourism may be having in your destination is habitat and ecosystem degradation, which often impacts Indigenous lands, livelihoods, and ways of life.

It's important to note that the impact of tourism on Indigenous lands and people is complex and context specific. Engaging – and partnering with - Indigenous communities and businesses directly; taking the lead from local Tribal governments with regard to decision-making processes around implementing tourism experiences, creating entrepreneurship opportunities, and how to respect cultural protocols, is an essential step in mitigating negative impacts and maximizing the benefits of tourism for Indigenous peoples.

An Opportunity To Turn A Conflict Into A Win-Win

In the summer of 2023, a Tribe near a rural Washington community set out for its annual traditional canoe journey, an event to celebrate the canoe as a central part of Coast Salish peoples' way of life and a cultural activity in existence since time immemorial. Participants encountered difficulty accessing the river this year. The water levels were already low due to drought, and on this day, there were river floaters that impeded access for the traditional canoes. This is an example of a negative cultural impact, and one that could have been avoided. The Tribe and the main business operating on the river did coordinate for a positive outcome, demonstrating that organized activities are beneficial because there can be more controls on behaviors and interactions. It was an opportunity for the destination management organization to collaborate with the Tribe and any other applicable local authorities, as well as to use their communications channels to message recreationists directly, but also to support organized activities as those relationships with businesses can create positive outcomes for all. This demonstrates the importance of incorporating efforts to partner with Tribal governments into destination management strategies and action plans.



Welcoming Week 2022, Courtesy of Visit Issaquah

The Guardians Program: Indigenous-led Destination Stewardship



The Indigenous Guardians Program was pioneered by the Haida Nation in 2005 and has become an exemplary model of Indigenous-led stewardship other communities are replicating. There is a network of guardian programs on the north Pacific coast. On the north Pacific coast, [Coastal Guardian Watchmen](#) “play a critical role in all aspects of stewardship for Coastal First Nations—ensuring resources are sustainably managed, that rules and regulations are followed, and that land and marine use agreements are implemented effectively. They uphold and enforce traditional and contemporary Indigenous laws and continue the work of their ancestors in protecting and managing coastal territories. Within the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), reconciliation and efforts in collaborative governance, the Coastal Guardian Watchmen are at the leading edge of a global movement toward Indigenous-led stewardship.”

“The Guardian Watchmen programs play a critical role in protecting and managing traditional territories, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering a thriving conservation economy.” [Read more: Destination Stewardship Report Summer 2023 Issue](#)

The [Indigenous Leadership Initiative](#) explains the history of the model and how it is modeled after an Australian program, and how it works in Canada, and provides guidance around how it could be replicated in other countries including the United States.

TREAD Map App

An innovative partnership between State of Washington Tourism, TREAD, and Dharma Maps elevates destination management initiatives across Washington. The TREAD Map App was developed during the pandemic and launched statewide in 2022 as a real-time tool help visitors and recreationists with exploration and wayfinding while inspiring responsible use of public lands. What sets it apart from other map apps is that local land managers, Tribes and destination organizations can share messaging about how to

recreate responsibly and respectfully. Existing partners include Disabled Hikers, Snoqualmie Tribe, Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Back Country Horsemen, Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, Pacific Northwest Trail Association, Northwest Motorcycle Association, Evergreen, Spokane Tribe of Indians, and the Mountaineers. It comes with a marketing toolkit and can be downloaded to iOS and Android devices. The more people contribute to it and the more it is promoted, the better, and more effective a tool it will become.



The advertisement features a dark background with a white mountain logo at the top center containing a winding path, with the text "TREAD MAP" below it. A green banner below the logo reads "POWERING SUSTAINABLE OUTDOOR RECREATION". On the left is a large QR code with a small version of the TREAD MAP logo in the center. Below the QR code, the text "Scan the QR code to download the app!" is written in white. In the bottom left corner is the official seal of the State of Washington. On the right, a hand holds a smartphone displaying the app's interface, which shows a map of a forested area with a yellow notification box that says "Crowded Area" and "Tap to see alternative Sno-Parks".

