



An Event Planner's Guide to Destination Stewardship

It's a journey, not an end point



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“Indisputably, irresponsible luxury is fading while meaningful engagement is growing. Trips that enrich our understanding of other cultures, protect fragile environments or assist impoverished communities are not extravagant, but empowering.”

—ARILD MOLSTAD

from his book, *Last Chance Destinations*

Lately we've been watching beloved destinations struggle under the weight of popularity—Venice, Cinque Terre, Barcelona, Dubrovnik, Santorini, Iceland, Bali, The Galapagos—the list gets longer every year. Over the last decade, everyone in the meetings and events industry has witnessed this explosion of overtourism and the serious challenges for destinations that come along with such fame. With many popular destinations turning from dream spots to nightmares, the pressure on event planners to embrace destination stewardship has never been more critical to the health of our industry.

Let's face it, though. The hard reality is that if a client has their sights set on rewarding their top performers by

indulging them in the canals and history of Venice, we might try to convince our client to consider the downsides of choosing this particular location, but more likely we will oblige their desire and work to make the experience the best one possible. Where we sit as strategic advisers has a lot to do with the influence we can yield. Whether addressing perennially favored destinations or encouraging clients to consider emerging destinations, event agencies can become a part of the solution rather than contributors to the problem.

Where we sit as strategic advisers has a lot to do with the influence we can yield.



A Destination Stewardship Mindset

Because many up and coming destinations are ill-prepared to support a significant increase in visitors, it's clear that we can't simply identify and recommend new destinations—we actually need to adopt a destination stewardship mindset from the outset. Event planners with a destination stewardship mindset incorporate lessons

[we actually need to adopt a destination stewardship mindset from the outset]

learned from locations that confronted challenges too late, and they consider and commit to strategies in advance to protect emerging destinations—their residents, environments, cultures, and economies—as they grow in popularity.

Annette Chinn founded streamlinevents in 2002. Since then, streamlinevents has organized incentive travel events in locations all over the world. We

know the event planners and the companies we work with want to be a part of a solution, as do the high performing employees they reward with extraordinary incentive travel experiences.

Choosing a Sustainable Approach

By shifting practice and event design to a more sustainable approach, we can remain focused on how to offer enriching and motivating experiential events, while making sure that everyone we work with shares our goals to help prevent or mitigate the oversights, negligence, and mistakes that have brought so much negative attention and all too frequently, harm, to destinations we love. Because we recognize that destination stewardship requires commitment and collaboration across the entire Travel & Tourism sector, we thought it might be helpful to share our journey—efforts we admire, best practices we've developed so far, and how we're creating authentic and transformative incentive programs that reward, celebrate, and inspire high performers.



Overtourism—How Did We Get Here:

Preventing overtourism requires committed collaborations across industry, governments, and local populations. All of us in the incentive travel sector are tasked with the challenge to consider carefully how to not love these special places to death. We all want to provide once-in-a-lifetime experiences for our clients, responsibly. Fortunately, we have a wealth of examples—failures and successes—and a robust set of goals, principles, and best practices to guide us as event planners towards Destination Stewardship. First, let's explore two superstars of #overtourism.

#Overtourism

In 2018, the word “overtourism” made the Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year shortlist. We've all been there, shoulder to shoulder with too many tourists. With the exponential growth in tourism, more people are visiting the most popular destinations in a day than there are people living there (think Venice and Barcelona). In other destinations, yearly visitors exceed the local population of the entire country (think Iceland). Still other destinations that once required arduous and expensive travel now find the skyrocketing tourist population and the new ease of accessibility threatening the very existence of the ecosystems that bring people there (think the Galapagos Islands). It's an enormous problem—for the locals, the tourists, the industry, and especially, the environment. We know this.



[In 2018, the word “overtourism” made the Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year shortlist.]

