

27 FOR COP27

PART ONE OF TWO | NOVEMBER 2022

27 Actions for Destinations and the Tourism Industry
to Address Climate Change and Become More Sustainable,
Liveable & Welcoming to Visitors

MilesPartnership.com/ClimateChange

“We are the first generation to feel the effects of climate change and the last generation who can do something about it.”

– Barack Obama

This White Paper Series Includes:

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- 27 Areas of Climate Change Action
- Dozens of Practical Examples
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In association with

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NORWAY





Travel and tourism is at the front lines of both the challenges and solutions of climate change.

Few, if any, other industries are as exposed to climate change's impacts or can contribute in such meaningful ways to address it. And perhaps no other industry has as much to gain from addressing climate change and the connected crisis of the loss and deterioration of the Earth's natural areas and biodiversity.

It has become both a business and social imperative. Action on climate change is not only critical for ensuring tourism will be sustainable in the future but in demonstrating to both residents and visitors that

tourism is moving from being part of the problem to helping make the world a better, more equitable and sustainable place.

With the close of the COP27 conference in Kyrö, Finland in November 2022, it's time to review and refine the role of tourism. This guide outlines four foundational priorities and describes 27 specific areas of action for tourism - many of which can be led or facilitated by destination marketing and/or management organizations (DMOs).

Note on Examples and Resources: For each element in this plan, there are examples and resources such as additional research, best practice guidelines and references to help guide you. There is a range of primary research and white papers that helped guide the overall development of this white paper in the list of sources at the end.

Contributors: "27 for COP27" was developed by Miles Partnership in association with our agency partners at Coraggio Group, Group NAO and Global Destination Sustainability Movement. Suggestions on updates or additional ways to contribute to practical solutions are welcome. Please contact Chris Adams, Head of Research & Insights, Miles Partnership: Chris.Adams@MilesPartnership.com

FOUR FOUNDATION PRIORITIES

Real, practical action on climate change requires getting some fundamental policies and priorities aligned in your destination:

1. **Commit and Have a Plan for Action.** Declare your commitment to addressing climate change with a credible plan for action. Identify specific steps on climate change within a broader focus on sustainability and regenerative tourism. These should be included in a long-term master plan and/or sustainable tourism strategy for your destination. Your plan should have specific, practical and measurable objectives against which progress can be assessed.

Resources:

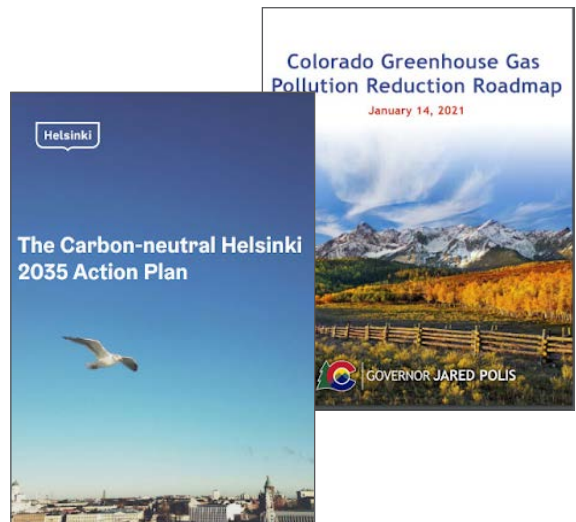
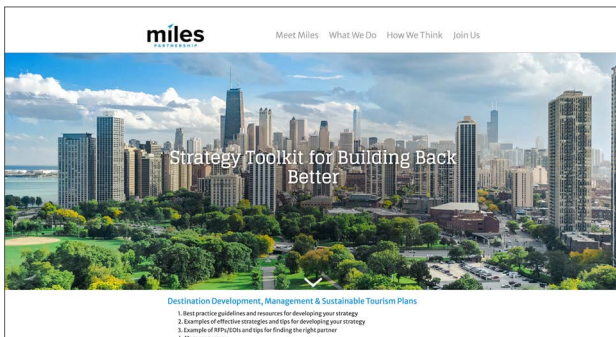
A leading example of a clear, public commitment is [The Glasgow Declaration](#) (facilitated by the UNWTO and the Travel Foundation) highlighting the commitment of more than 300 tourism organizations to reduce their carbon footprint 50% by 2030.

