

# Destination: Stewardship

# A Guide to Action on Climate Change



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## FEATURING



28 action steps



Examples from  
around the world



Expert insights  
and resources



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# Travel and tourism are at the front line for both the challenges and solutions of climate change.

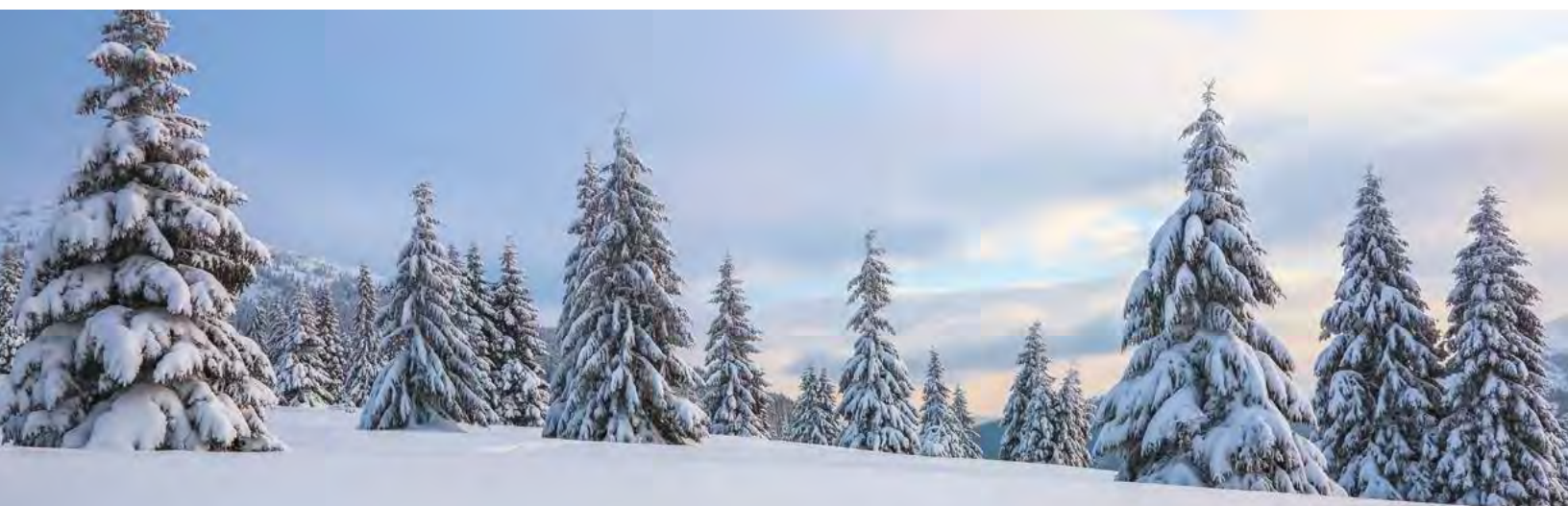
## We must take action. Now.

Tourism should be a leader in climate change action in destinations around the world. 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 of the Earth's natural areas and biodiversity.

Destination organizations are a natural supporter, facilitator and leader of climate change action in their destination. As organizations that connect the public and private sectors, destination organizations have the right structure and resources to be a long term, invaluable partner with the government, industry and community. The recently completed COP28 conference on climate change has once again highlighted the scale of the threat and the size of the challenge. There is no more time to discuss and debate. It's time for tourism to step up and take action.

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This white paper is led by Miles Partnership in association with partners at Coraggio Group, Global Destination Sustainability Movement, Group NAO, Solimar International and The Travel Foundation. Suggestions on updates or additional ways to contribute to actionable solutions are welcome and can be shared with Chris Adams, Head of Research & Insights of Miles Partnership at [Chris.Adams@MilesPartnership.com](mailto:Chris.Adams@MilesPartnership.com).