Venice—turning the ship around

Along with Barcelona, Dubrovnik, Bali, and other high profile destinations, Venice has become synonymous with #overtourism. The people of Venice literally started to turn the ship of overtourism around in 2016 when small fishing boats blocked 6 cruise liners from entering the Giudecca Canal in a protest they called No Grandi Navi (no large ships). While we were writing this guide, the 13-deck cruise ship, The Opera, crashed into a wharf and a tourist boat, injuring 5 people while passing through the Giudecca Canal.

Just a few weeks earlier in May, 2019, the famed street artist Banksy made an appearance in Venice during the Biennale, setting up a stall in St. Mark's Square where he displayed his new work titled "Venice in Oil." The painting was actually composed of several canvases that side by side showed a canal with a huge cruise ship in the background blocking the view of the city, and several small gondolas in the foreground. Shortly after he set up his stall, police asked him to leave, unaware of his identity. He posted a video of the encounter to his Instagram.

The cruise ship crash on June 2 may finally spur a ban of large cruise ships from the canal. But engineering new routes and a new passenger terminal to receive tourists is certainly no quick fix. Urgent problems with pollution, the effects of the climate crisis, housing affordability, etc., remain.

Venice has become synonymous with #overtourism



Iceland

protecting a fragile ecosystem



When the Eyjafjallajökull volcano erupted in 2010, it set more than giant ash clouds and electrical storms in motion. It put Iceland on the destination map of visitors seeking extraordinary natural landscapes. Between 2010 and 2016, visitors to Iceland quadrupled, leading the government to limit access to some fragile natural resources because of concerns about environmental damage.

In 2017 alone, Iceland received 6.5 times more international visitors than there are people in the country. And then there's the Bieber effect. In 2015 Justin Bieber released a video, I'll Show You, set in the Fjaðrárgljúfur canyon.

According to the Environmental Agency of Iceland, an estimated 1 million+ Bieber fans showed up from all corners of the world in the wake of that video. To protect this pristine canyon, Icelandic officials have had to close it off to the public.

Iceland

protecting a fragile ecosystem

Iceland has responded to their overtourism challenges with a variety of approaches. The city of Reykjavik, where locals are being pushed out by AirBnB and rising real estate prices, has banned new hotel construction. A Tourist Site Protection Fund has been created to protect Icelandic nature and increase the number of sites visited by tourists to reduce pressure on tourist destinations experiencing overtourism. The Iceland Tourist Board and Icelandic Travel Industry Association created an official quality and eco label for Icelandic tourism—Vakinn. The Vakinn label demonstrates that a business operates in an ethical, professional, and environmentally sustainable way. The country launched the Icelandic Pledge, a set of guidelines for responsible tourism, and Iceland Academy, a series of online courses to educate tourists on responsible travel before they arrive. Since January, 2017, 310 Icelandic tourism companies have signed a Declaration of Responsible Tourism.



The Roots of Sustainable Travel—Ecotourism and Geotourism

The word ecotourism emerged from the global environmental movement in the '70s and was eventually defined by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES, 1990) as: "Responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people." Sounds a lot like Destination Stewardship, doesn't it? The UN declared 2002 the International Year of Ecotourism, giving the ecotourism ethic a big boost in visibility, and ecotourism grew, driven by strong consumer demand.

National Geographic originated Geotourism and continues to promote it today. National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destinations defines geotourism as: "Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents." Take a look at National Geographic's 13 Geotourism Principles for governments and the travel industry here.

So we can all breathe a sigh of relief—we don't have to reinvent the wheel. A lot of excellent work has been done to help illuminate a path towards Destination Stewardship.

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National Geographic's **13** Geotourism Principles for governments and the travel industry

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Integrity of a Place | 8. Planning |
| 2. International Codes | 9. Land Use |
| 3. Community Involvement | 10. Market Diversity |
| 4. Community Benefit | 11. Interactive Interpretation |
| 5. Tourist Satisfaction | 12. Market Selectivity |
| 6. Conservation of Resources | 13. Evaluation |
| 7. Protection and Enhancement of Destination Appeal | |
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“
Overcrowding
is easier to
prevent than to
recover from.
Good tourism
management
practices
and stringent
planning are
key to the
sustainable
development of
tourism.