Miles has a toolkit of best practices and resources for developing a destination master plan or sustainable tourism strategy. See [“Strategy Toolkit for Building Back Better.”](#)

2. **Collaborate and Coordinate.** Meaningful action on climate change will require coordination across multiple public and private organizations. Tourism should encourage and participate in the development or updating of a climate action plan for your destination, and then coordinate with others on the specific, practical actions that tourism can take.

Resources:

Collaborate with your city, state, province or nation on their efforts to work with others, sharing insights and knowledge. One example is the [Global Covenant of Mayors](#) - 470 mayors and communities working together around climate action including initiatives such as [“Innovate4Cities”](#) and [their recent global conference](#) on how cities and destinations can accelerate their climate change initiatives.



Encourage and participate in the development or updating of a climate action plan for your destination. Destinations such as [Colorado](#) and [Helsinki, Finland](#) have strategies like this in place. Helsinki recently strengthened their plan and is now planning to become carbon neutral by 2030.

3. Develop a Future-Focused Funding Strategy. Action takes resources. Make sure your strategy includes a budget for the funds, staffing and other resources you will need. You will need funding that is resilient, sustainable and sufficient for taking on an expanded role in destination management and sustainability including action on climate change. In 2020, Miles Partnership, Group NAO and GDSM, along with other partners, led the largest ever studies on tourism taxation and funding models. The global best practices were summarized in [“Funding For Tomorrow”](#) with the detail of taxation options and opportunities in the respective North American study [“Funding Futures”](#) and European study [“Tourism Taxes by Design.”](#)

Resources: [“Funding For Tomorrow”](#) included a review of options and opportunities for funding sustainable tourism and climate change action. The Global Covenant of Mayors has helped coordinate [the City Climate Finance Gap Fund with the World Bank](#) for communities to fund critical [climate change action](#).



4. Benchmark and Report on Successes and Shortfalls. Building credibility and support for long-term investment requires reporting against clear and measurable goals. Work to estimate the carbon footprint of your overall tourism industry (e.g.: using the LEED for Cities and Communities certification) but more importantly, empower industry groups or individual businesses to audit their own performance by providing support and highlighting online calculators that can be used. Engage with other destinations on this journey - both to benchmark your relative performance and to check in for inspiration and ideas.

Resources:

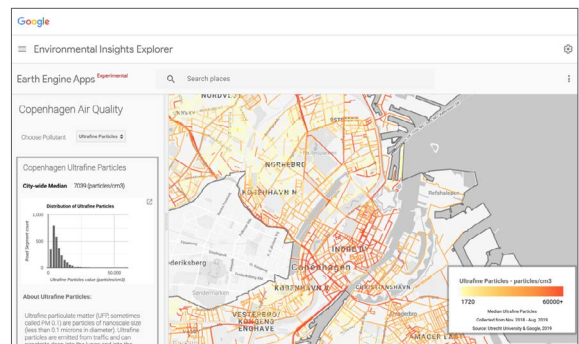
Measurement of your destination’s carbon footprint should be part of your climate change action plan (e.g.: [LEED for Cities and Communities certification](#)). Work within the development of this overall plan to measure the contribution and progress of tourism.

[Google’s Environmental Insights Explorer](#) offers a large range of free data to help estimate the global emissions and renewable energy potential of thousands of cities around the world.

For individual businesses, here are several calculators to assess your carbon footprint:

- [CarbonFund.org’s Business emissions calculators](#)
- [Cool Effect Business carbon offset calculator](#)
- [Cool Effect Travel carbon offset calculator](#)

Valencia, Italy, both as a city and destination, is at the forefront of measuring the impact of tourism. This includes the development of a methodology to measure the [carbon footprint](#) and the [water footprint](#) of tourism to Valencia. Furthermore, the city of Valencia has measures available for each of the SDGs: <https://ods-valencia.github.io/estadistica/es/>.



27 ACTION STEPS

Develop your own action plan by prioritizing and customizing these steps to adapt them for your destination.