Building Climate Resilience

The global travel community now faces an even greater threat (than the COVID-19 pandemic) posed by climate change, one of the biggest and most urgent issues of our time. The travel and tourism sector, reliant on the weather and local natural environments, particularly in outdoor recreation communities, faces growing uncertainty. While the sector accounts for around 8%-11% of global carbon emissions with transport-related emissions forecasted to increase by 25% by 2030 from 2016 levels ([UNWTO/ITF](#)), it may disproportionately be affected by changing weather patterns and extreme events such as flooding and wildfires – something Washington is all too familiar with already. We need to act now to adapt and adjust, as well as to reduce the sector’s direct emissions.

The [World Economic Forum’s Global Risks Report 2022](#) ranked climate inaction as the number one threat to the world and the most severe risk, in terms of potential impacts, over the next decade. Tourism destinations are on the frontline of this crisis, with extreme temperatures, wildfires, flooding, coral bleaching, drought, storms and hurricanes all increasing in severity and frequency, as well as a growing threat from rising sea levels.

Nowhere will be exempt from these impacts, from crowded cities to areas of wilderness, as extreme weather events increase in severity and frequency. Yet, the effects of climate change are not felt equally – it affects under-represented and vulnerable groups including women, Indigenous communities, small island states and coastal areas more severely. Communities across Washington are experiencing this firsthand, from the increasing instances of wildfire smoke every summer,



Future of Tourism Guiding Principle #8 *Mitigate Climate impacts*



Strive to follow accepted scientific consensus on needed reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Invest in green infrastructure and a fast reduction in transport emissions involved in tourism - air, sea, and ground.

to record heat, to unstable snowpack at ski resorts and drought conditions for many counties across the state in summer of 2023 at the time of this writing. Drought and persistent heat lead to forests being more susceptible to wildfire, and recreation has a direct impact on the number and frequency of fires. Washington’s coastal waters are experiencing ocean acidification and warming temperatures as well, affecting marine life with long-term potential impacts for coastal communities.

According to the [department of natural resources](#), 85% of wildfires in Washington are human-caused, necessitating urgent and consistent messaging by all tourism and recreation businesses to ensure guests, visitors, campers, hikers, etc., are aware of this extreme risk.

To ensure communities and environments are protected and to stay viable, all tourism organizations, including travel companies and destination marketing and management organizations need to take action; this is essential to maintain and protect a thriving tourism economy. In an increasingly unstable world, there is an opportunity for tourism to move beyond simply minimizing its negative impact on destinations to actively contributing to long-term sustainability and restoration and regeneration by working with communities to improve social, environmental and economic situation of the places where they live, and tourists visit. Tourism can also contribute to the generation of good quality jobs, including green jobs, and diverse opportunities for entrepreneurship throughout the tourism supply chain.

Mt. Constitution, Brandon Fralic,
Courtesy of San Juan Islands Visitor Bureau

Reaching Net Zero: Envisioning 2030 and Beyond

On a local, national and international level, the tourism sector is both highly vulnerable to climate change and a notable contributor, meaning it has a key role to play in both reducing its own impacts as well as preparing and adapting. Globally, there is an effort to transition to 'Net Zero'; this refers to the goal of the total level of greenhouse gases entering the atmosphere being reduced to zero (achieved by a combination of reduction and removal). There is consensus that in order to avoid irreversible effects of climate change, emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) need to fall by approximately 50 percent from 2010 levels by 2030 and need to reach net zero by 2050. This requires large-scale decarbonization across all levels of society, increased capture in soils, plants and trees, and increased removal via technologies that remove carbon from the air. This ambition was first set out in the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015 and has been reinforced at subsequent UN climate change conferences or COPs since then. In order for countries to make these commitments, national targets must include action from all types of sectors, organizations and businesses of all sizes.