# Four Foundation Priorities

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



## FOUR FOUNDATION PRIORITIES



### Commit and Have a Plan for Action.

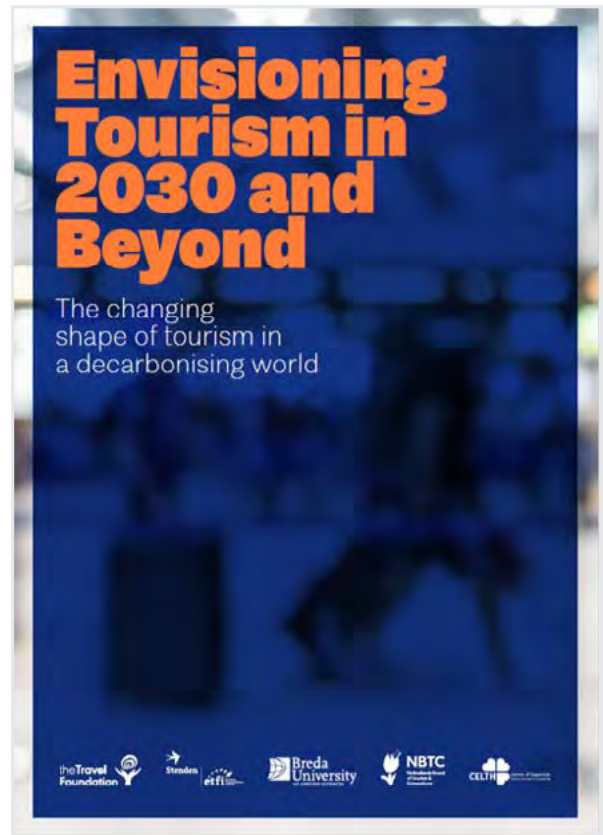
Declare a commitment to climate change with a credible plan, focusing on sustainability and regenerative tourism. Include specific steps in a long-term master plan or sustainable tourism strategy, with specific, measurable objectives for progress assessment.

#### Resources:

The leading example of this is [“The Glasgow Declaration”](#), facilitated by the UNWTO and the Travel Foundation, that highlights the commitment of more than 500 tourism organizations to reduce their carbon footprint 50% by 2030.

In 2023 The Travel Foundation published [“Envision 2030”](#), a supporting strategy that assesses the tourism industry's path to a net zero carbon future through 2050. This strategy highlighted the major work required and very narrow path to achieving this all important goal.

Miles also has a [toolkit](#) of best practices and resources for developing a destination master plan or sustainable tourism strategy.



## FOUR FOUNDATION PRIORITIES



### Collaborate and Coordinate.

To effectively combat climate change, coordination among public and private organizations is crucial. Tourism should actively participate in developing or updating a climate action plan for their destination, and then collaborate on practical actions.

#### 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 for Climate & Energy](#), 470 mayors and communities working together around climate action. This includes initiatives such as its [Innovate4Cities Conference](#) focused 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. The [Netherlands](#) and [Queenstown, New Zealand](#) are leading the development of climate change action plans for their destinations.



### Develop a Future-Focused Funding Strategy.

Action takes resources. Ensure your strategy includes a budget for the necessary funds, staffing and other resources you might need. Funding should be resilient, sustainable and sufficient for taking on an expanded role in destination management and sustainability.

#### Resources:

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.

In 2021, Miles Partnership, Group NAO, Civitas and GDSM, 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.”](#)





## Benchmark and Report on Successes and Shortfalls.

To build credibility and support for long-term investment, report against clear, measurable goals. Work to estimate your destination's tourism industry carbon footprint and empower businesses to audit their performance using online calculators. Engage with other destinations to benchmark performance and share ideas, while also providing support and resources for industry groups and individual businesses.