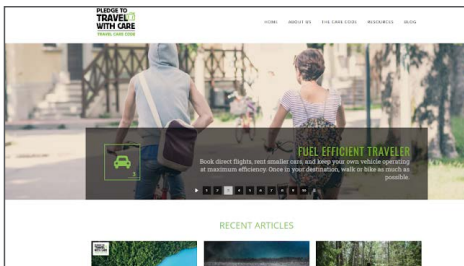
ACTION STEPS 1-4

A. SUSTAINABLE MARKETING - INFLUENCING TRAVEL DEMAND AND BEHAVIOR

1. Educate Your Visitors on Responsible Travel.

Emphasize more sustainable types of travel in your communications including fewer and longer trips, choosing more energy efficient forms of travel and selecting businesses with a commitment to sustainability. This includes developing or updating visitor responsibility messaging that addresses these issues (see resources below) and leveraging sustainable travel.

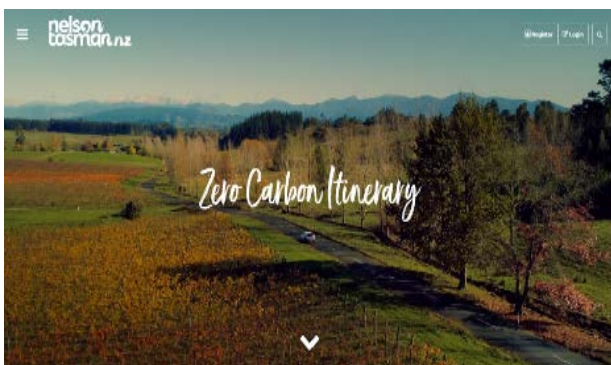
Example: [The Travel Care Code](#), managed at Purdue University's School of Tourism & Hospitality Research Center, directly addresses how travelers can minimize their carbon footprint in its guidelines. The Code is available to be customized and used by DMOs and tourism businesses for free and under a public use license.



Resources:

An increasing number of destinations from [Iceland](#) to [Colorado](#) and [Palau](#) to [New Zealand](#) have visitor responsibility codes. While these include other sustainable travel messages, they can be updated to directly address ways in which visitors can minimize or offset their carbon footprint.

Nelson Tasman zero-carbon itinerary



2. Highlight & Support Sustainable Businesses & Low Carbon Travel.

Work with your industry to help develop and promote businesses making a significant commitment to sustainability including reducing their carbon footprint. Examples include assisting activities, attractions and tours to develop new sustainable products in your destination or training on how to leverage media on major digital platforms (such as Google) to promote their sustainability credentials.

Examples: Google has greatly expanded information for making [sustainable travel decisions across their products](#). Google Maps and Google Flights highlight the most energy efficient options. Google hotel listings now feature a wide range of sustainability criteria that hotels and other accommodation [can add and manage for free](#). Booking.com has launched "[Travel Sustainable](#)," a major new program to empower travelers to make sustainable choices. Work with your industry to leverage platforms like Google and Booking.com to highlight their commitment to sustainability.

Example: Develop low or zero-carbon suggested itineraries for travelers - see this European travel guidebook from Lonely Planet [Lonely Planet's Low Carbon Guide to Europe](#) or [zero-carbon travel itineraries](#) from Nelson Tasman Tourism in New Zealand (see below).

[Intrepid Travel](#) is a world leader in developing sustainable tour options including a commitment to reduce their carbon emissions in half by 2030. See the [World Travel & Tourism Council case study on Intrepid Travel here](#). Work with local companies and international partners like Intrepid Travel to develop sustainable tours and experiences.

Resources:

Google has launched a wide range of sustainability solutions including options for hotels and accommodations to highlight their green credentials with Google Search, Maps and Business Listings for free. [Find more sustainable travel options with new search tools](#) (September 22, 2022).



Amsterdam



Croatia

3. Use Outcome-Based Pricing to Reward Sustainable Travel. Update your visitor taxes and fees to make them differential, focusing on the outcomes that your destination wants to encourage - including travel with a lower carbon footprint. Taxes that are lower in the off-season and higher in the peak season, reward longer visits and encourage dispersed travel out to less visited regions.

Example: Destinations like Amsterdam and Croatia are amongst a small but growing number of destinations that are varying visitor taxes and fees by season or type of travel. This differential pricing sends powerful market signals on the outcomes from tourism you want to encourage in your destination.