—from *Coping with
Success—Managing
Overcrowding in
Tourism
Destinations*,
McKinsey & Company

”

Foundations for Destination Stewardship

Venice and Iceland demonstrate the tough challenges of recovery once the overtourism scale tips. Their continuing sagas and the tales of woe from other destinations suffering similar fates have helped us realize the urgency in adopting a Destination Stewardship approach right from the start. When we look around for inspiration and best practices, we find a lot of excellent work to inform our own efforts.

We especially appreciate the motto of the GDS-Index, global thought leaders in sustainable destination management: "The GDS-Index is About Progress, Not Perfection." Progress, not perfection. There will always be unanticipated outcomes despite our best efforts—emerging destinations are highly complex systems with many players and moving, changing parts. But many creative, dedicated people have been working on solutions. [Here's a brief overview of the foundations for destination stewardship informing our efforts today.](#)

Our Common Agenda

We're inspired by the work of the Events Industry Council. In May, 2018 the EIC hosted the first Global Sustainable Event Standards Forum at IMEX Frankfurt to discuss sustainability standards and encourage widespread adoption of sustainability practices. After discussion and debate, EIC members outlined four overarching principles based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals to guide the events industry, and created a Sustainability Pledge for companies to demonstrate their commitment.

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The GDS-Index is About Progress, Not Perfection.



The UN Sustainability Goals

You may be familiar with the UN Sustainability Goals. Guy Bigwood, managing director of the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index), a leading sustainability benchmarking and improvement program for meetings and events destinations around the world, calls the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (or SDGs) “our common agenda.”



Created in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly, the UN Sustainability Goals provide “the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice.” The SDGs “call for action by all countries, poor, rich and middle-income to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.” The target year for achievement of the goals is 2030.

Principles of Event Sustainability

After you've read the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, you'll appreciate the Principles of Event Sustainability created by the Events Industry Council. The EIC aligned the 17 SDGs with Four Principles of Event Sustainability and offered a clear definition of event sustainability:

Sustainability for events means taking action towards preserving our natural environment; promoting a healthy, inclusive society; and supporting a thriving economy.

Adopting the Four Principles of Event Sustainability as a road map can take us far on our journey to becoming Destination Stewards.

Four principles of event sustainability

1

Event organisers and suppliers share responsibility for implementing and communicating sustainable practices to their stakeholders.



2

Basic environmental practices include:

- Conservation of resources, including water, energy and natural resources
 - Waste management
- Carbon emissions reduction and management
- Supply chain management and responsible purchasing
- Biodiversity preservation



3

Basic social considerations include:

- Universal human rights
 - Community impacts
 - Labour practices
 - Respect for culture
 - Safety and security
 - Health and well-being



4

Sustainable events support thriving economic practices through:

- Collaboration and partnerships
- Local support, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
 - Stakeholder participation
- Equitable economic impact
 - Transparency
- Responsible governance



You'll find the [Sustainability Pledge](#) here on the EIC website.

Protecting Emerging Destinations

In the 1970s, the pristine beaches of Bali were still relatively unknown—Bali was an emerging destination. Cheap international flights and travel marketing campaigns promoting “tropical paradise,” coupled with no tourism development plan, rapidly transformed Bali to what it is today, a poster child of #overtourism with over 6 million tourists a year (Bali’s population is 4 million). The island faces severe water shortages, garbage emergencies, beach erosion, and air pollution, and with the government’s goal of attracting millions more tourists from China this year, it doesn’t look like these challenges have immediate solutions in sight.

We have an opportunity and a responsibility today with emerging destinations to adopt a destination stewardship commitment from the beginning.

[We’ve selected **Rwanda** to bring the concept of destination stewardship down to earth.]

Rwanda has a lot in common with 1970s Bali—in particular, extraordinary beauty, rich culture, and a low volume of tourists.

With the Sustainable Development Goals and the Four Principles in mind, let’s take a look at this emerging destination we’ve identified with tremendous potential for a transformative travel experience.