In 2021, at the climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, leading players from the tourism sector came together to launch the [Glasgow Declaration for Climate Action in Tourism](#). **The Glasgow Declaration is part of the**



Defining Greenhouse Gases and Decarbonization

Greenhouse gases (GHG) are atmospheric gases such as carbon dioxide and methane that trap heat from the sun, leading to the greenhouse effect and subsequently causing the Earth's surface temperature to rise. Human activities, such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes, are major sources of GHG emissions which are accelerating global warming and climate change.

Decarbonization is the process of reducing or eliminating Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from various sources, particularly from human activities such as burning fossil fuels, industrial processes, and deforestation. The goal of decarbonization is to eliminate the global economy's reliance on fossil fuels and to transition to a low-carbon or carbon-neutral economy, where the net emissions of GHGs, especially CO₂, are minimized or balanced by removing an equivalent amount from the atmosphere.

wider global movement to halve emissions by 2030 and reach Net Zero as soon as possible before 2050.

Signatories to the declaration commit to developing a climate action goals, setting out how they will reduce their emissions.

Developing a Climate Action Plan or goals for an existing strategy enables signatories to prioritize which actions to take to reach Net Zero and how to measure progress against them.

What should Climate Action Plans contain?

- The main climate impacts of your business i.e., significant sources of emissions
- The steps you will take to address those impacts, over the next year and beyond
- How you will monitor and report on your progress

Climate Action Plans can be standalone or simply new goals and actions integrated into broader business plans,

strategic plans or sustainability plans. The important thing is to keep plans simple, concise and actionable, using language that all those affected understand and that can engage people across the business or community in the plan's development and implementation.

Is It Possible To Reach Net Zero?

In 2023, the Travel Foundation set out to understand what a decarbonized travel and tourism industry would look like, and if it was feasible to reach the targets, within a thriving sector. Together with Breda University in the Netherlands, the European Tourism Futures Institute, and sponsored by Intrepid Travel and Destination Vancouver, they published [Envisioning 2030 and Beyond: The changing shape of tourism in a decarbonizing world.](#)

The report finds only one scenario to achieve Net Zero by 2050, while also allowing for growth. To achieve this scenario, key recommendations include:

- More governments including international aviation emissions (to reach their destinations) in their plans;
- Tourist boards and travel companies targeting a greater proportion of short-haul customer and bringing net zero products to market;
- Governments investing in greener forms of transport and the travel industry adopting and promoting them;

Mica Moon Zip Tours, Greg Balkin, Wondercamp,
Courtesy of State of Washington Tourism

What is a Climate Action Plan?

A detailed, customized roadmap for measuring, planning and reducing GHG emissions and related climate impacts, including:

- **Measure** - inventory of existing emissions
 - **Decarbonize** - reduction targets and prioritized actions
 - **Regenerate** - actions to restore and protect ecosystems
 - **Collaborate** - sharing solutions
 - **Finance** - resources and funding required
-
- Relying less on offsetting as a primary solution, focusing instead on decarbonization; and using offsetting a final resort or focusing on investing in restoration and carbon sequestration solutions to offset those emissions that cannot be reduced;
 - The need to consider equity and fairness, recognizing that some destinations are more ready for the scenario than others and some destinations rely more on long-haul travelers than others; and
 - Slowing the expected rapid growth in aviation, with limits on the number of long-haul flights.



Tourism in 2030

Getting on track for Net Zero



To keep **global warming** to no more than 1.5°C – as called for in the Paris Agreement – the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism supports a global commitment to halve CO2 emissions by 2030 and reach **Net Zero** as soon as possible before 2050.



1 THE URGENCY OF THE NEED TO DECARBONISE



Tourism's emissions now



Travel and Tourism accounts for at least 5% of global CO₂ emissions, with some estimates at 8-11% if you include indirect (supply chain) emissions.