Resources:

The updated 2021 edition of [“Funding Futures”](#) and the [“Tourism Taxation by Design”](#) (2020) study both have a range of examples of these types of outcome-based pricing in tourism taxes and visitor fees.

Resources:

Skift’s July 2021 report [“Environmental Impact of Hotel & Airline Loyalty Programs”](#) broke new ground by estimating the environmental impact of loyalty programs and options for making loyalty programs more sustainable.

“Travel companies should also leverage the continuing popularity of their [loyalty] programs for good...find environmentally friendly ways to earn and spend points, keeping travel players involved without the need to achieve a certain mileage or stays.”

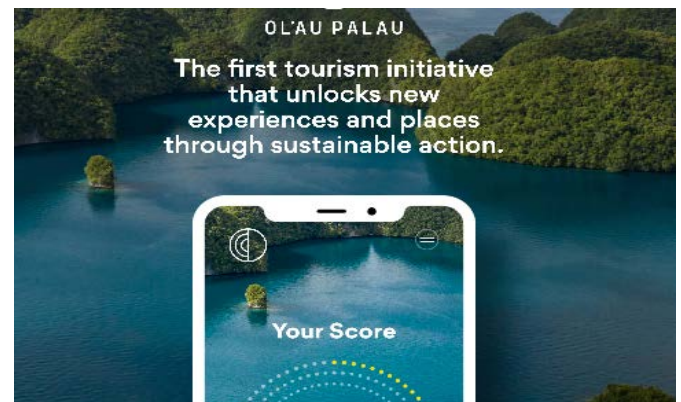
(Skift Environmental Impact of Hotel & Airline Loyalty Programs” July 2021)

4. Develop More Sustainable Loyalty Programs.

A more sustainable tourism industry means travel that is more thoughtful and responsible. This likely means less travel - fewer trips but longer and more rewarding experiences. Airline and hotel loyalty programs need to evolve away from “frequency” to encourage more responsible types of travel. Collaborate with your industry partners to have this conversation. This provides an opportunity for any tourism businesses with a loyalty program to use recognizing sustainability in their rewards as a point of differentiation.

Example: Accor has made a number of ambitious steps in migrating their hospitality business to a more sustainable structure (e.g.: [Accor Planet 21](#)). This [Skift report](#) identified Accor’s loyalty program as one model less tied to just the frequency of travel itself but rather to other signals of “loyalty”.

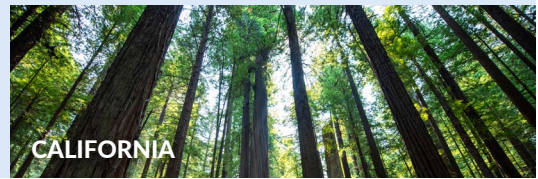
Example: [Ol’au Palau](#) is “the first tourism initiative that unlocks experiences and places through sustainable action.” The app from Palau awards visitors points for interacting with the destination’s sustainable initiatives, from signing the Palau Pledge to tracking their carbon footprint. Visitors can use those points to unlock unique experiences.



ACTION STEPS 5-8

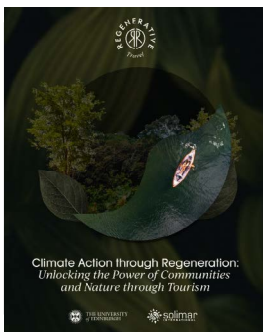
B. NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS - TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE & ENHANCING BOTH NATURE & COMMUNITIES

The climate change crisis is tied to a far broader crisis in the degradation of natural areas, the loss of biodiversity and impacts on communities. They are often interrelated – for example, climate change-fueled wildfires drive climate change, habitat loss and environmental degradation for locals and visitors alike. Nature-based Solutions (NbS) such as forest or wetlands restoration can address both of these challenges. NbS can both restore natural areas such as forests and wetlands to absorb (“sequester”) huge amounts of carbon and enhance the natural environment as a great place to visit, work and live. Nature-based solutions are a major part of tackling climate change and their wider environmental and social benefits make them a natural fit for



5. Protect & Restore Forests & Natural Habitats. Tourism, led and facilitated by DMOs, should be more active in protecting the forest, prairie and other natural habitats that would otherwise be degraded or developed. Partner with the public sector, NGOs and academia with similar goals. This could include supporting one-off investments or donations, or it could be part of a longer-term tourism-based funding model that helps protect natural areas in your community.