Rwanda has a lot in common with 1970’s Bali



Rwanda

Rwanda has made a remarkable journey in the past 25 years—from a country torn apart by war and genocide to a country committed to women's leadership, wildlife conservation, and a low-volume, high-cost tourism strategy that supports conservation efforts and returns a percentage of visitor fees

to the rural communities. In 2018, delegates from SITE, the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence, journeyed to Rwanda for the SITE Executive Summit and concluded enthusiastically after their trip that "Rwanda is incentive ready."



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*The reality of overtourism in leading global destinations is a lesson to emerging countries around the unintended consequences that can be unleashed, like a Pandora's box, when countries seek indiscriminately to attract visitors at all costs. Short-term gains cause mid- to long-term woes and a nation's brand and reputation is easily damaged, sometimes beyond repair. **In Rwanda we are determined not to make these mistakes. Conferences and incentives are key pillars for Rwanda in a tourism strategy that takes the long-term view and seeks to build on solid foundations.** For a country that upholds tourism as a strong contributing factor for its economic transformation, rebuilt on a strong foundation of reconciliation, and powered by the determination to succeed, Rwanda will continue to invest in its conference and incentive offerings. Incentive travel rewards employees with an extraordinary travel experience for going the extra mile and meeting stretch targets. We believe Rwanda can be the extraordinary experience, par excellence.*

”

—CLARE AKAMANZI

CEO, Rwanda Development Board

Rwanda

Nature and Wildlife

National Parks

Volcanoes National Park with the Virunga Mountains is home to the mountain gorilla population.

Akagera National Park, after intensive conservation efforts, is now home to “the big 5”—lions, leopards, elephants, rhinoceros, Cape buffalo—in this savannah ecosystem.

Nyungwe Forest National Park with a 200m canopy walk above the rainforest, and lush tea plantations is home to 13 primate species including the rare black Colobus monkey, blue monkey, chimpanzee, vervet monkey, dent's, L'Hoest's, red-tailed, and Mangabey.

Out of 670 bird species in Rwanda, Nyungwe Forest National Park has 280 recorded bird species, and is designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by BirdLife International.



“ Incentive Travel Leadership ”

For me, conservation is not just for the sake of conserving, but I see it as a way of improving our life today and the future generations.

— EUGENE MUTANGANA,
Rwanda Development Board



Women's Leadership/Gender Inclusiveness

According to the World Economic Forum, Rwanda leads the world in women elected to Parliament with two thirds of its seats held by women (the constitution of 2003 mandated 30% of elected posts to be held by women.

Infrastructure commitment

Investment in world class facilities for low-volume, high-cost tourism, conferences, and meetings

High speed 4G LTE wireless broadband in major cities

Improvements underway to Bugesera International Airport

"Green mindset"

Plastic bag ban since 2008



Rwanda has had plastic bag ban since 2008

Conservation

Rwanda is known for being home to the endangered mountain gorilla. Thanks to conservation efforts, the mountain gorilla population in the Virunga Mountains grew from 480 to 604 in 2016. Because increasing "gorilla tourism" threatened the gorillas, Rwanda doubled the fees for gorilla tours to limit access. Such efforts have contributed to the gorilla population in Virunga Volcanoes more than doubling in the past 30 years. At the same time, the country has worked to educate people about the diversity of other wildlife, and especially, they have worked to restore The Big 5—lions, rhinoceros, leopards, Cape buffalo, elephants—populations which had been impacted heavily by preceding years of conflict in the region. The Rwandan Eastern black rhino became extinct in 2007 due to poaching. The region's lions had been poisoned by farmers in the war-torn years past because they were killing cattle. In 2015, lions from South Africa were reintroduced into Akagera National Park, and in 2017, eighteen Eastern black rhinos from South Africa were transferred to the park as well. And in June, 2019, five zoo-born Eastern black rhinos were safely transported to Akagera from the Czech Republic, bringing the Eastern black rhino population in Rwanda to 23.