Our modelling

We sought alternative positive scenarios for tourism that would meet the Glasgow Declaration's goals. We modelled what would happen if we increased a range of measures under 7 categories:

- Sustainable Aviation Fuel
- Electrification and Efficiency
- Infrastructure Improvements
- Taxi and Roadside
- Green Buildings
- Electric Road
- Electric Road

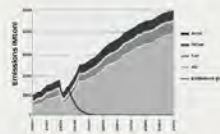
Legend: ● Strong Impact, ● Moderate Impact, ● Limited Impact

Long haul flying is a big polluter

The longest-distance journeys are a small percentage of all trips (2% in 2019) but are, by far, the most polluting and hardest to decarbonise. If left unchecked, by 2050 such flights will quadruple, and account for 41% of all tourism's emissions (up from 19% in 2019).

Tourism's emissions are set to grow

Global tourism is set to double in size by 2050 (from 2019 levels), and emissions are set to increase by 73%.



2 ONLY ONE OPTION TO TRAVEL AND DECARBONISE

Our decarbonisation scenario

We found only one decarbonisation scenario which allows for the fact that tourism will grow, with similar levels of growth by 2050 (+102% trips +91% guest nights +80% revenue).

How we got to net zero

Significant investments and incentives to accelerate the use of green energy and shift to the greenest forms of transport such as electric cars and trains.



Applying limits to the most polluting forms of transport, reducing long-haul flights and keeping overall distance travelled by air to 2019 levels.

Taking immediate action to prevent further escalation of emissions, to come even close to halving them by the end of this decade.

A shift in how we travel

This means more trips by road and rail, comparatively fewer trips by air and an overall reduction in distances travelled.



3 THE NEED FOR FAIR TOURISM STRATEGIES

Tourism's emissions are inequitable

About half of tourism's global footprint is caused by travel between the richest countries (per capita GDP of more than US \$25,000).

The most frequent fliers – a mere 1% of the world population – account for more than half of total emissions from passenger air travel.

Destinations are all different

Some destinations have fewer resources to invest in green infrastructure and technology.

Some, such as island nations, are more dependent on long-haul visitors.

Some have contributed very little to climate change but are suffering the most from its impacts.

And should less developed economies be required to introduce limits in the same way as richer, developed nations?

4 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NOW

Support the call for **global coordination** of policies, innovation, investment and data.

Ensure emissions from travel **from destinations are fully accounted for** in tourism plans.



Start identifying and providing **low and net-zero emissions** tourism options.

Better **understand and plan** for how tourism will operate in a decarbonised, 1.5 degree world.

Sign and implement the **Glasgow Declaration**.

Read the full report at www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/envision2030

[Download high-res version of infographic](#)

Responding to Shifts in Demand

There is an increasing awareness from consumers about the negative impacts of travel and a corresponding demand for more sustainable travel options.

- 83% of global travelers think sustainable travel is vital, with 61% saying the pandemic has made them want to travel more sustainably in the future (Booking.com, 2021)
- 90% of travelers are actively looking for sustainable travel options when booking (Expedia Group, 2022)
- When traveling, 69% of people want to reduce their carbon footprint (Booking.com, 2021).
- Google data found that 82% of people say sustainability is more top of mind than before the COVID-19 pandemic and recorded a 70% rise in the number of travelers seeking sustainable travel options in 2021 (Travel Weekly, 2021)
- 46% of flyers are willing to pay more than 2% extra for a carbon neutral flight and 71% think travel companies should offer more sustainable choices (Travel Weekly, 2021)
- 'A world in motion: shifting consumer travel trends in 2022 and beyond' (WTTC 2023) shows that sustainability is a key element of the travel agenda, with travelers eager to reduce their carbon footprint and support sustainable tourism.

Research shows that sustainability is most valued by Millennial and Gen Z travelers, who will comprise the biggest segment of global travel consumers for the foreseeable future.



- 77% of travelers aged between 18–29 surveyed by Intrepid Travel say that sustainability impacts their travel decisions (Travel Agent Central, 2018)
- 82% of 18–29-year-olds said that they would be willing to spend more money on accommodation that operates responsibly (Globetrender, 2021)
- “Close to half of Gen Z globally have climate anxiety... The vast majority worry about the potentially catastrophic consequences of climate change – and many say they are committed to finding solutions by speaking up,” changing their diet and altering their vacation plans, according to survey research conducted by the Oliver Wyman Forum. (WEForum 2022)

Furthermore, far from sustainable options and experiences simply being a bonus for consumers, for a majority of travelers, a lack of these options will negatively impact their trip and have lasting ramifications for the business and/or destination.