Example: Iceland, New Zealand and the Balearic Islands in Spain are examples of destinations that have conservation programs for natural areas funded by visitor taxes or fees. See [“Funding Futures 2021 Edition”](#) for more information.



Resources: For more on Nature-based Solutions see [Climate Action through Regeneration: Unlocking the Power of Communities and Nature through Tourism](#). This white paper outlines five core principles and action steps for tourism businesses to catalyze effective Nature-based Solutions that both enhance biodiversity and local communities and livelihoods.

6. Support Meaningful Reforestation Programs. Reforestation does not just help with carbon capture; when done well, reforestation can support biodiversity, economic resilience, and local food security. To have a significant impact on climate change, large-scale reforestation programs will be needed. Tourism and DMOs can support these programs at the simplest level by encouraging visitors or businesses to donate or participate as volunteers. However, to scale these efforts, tourism will likely need to make a more direct, long-term contribution from tourism taxes or fees to fund reforestation programs (which could be part of a carbon offset program; see Action Step 8).

Example: Since 2020, Tourism New Zealand has partnered with “Trees that Count,” a reforestation program in New Zealand. They have encouraged both visitors, potential visitors and [tourism businesses to donate](#) and support native forest

Resources: [“Tree Planting has ‘Mind Blowing Potential’ to Tackle Climate Change”](#) - The Guardian (2020), [“10 Golden Rules for Reforestation to optimize carbon sequestration & biodiversity recovery”](#) (2021) - GCB Review.

** This section focuses on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) rather than the more narrow Natural Climate Solutions (NCS). NbS are focused on addressing climate change within broader environmental and societal challenges such as restoring biodiversity and helping with climate adaptation needs, whereas NCS is primarily focused on carbon capture only and not these “secondary benefits”. Recent research suggests that by 2030, NbS could contribute 30-37% of the cost-effective mitigation required to limit warming to below 2°C*



7. Focus on Wetlands Protection or Restoration.

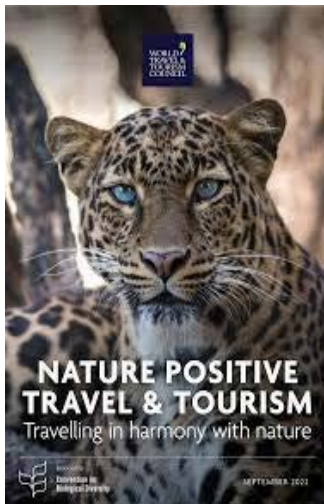
Wetlands are vital ecosystems that both help capture carbon and address adaptation challenges, but their health is in serious decline globally. Wetlands can be an effective Nature-based Solution to reduce bacteria in wastewater, and their restoration can be complemented by traditional hard infrastructure projects in destinations grappling with the growth of visitors.

Example: Cape Cod in Massachusetts invested in a new treatment facility to better manage the visitor community’s wastewater. This was partly funded by the introduction of a short-term rental bed tax and included restored wetlands for the final part of the treatment process. See a summary of the project [here](#) or the wider “State of the Waters Action Plan [here](#).



Resources:

The World Economic Forum and McKinsey & Company published a report in July 2021 that outlines the potential and practical guidance for investing in natural climate solutions (NCS). Download the report [here](#).



Resources:

Nature Positive Travel & Tourism. See the [2022 Report](#) plus [Commitments & Toolkit](#). Expanding on Nature-based Solutions to climate change, the World Travel & Tourism Council has outlined a vision for “Nature Positive Travel & Tourism”. A powerful call to action for the tourism industry is ready for COP-27 and the 2022 [UN Biodiversity Conference \(COP15\)](#).

8. Highlight Carbon Offset Programs.

Carbon offsetting can be an important tool in any tourism toolbox when preceded and complemented by a significant reduction in carbon emissions. Carbon offsetting programs should not be simply planting trees (or other initiatives) to maximize carbon capture, but Nature-based Solutions that meaningfully contribute to biodiversity and enhance local communities. We recommend working with a credible partner that offers offset programs with these important other environmental and/or community benefits. Explore opportunities for offset opportunities in your community or region.

Directly offset your own organization’s carbon footprint plus highlight these opportunities to your visitors and business/community partners for them to take action.

