

6 sustainable travel trends set to dominate in 2022

 By Sue Garrett

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Since 2020, the travel and tourism industries have primarily focused on health and safety, fighting tooth and nail for survival following the global impact of Covid-19. However, that doesn't mean that travel brands, operators or travellers have forgotten about the importance of travelling sustainability.



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If anything, sustainable, responsible or 'green' travel – call it what you will – is more at the forefront than ever. In many ways, we have a clean slate. A chance to do things better, more responsibly and mindfully, both as travel thought leaders and travellers. Many responsible travel trends are already becoming more mainstream, which is fantastic news and just the way it should be.

So, what do experts predict will emerge as sustainable travel trends for 2022?

1. Say no to single-use plastics

Hopefully, you are seeing much fewer single-use toiletries, plastic straws and plastic takeaway containers on your travels. Single-use plastic contributes to the whopping 300 million tonnes of plastic produced globally each year and the enormous pollution problem in our oceans.

More travellers are now demanding that single-use plastics become a thing of the past in hotels, on aeroplanes, and across the traveller journey.

2. Say yes to eco-tourism packages

While many travellers desire to travel more sustainably, that doesn't necessarily mean they're keen to do all the required research themselves.

Increasingly, we've seen travellers express interest in eco-tourism packages that come with a trusted 'seal of approval', more environmentally friendly aircraft and airlines, as well as accommodation and experiences with suitable sustainable protocols or initiatives.

Travel Experts can play a pivotal role in assisting their customers by doing the research, advising on sustainable experiences, what to avoid, and where to shop and eat locally.

3. Say no to unethical animal tourism

I'd argue that sustainable travel should always include being mindful of how we interact with the creatures around us. Travellers and travel companies alike have a critical role to play in saying no to activities where wildlife are not in their natural environment.

I love this quote from the World Bank, which details our collective role in growing wildlife-based tourism sustainably:

"More than ever, more countries need to look to concrete examples of well-planned, sustainably-run tourism operations that have led to increased investments in protected areas and reserves, a reduction in poaching, an increase in the non-consumptive value of wildlife through viewing, and opportunities for rural communities to improve their livelihoods through tourism-related jobs, revenue-sharing arrangements, and co-management of natural resources."

4. Say yes to improved standards and certification

We expect to see improved systems and standards come into play, particularly from a certification perspective. This should make it easier for travel agents, DMCs, and travellers to select suppliers that are genuinely making sustainable efforts.

We are also sure to see the increased influence of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and other destination-specific authorities with their recognised sustainability standards.

5. Say yes to financial incentives for sustainable initiatives

Industry experts tend to agree that government financial support is critical in incentivising sustainable initiatives. Such funds, if made available, could be put to use in supporting small businesses and initiatives and boosting a destination's overall sustainable reputation, particularly vital in communities where putting food on the table takes precedence.

6. Say no to overtourism

To steer clear of crowds, we've seen many travellers opting for 'off-the-beaten-track' destinations over the once-popular

tourist spots.

If overtourism becomes a concern once more, industry experts predict that authorities will be much quicker to establish more protected areas and limitations to spread the 'traveller load' more broadly.

Most importantly, sustainable travel is everyone's responsibility. Let's keep the good practices we've implemented over the last two years and continue improving where we need to.

How to be more sustainable during your travels:

- Avoid single-use plastics. If you can't, take the time to find out how and where to recycle your items.
- Turn off the lights and the aircon when leaving your hotel room. Better yet, avoid using the aircon altogether.
- Take charge of your carbon footprint by using public transport whenever possible and potentially paying a portion towards a local carbon offset project.
- Pick up litter when out and about.
- Shop local.
- Choose your destination wisely, opting for lesser-known 'gems' instead of the more popular holiday 'go-tos'.
- Support community establishments and suppliers.

ABOUT SUE GARRETT

Sue Garret is General Manager for Product and Marketing at Flight Centre Travel Group.

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