- 53% of travelers surveyed admit that they get annoyed if somewhere they are staying stops them from being sustainable, for example by not providing recycling facilities (Booking.com, 2021)

●●○○○ Reviewed 11 July 2020

Too much single-use plastic packaging

●●○○○ Reviewed 9 August 2021 via mobile

No recycling - all rubbish sent to landfill!

Tourism destinations and organizations that are able to respond to the growing demand and expectation for sustainable travel options by providing innovative and sustainable offerings will be in a stronger position to attract responsible and economically valuable visitors in an increasingly competitive market, in addition to the obvious benefits of boosting the resilience of the destination itself.

Alongside the growing demand for more sustainable travel experiences, there are several other emerging travel trends that can be better harnessed by improved sustainability and resilience at the community level. These consumer trends are well-aligned to the tourism landscape in Washington and the products offered in the region. For example, the pandemic inspired increased interest in nature-based activities for many people

Mark Downey, Courtesy of State of Washington Tourism

who were required to spend more time outside to meet social distancing requirements, as well as to exercise and to escape the confines of their homes during lockdowns. This resulted in sudden changes to existing visitor flows and behavior as more people headed to rural sites and attractions which often do not have the corresponding infrastructure and facilities to support rapid increases in arrivals. If outdoor experiences become overcrowded, they can result in degradation of the natural environment which jeopardizes the very asset that the tourism product is built on and diminishes the quality of the experience for the visitor. This threatens the long-term viability of the destination and underlines the need for integrating sustainability and resilience-building into destination planning and management.

Evolving from Destination Marketing to Destination Management

The COVID-19 pandemic was catalytic in galvanizing the tourism sector to want to ‘build back better’ and to use the recovery from the pandemic as an opportunity to address many of the challenges that destinations were facing. In many cases, actions were already being taken toward change, and the pandemic served to accelerate important

The Case of Lake Tahoe

The Lake Tahoe region was experiencing high volumes of visitors to recreation sites and an increasing cost of living that came to a point of crisis during the pandemic when many sought refuge in natural areas and outdoor recreation communities. There were instances of anti-tourism protesting and closures of restaurants at certain times due to staff shortages. This inspired a group of organizations from across the region to come together in 2021 to commit to coordinated solutions and to demonstrate to residents that decision-makers and leaders across government, and non-governmental organizations and the tourism industry would work together to ensure a better future of tourism in Tahoe. They formed a coalition and began the destination stewardship planning process. Upon releasing the Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan in 2023 the coalition became the Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Council with the region’s destination management organizations, conservation organizations, the regional planning agency, forest service and more, committing funding to ensure implementation of the plan. Learn more at stewardshiptahoe.org.

Future of Tourism Guiding Principle #6 Reduce tourism’s burden



Account for all tourism costs in terms of local tax burdens, environmental and social impacts, and objectively verifiable disruption. Ensure investments are linked to optimizing net-positive impacts for communities and the environment.

shifts to the tourism status quo. For example, over several years now, the mandate of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) across the globe has increasingly expanded from a primary focus on marketing to boost visitor numbers to a wider mandate of management of tourism in the destination.

Growth has always been the primary goal in tourism, which is why tourism organizations have primarily concentrated on marketing their destination to attract ever increasing numbers of visitors. The assumption has been that more visitors result in more spending in the destination which translates into employment opportunities, infrastructure improvements, economic and social development. However, a sole focus on marketing and increased visitor numbers ignores the complex challenges that unmanaged growth can lead to, including overcrowding, increases in pollution, lack of capacity for processing waste, water shortages, inflated rent and living costs, resident dissatisfaction, the degradation of the natural environment, etc. This is essential public policy cost-benefit analysis that should go on at every local and regional tourism planning department. These impacts threaten the tourism economy itself over the long run and can negatively impact the social and cultural fabric of communities which, while intangible, is often a key attraction for visitors to a particular area.