Example: [Cool Effect](#)* offers carbon offsets for both individuals and businesses. It rigorously researches, monitors and reports on each offset program to guarantee they are financially strong and ethically sound. Programs are selected with strong secondary benefits to the natural environment and communities. They have a range of carbon offset programs around the world.

Resources:

Cool Effect worked with the Stockholm Environmental Institute & Greenhouse Gas Management Institute [to create a guide to carbon offsets programs](#) by business.



ACTION STEPS 9-13:**C. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE****9. Expand Public Transit in Your Destination.**

Collaborate with your local and national government partners, and the private sector, to enhance public transportation for visitors. Visitors have different needs than locals, and these needs should be considered in planning for public transit. Public transit should be integrated and seamless across different modes including rail, light rail, ferries, buses, bikes and/or scooters, etc.

Example: Minneapolis and St Paul's [public transit system](#) saw amongst the strongest growth in ridership, including use by visitors, of any major U.S. city in the decade leading up to the pandemic.

Example: An increasing number of airlines are also promoting intermodal travel (flight-train). For example, [Star Alliance](#) just announced that the German Railways (Deutsche Bahn) is the first intermodal partner of the airline alliance, increasing options for air and rail combined itineraries.

Resources:

Investigate the opportunities to leverage public money in your community to benefit visitors. A longtime straggler in the public transit space, the U.S. will see an unprecedented investment from the [2021 Infrastructure Bill](#) - see a [summary here](#). Then connect with your government and public transit partners and discuss how tourism can be considered as part of this investment.



MINNEAPOLIS

10. Enhance Transit Between the Airport & City.

Building or enhancing public transit from the airport is a critical part of transportation for visitors. Encouraging visitors to use public transit from the airport may not be popular with some (e.g.: taxi companies), but it is good for the planet, reduces traffic and is far less costly for visitors. It also introduces travelers to public transportation that they can use throughout their visit. Work with your airport and public transportation authorities to make these options fast and convenient.

Example: The city of Geneva and Geneva Airport in Switzerland is connected by both rail and light rail services. The airport provides a ticket machine that gives out free public transit tickets for travel into the city for all arriving passengers. An increasing number of cities in the U.S. such as [Minneapolis and St Paul](#) have a rail/light rail to the airport which visitors can be encouraged to use.



GENEVA

11. **Market Public Transit Options.** DMOs should also work with their public and private sector partners to develop enhanced marketing programs that highlight public transit and make it easily accessible to visitors. Start by providing input into your public transit’s marketing and communications strategies. Many are developed without any input from tourism and DMOs.

Example: Many European cities such as [Berlin’s Welcome Card](#) have developed “tourist cards” that include easy-to-buy, discounted full-day or multi-day passes to public transport. They often include (as in Berlin) savings on a range of other city attractions and activities. In many European cities, they derive significant revenue to the DMO.

Resources:
[“How to make public transport an attractive option in your City”](#) C40 City Climate Change Leadership Group.



12. **Support Smart Urban & Regional Planning.** Developing a low carbon, more energy efficient destination will be based on long-term urban or regional planning and smart development (or redevelopment). [Research has highlighted](#) that more walkable, compact communities are highly valued by both visitors and local residents who report a better quality of life. Work with your public and private sector partners to support and encourage policies and development that fosters a more compact, accessible and walkable community.

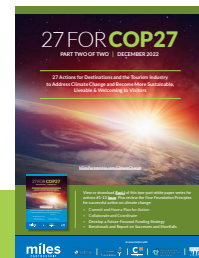
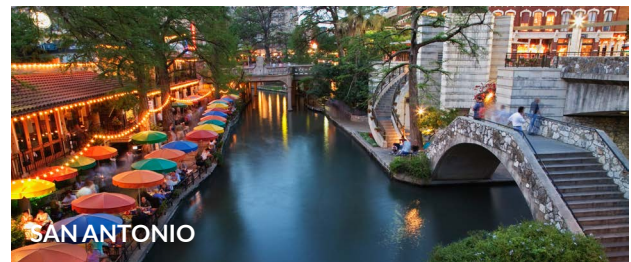
Example: The San Antonio Riverwalk is a world-famous example of what long-term thinking in urban design can do to make a destination more attractive to locals and visitors alike. This type of walkable downtown entertainment precinct (common in many historic European and Asian cities) has been copied in the redevelopment of many riverfront or waterfront destinations around the world including Baltimore, Maryland; Vancouver, Canada; and Auckland, New Zealand.