Reforestation efforts are underway in Rwanda's forest reserves: Gishwati Forest, Mukura Forest, Busaga Forest, Buhanga Forest. A 10,000 acre corridor of new trees has been planted to create a wildlife corridor between Gishwati Forest and Nyungwe National Park (about 30 miles south).*

Local economic development

Benefiting Local Communities

Ten percent of the income derived from gorilla, safari and other tourist permits, as well as park fees, is spent in partnership with local communities to change lives for the better.

Local Foods

Coffee—Rwanda grows some of the best coffee in the world with 450,000 small growers throughout the country. Like Question Coffee...where you can book a cooperative tour to see coffee production first hand from plot to washing station to drying tables, and learn about how sustainable coffee production is improving the lives of Rwandan women farmers.

Tea—The rich volcanic soil and a temperate climate make Rwanda a perfect location for the cultivation of tea, one of the country's largest exports. Rwanda's tea grows on the many hillside plantations throughout the country—with the major ones around Nyungwe National Park. The dramatic black and white Colobus monkeys, one of the rarest primates in Africa, inhabit the forest on the Gisakura Tea Estate.



10% of the tourist permit income is spent in partnership with local communities.





Designing a **Path** to Stewardship

We'll be the first to admit that making the changes that destination stewardship requires is no easy task.

Behavior change comes with serious challenges, whether it's in an individual life, an organization, an industry, a nation, or on a global scale.

We can see the challenges of behavior change wherever we look today. In our industry, when we commit to becoming Destination Stewards, we commit to spreading these ideas and practices throughout the entire ecosystem. Because we are a community of interdependent partners, we need to change our own organizations, along with our vendors, and our clients. We have to learn new ways to work together to make destination stewardship a priority, right alongside all of our other burning priorities. How can we do that?

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Designing a Path to Stewardship

Start with what you're already doing.

Without a doubt, your organization is already aligned with at least one or two of the Principles of Event Sustainability. At streamlinevents, we embrace the philosophy that taking one step is better than taking no step. Initiating changes in our own internal practice trains and inspires our event managers to apply the same business and sustainability principles to our events and ultimately to the commitment of destination stewardship. For example, focusing on Zero Food Waste as a company value translates to working with our vendors to support local producers, reduce carbon emissions in the transport of food products and the choice of proteins that affect our planet, while celebrating the local culture and flavors of a destination. Sourcing local vendors for everything from incentive room gifts to printed materials for tradeshow supports local and small-owner businesses, helping local economies to thrive. Volunteering for our favorite local charities translates to creating meaningful CSR events that leave a positive impact on the communities where we do business.

Track and share

your successes





Find ways to measure how you're making a difference. As you begin to show your successes, use these measurements to support expansion of your programs. And start close to home—with your own teams. For example, one of our clients installed a water dispenser in their offices to eliminate the use of plastic water bottles. We applauded the idea and installed the machine in our office, offering both sparkling and still water, along with flavored (naturally flavored, non-sweetened) water. To encourage its use, we also made sure each employee had a reusable water bottle at their desk. We discovered that not only were we able to eliminate the plastic water bottles, but we also saw that with this new option, our employees stopped drinking soft drinks, and we stopped ordering cases of sugary beverages. Our client shared the changes they were making and in the process helped transform our practices (and our health).

Here's what we're doing at streamlinevents

PRINCIPLE 1: Communicating sustainable practices to stakeholders

One of our first steps has been in the area of Certifications. Josh Adams, Industry Relations Strategist, completed the Sustainable Event Professional Certification with the Events Industry Council. The goals of this sustainability certification included understanding the business value of sustainability for the events industry; identifying practical solutions for improving our environmental performance in areas such as food and beverage, transportation, and supply chain management; and adopting effective methods for achieving corporate social responsibility goals.

Since then we've brought together event planners on two separate occasions to explore specific areas where we can work together as an industry to reach the Sustainability Goals set by the UN. In the first panel discussion we looked at alternatives to plastics use in everything from Food and Beverage to name badges and signage. The second group looked at reducing food waste through a variety of actions including better menu planning, local sourcing, and working with local organizations to donate leftover food.