This reached a crisis point in some city destinations such as Amsterdam and Barcelona and resulted in new measures from destination authorities looking to appease unhappy residents and halt the negative impacts of unchecked tourism. For example, in 2019, the city of Amsterdam passed a regulation which limits entire properties to being rented out for a maximum of 30 nights per year and in 2023 they set a cap on overnight and daytrip visitor numbers to the city. Likewise, Venice banned large cruise

The Invisible Burden of Tourism

As visitor numbers grow, the relationship between ‘more visitors and ‘more benefits’ provides diminishing returns. Not only do the costs – or burdens – increase, but visitor demand begins to reach – and breach - various limitations. Examples of the unaccounted or ‘invisible’ costs associated with the additional demand of visitors include:

- additional infrastructure required to transport, feed, accommodate, provide energy and water, and manage the waste of tourists and those employed in the sector.
- protecting/maintaining shared environmental & cultural assets

These pressures are not necessarily caused by very large numbers of visitors as tourism is often in places that are particularly vulnerable (e.g. fragile ecosystems, traditional ways of life) as that is what makes them special. Even small numbers can lead to degradation.

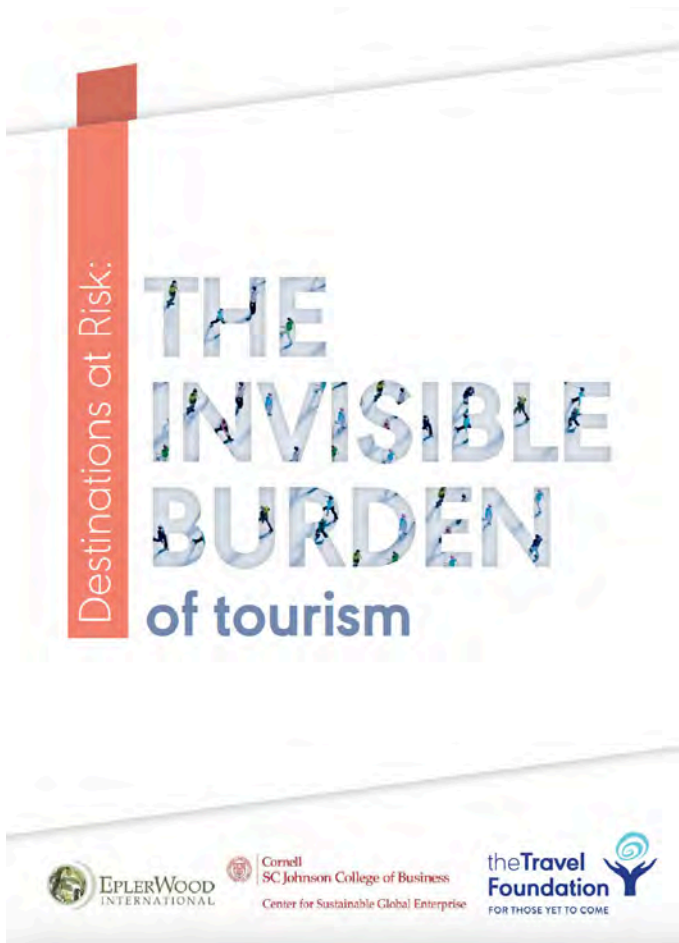
This ‘invisible burden’ of tourism relates to shared or ‘common pool’ resources between the tourism sector and the community. The travel and tourism industry is highly reliant on common pool resources: natural habitats, historical monuments, water and energy, public spaces, infrastructure, and social and cultural capital which, when taken together, amount to ‘the destination’. It is ‘invisible’ because the wider destination costs/impacts of servicing demand (i.e., the implications of growth) are simply not taken into account, and there is no clear accountability or shared responsibility between sectors or businesses for maintaining them.