Resources:
[5 Ways to Make Cities More Walkable](#) - Kittleson & Asso. The University of Delaware has a [Walkable Communities Tool Box](#).

13. **Build Resilience Including a Crisis Management Plan.** Climate change is happening, and though we can minimize its impact, the effects (e.g. extreme weather events, wildfires, etc.) will be felt by destinations across the planet. DMOs should work with public agencies to ensure critical infrastructures used by visitors (e.g.: airports, major roads, walking and cycle trails) are being strengthened and made resilient to these impacts. These costs may need to include contributions from visitor taxes and levies. Colliding with other external risks (e.g.: a new pandemic), the growing impacts of climate change make it critical that your DMO has reviewed and updated its crisis management plan.

Example: As previously noted, [“Funding Futures”](#) includes a detailed discussion of funding models that could help strengthen visitor infrastructure.

Crisis Management: In addition to lessons from the current COVID-19 crisis in tourism (see this [selection of articles in Skift](#)), use this [Destinations International](#) article for an introduction and then this [UNWTO “toolbox” for crisis communication in tourism](#) for more detailed guidelines.



For Actions 14-27, see Part 2 of 27 for COP-27 available [here](#).

SOURCES

In addition to the references, research and examples quoted in each “action step” above, some primary sources were used in multiple ways to develop these 27 actions:

Resources:

[Funding Futures](#) - Options & Opportunities in Tourism Taxation & DMO Funding (Miles Partnership with Civitas, Tourism Economics & Destination Analysts)

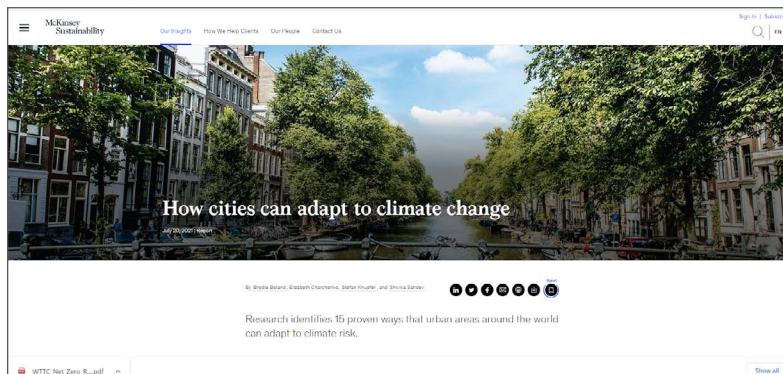
- [Funding Futures 2021 Edition](#) Report & Webinar
- [Funding for Tomorrow](#) - 10 Global Best Practices 2020 White Paper



McKinsey & Company Research, Analysis & Webinars on [Climate Change](#) & [Travel & Tourism](#) including:

- [Accelerating the Path to Net Zero Travel](#), September 2022
- [Opportunities for industry leaders as new travelers take to the skies](#), April 2022

[Project Drawdown](#) - carbon reduction science and solutions for governments, industry and communities, a not-for-profit foundation.



[Skift](#) Research & Analysis including [Climate Change](#). Reports include:

- [Why the travel industry can't afford to dismiss the loudest climate change warning yet](#)
- [Sustainability in Travel 2021](#) - quantifying tourism emissions for destinations

[UNWTO](#) Resources on Climate Change & Tourism including:

- [UNWTO & Travel Foundation Glasgow Declaration](#)
- [Nature Positive Travel & Tourism - 2022 Report](#)
- [Nature Positive Travel & Tourism - Commitments & Toolkit](#)
- [One Planet - UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

[World Travel & Tourism Council](#) Reports & Resources including:

- [A Net Zero Road Map for Travel & Tourism - 2021](#)
- [Towards Destination Stewardship - A Framework 2021](#)

Plus insights, resources and/or advice from:

- [The Travel Foundation](#)
- [The Future of Travel Coalition](#)
- [Global Destination Sustainability Movement](#)
- [Group NAO](#)
- [Miles Partnership](#)