Our philosophy: Practice transparency, share ideas, and implement best practices. It's how we'll all grow together as destination stewards.

PRINCIPLE 1

Communicating sustainable practices to all stakeholders

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Practice transparency, share ideas, and implement best practices. It's how we'll all grow together as destination stewards.

PRINCIPLE 2: Basic environmental practices

Here's what we're doing about food waste and conservation of

resources.

- We've created a grid that incorporates past history for event planners setting up a food and beverage budget. We know, for example, that over time 30% fewer people show up for breakfast than for lunch, and we can safely order less food.
- Local food sourcing is something we always try to do. Local food is better tasting, more nutritious, takes advantage of seasonal offerings, supports the local community, and has lower transit costs, minimizing our carbon footprint.
- We take advantage of programs offered by our partners. MGM Grand flash freezes any food that hasn't been served and sends it to local food banks. The SF Hilton works with Food Runners (<http://www.foodrunners.org/>) in a similar way and we make sure to take advantage of their program rather than throw away unserved food.
- We are working with one of our clients to move to plant-based products in lieu of meat. Not only is this more ecologically sound, but it allows us to address various dietary preferences with a simpler solution.
- We are working with two of our clients to reduce or eliminate the amount of swag offered at large conferences. In some cases, the freed-up budgetary funds have been donated to charity.
- At a recent internal Sales Kick Off event, we substituted water coolers for bottles, estimating we saved \$7.2K in plastic bottles and holding off untold environmental damage. Plastic straws were not served or offered.

OUR PHILOSOPHY: When there are so many hungry people in the world, we need to take every opportunity to make sure we don't contribute to the problem starting with being smart about how much food to order, and then working with hoteliers and other vendors to find ways to make sure un-served food is not just thrown away. With an eye towards sustainability, we're committing to careful supply chain management and responsible purchasing, eliminating waste wherever we can.

PRINCIPLE 3: Basic social considerations

PRINCIPLE 2

**Basic
environmental
practices**

OUR PHILOSOPHY

**We're
committing
to careful
supply chain
management
and responsible
purchasing,
eliminating
waste wherever
we can.**

We're approaching Principle 3 on the social dimension through our work in Corporate Social Responsibility, or CSR. Here is an example project—supporting the Boys and Girls Club Hawaii in Lihue.



This project was initiated at the request of our client, Pure Storage. Our client had already engineered the construction of the current building housing the Boys and Girls Club (BGCH) on Kauai, and in his own words, his group “dropped the ball” by not considering the long-term effect of children aging out of the program. This project gave him dual opportunity to introduce the power of CSR through events, at the same time addressing the additional need of the local Kauai community.

Upon arrival, the event attendees were given the

opportunity to add a special “surprise activity” to their schedule and spend an afternoon working on a recreation facility for the local Boys and Girls Club in Kauai. Nearly 60% of the conference

attendees signed up and were transported to the facility to help build recreational furniture and paint the walls of the nearly complete facility. Once finished the local boys and girls and their parents who use the facility were invited to a special ribbon cutting ceremony to officially open the center. At the end of the event, the attendees were surveyed and 95% of those who participated in the activity asked for it to be repeated.

For Pure Storage, the project integrated a CSR “mind-set” into the management and operations team. For BGCH the project will have a long-term impact on the community. Tina Albao, Director of Operations and Development for the Boys and Girls Club, gave this testimonial. “Building additional space for the Boys and Girls Club of Hawaii achieved a strategic milestone which will serve the economic, environmental, and social interests of all stakeholders in the tight knit island community of Kauai. This project has doubled our capacity to serve youth.”

OUR PHILOSOPHY: Leave the communities we visit better off than we found them by supporting the local residents, and by finding ways to give back through CSR.

PRINCIPLE 3

Basic social considerations

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Leave the communities we visit better off than we found them by supporting the local residents, and by finding ways to give back through CSR.

PRINCIPLE 4: Supporting thriving economic practices.

Creating long-lasting memories for top producers is a common goal for any incentive planning company. For a recent incentive program in Nayarit, Mexico, we worked with a partner who represents local artisans to identify a women's collective making hand-crafted leather bracelets. We offered these as gifts for the participants.