So what can be done to manage the ‘invisible burden’? There needs to be a shift away from growth as the primary metric for assessing the performance of tourism. Organizations need to define new measures of success and a holistic set of indicators which account for the full costs of tourism in their destination and aims for a net positive impact for their communities.

Read the full report Destinations at Risk: [The Invisible Burden of Tourism](#) [Watch the Video](#)

ships from docking or passing through the city’s main canals and introduced other measures such as higher tourist taxes and turnstiles to curb visitor numbers and reduce the problems caused by overcrowding. In Washington there have been cases where cars parked erratically along roadways near popular hiking routes have prevented emergency vehicles from being able to pass through, a current challenge that has yet to be solved.

The tourism revenue that stays in the local economy and supports local livelihoods can also vary by place, and by policy. By expanding the focus to tourism management, tourism organizations can work with policymakers to ensure that tourism is reaching its full potential of boosting local livelihoods and resulting in the most benefits and least harm for the local community and environment.



Balanced Measures of Success

An increasing number of organizations are recognizing that traditional metrics focusing solely on volume of visitors, of trips, of occupancy, etc., are insufficient in telling the real story of success. Economic measures do not address the impacts of tourism in a destination. Communities need a new vision, and new ways to measure success that go beyond simply growth. Many leading tourism destinations are now recognizing that it's not a move from marketing to management that's needed but a move from destination-thinking (with tourism and tourists at the center) to place-thinking (with residents at the center).

Destinations can and should be places where people live, work, play, study...and visit. For this to happen, destinations of the future need to ensure that the needs of residents and communities – not just tourists – are at the heart of their strategy and will need a new definition of what success looks like.

Organizations that develop products and experiences for visitors without thinking about the needs of residents may not be contributing well to a place, despite the obvious benefits typically associated with tourism. Taking part in place-making means taking a seat at the table with

Case Study: Iceland Rethinking Tourism for the Long Haul

PROBLEM: During 2019, Iceland's tourism rapid growth had become unsustainable.

SOLUTIONS:

- Invest in improving tourism infrastructure (restrooms, parking lots, trails, accessible trails etc).
- Attract higher-earning professionals who stay longer and spend more
- Developing two new tourism routes to avoid over-congestion on Route 1 to enable more remote adventures.

(Source: [Condé Nast Traveler, 2021](#))



Future of Tourism Guiding Principle #7 **Redefine economic success**



Rather than raw contribution to growth in GDP, favor metrics that specify destination benefits such as small business development, distribution of incomes, and enhancement of local supply chains.

the public and private sector partners, to be involved in broader conversations that affect the community, from infrastructure, development planning, retail, culture and sports, environmental protection, and citizen wellbeing. This offers many new possibilities and opportunities for innovative product development and destination management.

Please see Section 5 of this handbook for more detail on how to assess the impacts of tourism in your destination.

Destination Stewardship and Global Sustainability Standards

Building on what has been outlined above, this holistic approach to tourism management can be defined as

What does this mean in practice?

New measures of success could include the following, with some requiring the identification of impacts that to be increased or decreased over time, in order to determine tracking methods and targets:

- Increasing positive impacts on communities
- Decreasing negative impacts on communities
- Decreasing impacts on natural resources, public spaces, built assets, etc.
- Distribution of tourism's benefits, related to local supply chain as well as diversity, equity and inclusion.
- The contribution of tourism to the climate and ecological emergencies, including financial and human resources
- Others are based on the vision for tourism in the community and how community members wish tourism to contribute value (economic, social, cultural, and environmental value).

Destination Stewardship. This approach considers the environmental and social context of the destination to understand tourism’s wider impacts. A stewardship approach also prioritizes collaboration between destination community members, including industry and residents and other sectors, to develop a shared vision of what the future of tourism should look like in line with the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit. Destination stewardship is a regenerative model, where tourism strategies aim to restore, protect and revitalize the local environment and community.