OUR PHILOSOPHY:

When planning gifts for an incentive, source local artisans for a more authentic experience. Supporting local artisans provides a boost to the local economy and, in many cases, women-owned enterprises. And, it minimizes our carbon footprint and supports Principle 2.



PRINCIPLE 4

Supporting thriving economic practices.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

When planning gifts for an incentive, source local artisans for a more authentic experience. Supporting local artisans provides a boost to the local economy and, in many cases, women-owned enterprises. And, it minimizes our carbon footprint and supports Principle 2.

Interested in taking the first step?

Here are a few ideas to get you started on the path of destination stewardship:

- **Select suppliers and partners with sustainable practices, policies, and infrastructure.** Add questions in your RFP that address Zero Food Waste policies, renewable energy sources, recycling, donation and composting practices, fair employment practices.
- **Be open to emerging destinations** and the possibility of being “among the first” to introduce your guests to new cultures and destinations. Remember that at one time, Bali and Costa Rica were considered to be emerging destinations.
- **Do your homework.** Find local artisans and goods that represent the unique aspects of your destination. Supporting the local economy may help your budget, but it will most certainly help create lasting memories for your attendees.
- **Consider adding a carbon offset contribution** as part of your air ticketing process.
- **Consider adding a CSR event** that would benefit the local community.
- **Develop menus that take into account sustainable land and sea practices,** and which can meet the dietary needs of the majority of your attendees—and order food quantities that help minimize food waste.
- **Design events that are respectful of the culture** you are visiting and sensitive to the environment your event is impacting.
- **Advise your venue that Sustainability is important to you and your client** and ask how you can best support their efforts to protect their resources.

Conclusion

Rwanda has learned from the mistakes of other destinations how essential it is to create a tourism strategy that takes the long-term sustainability view. Destinations plagued by overtourism are working hard to “turn the ship around.” Iceland has successfully launched their Icelandic Pledge, and 300+ Icelandic tourism companies have signed a Declaration of Responsible Tourism just since January, 2017. The city of Reykjavik made the 2018 GDS-Index as one of the top sustainable destinations.

Working in Partnership

Our challenge today is to work in partnership with newly emerging destinations and destinations recovering from overtourism to place a long-term sustainability view at the core of our business strategies. When we make that foundational, we'll see our efforts contribute to a significant improvement in outcomes. The stakes are high.

Because the need for responsible event and destination management has become more obvious than ever before and because tackling it alone is daunting, we want to be a partner in finding solutions, providing guidance, and offering ways to build the business case for why companies should adopt destination stewardship principles as a cornerstone of their corporate philosophy.

Looking ahead, we are exploring ways to integrate ISO 20121 standards into our processes, including the vendor recommendations we make to clients. We intend to continue managing food & beverage ordering to minimize food waste, and we're expanding efforts in the areas of plastics reduction, local sourcing, and community support. We're exploring how to better track, measure, and share the impact our efforts are having with stakeholders. We plan additional panels to examine how to come together more effectively as an industry to implement the 4 Principles of Event Sustainability.

Join Us

We look forward to working with individuals and organizations committed to this “common agenda.” [Let us know](#) if you're interested in participating with us in this conversation and we will let you know when we set a date for the next panel.

Resources

REPORTS

McKinsey & Company with the World Travel & Tourism Council

[*Coping with Success—Managing Overcrowding in Tourism Destinations*](#)

Identifies four major factors that have contributed to the growth of global tourism—increased affluence, demographic shifts, convenience, and awareness—each has the potential to contribute to overcrowding in its own way. Presents how destinations can reap the benefits of tourism while preserving their unique qualities.

2019 GDS-Index Report

[*Creating better places to live, meet & thrive in—Sustainable Destination Management Trends, Best Practices and Insights*](#)

2017 GDS-Index Report

[*Sustainable Destination Management. The Road to a Circular Economy.*](#)

(See the excellent section on Food Waste solutions w case studies.)

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