“Destination stewardship can be defined as an approach to destination governance that seeks to balance and meet the economic, environmental, and social/cultural needs of a destination; while operating within a legitimate governance model with active participation from the public and private sectors, as well as the local community.” (World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC))

The white paper [“Towards Destination Stewardship: Achieving Destination Stewardship through scenarios & a Governance Diagnostics framework”](#) developed by the Travel Foundation, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTTC) and European Tourism Futures Institute (ETFI) identifies the key drivers and barriers for destination stewardship.

Future of Tourism Guiding Principle #2 Sustainability Standards



Respect the publicly available, internationally approved minimum criteria for sustainable tourism practices maintained by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council for both industry and destinations.

Tourism destination management organizations and businesses alike are encouraged to turn to global standards for guidance on responsible and sustainable destination management and stewardship. These can be starting points for action planning and for self-assessments to gauge performance as well as identify priority areas that need attention in your destination.

4VI: A Social Enterprise Mission and Balanced KPIs

4VI (formerly Tourism Vancouver Island a regional destination marketing organization for Vancouver Island, Canada) re-launched themselves as a social enterprise with new social responsibility commitments in 2022 under four pillars – communities, environment, cultures and businesses. These new pillars meant the organization’s 2023 strategy was redesigned to include destination and organization-focused key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the efforts of their team, and the impact of their work, across Vancouver Island. The KPIs range from increasing revenues to Indigenous, women and LGBTQ+ -owned tourism enterprises, to increases in businesses signed up to their Biosphere Sustainability Program, to measuring investment by the tourism industry into conservation programs, and much more. [Read 4VI’s full Impact Strategy](#)



Port Townsend, Jason Hummel Photography,
Courtesy of State of Washington Tourism

Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria were developed by a working group of experts in the field to reflect a thorough and common set of ideal practices for industry and destinations to work toward achieving more sustainable tourism operations and destination management. “They reflect certification standards, indicators, criteria, and best practices from different cultural and geo-political contexts around the world in tourism and other sectors.” (gstccouncil.org) There are two types of criteria, adapted for businesses and for destinations. Destination criteria, mapped to the sustainable development goals with suggested performance indicators, can be found [here](#).

Some destinations use the criteria to guide activities, to work toward certification, to assess and monitor performance, to develop requirements for regionally specific programs or labels to help consumers identify organizations with more sustainable practices and to highlight and reward businesses that are taking steps to improve their practices.

Try a Tourism for SDGs Self-Assessment for your destination [here](#). Green Destinations is a Future of Tourism Coalition Partner supporting sustainable destinations, their businesses and their communities.



B Tourism More and more travel companies are going the route of becoming a Certified B Corporation. B Corporations are businesses that meet the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability to balance profit and purpose. B Tourism is a global network of Certified B Corporation travel and tourism companies as well as other conscious travel organizations that take collective action for environmental and social justice. For destination leaders, this can be a resource to provide for businesses looking for a process and network to join. [Learn More](#)

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 development goals covering areas from poverty and inequality to environmental

protection, climate action, and inclusive employment opportunities. They were established by the United Nations (UN) and adopted by all member states in 2015, who have committed to take meaningful actions across all of the target areas by 2030. As such, in many countries these targets have been integrated into planning documents. Many organizations use the thematic areas of the SDGs as a guide to align goals and actions in tourism and sustainability plans to some of the SDG targets. This may be especially relevant if your region has existing plans in place that are linked to the SDGs or if your local authority is already required to report against the SDG indicator framework. Learn more about the SDGs and tourism here <https://tourism4sdgs.org/> or at <https://www.goodlifegoals.org/>.

Reflections

- **Did you learn anything new while reading this section? Were there perspectives that you hadn't thought of that you are interested in learning more about?**
- **Are you aware of existing initiatives in your community focused on areas of environmental protection including reducing waste, decarbonization, protecting wildlife, conserving water, etc.?**
- **Are you aware of existing initiatives by businesses in your community to become more inclusive and accessible?**
- **Does your organization have any goals in place relating to the themes of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) e.g., environmental protection, poverty, inequality etc.?**