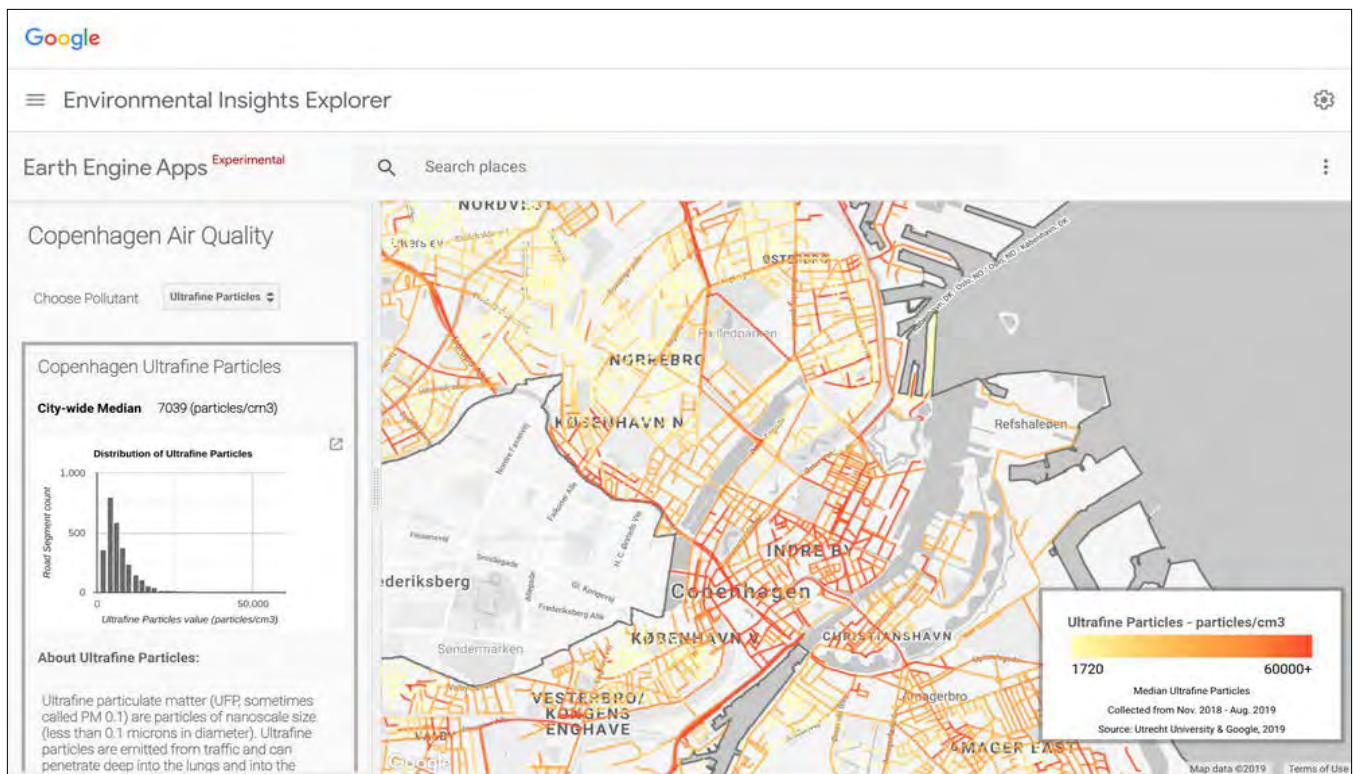
### Resources:

Measurement of your destination's carbon footprint should be part of your climate change action plan using the [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.

There are several calculators for businesses to assess their carbon footprint:

- » [CarbonFund.org's Business Emissions Calculators](#)
- » [Cool Effect Business Carbon Offset Calculator](#)
- » [Cool Effect Travel Offset](#)



# 28 Action Steps

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





## A. Sustainable Marketing – Influencing Travel Demand and Behavior

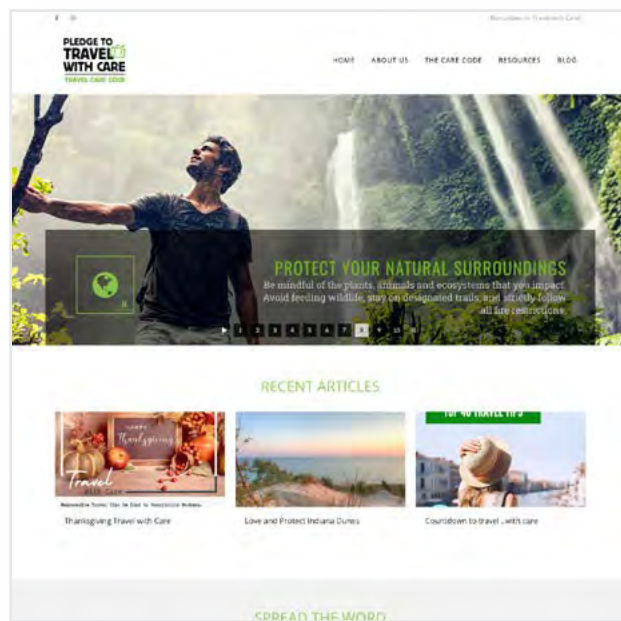
### 1. Educate Visitors on Responsible Travel.

Emphasize more sustainable types of travel in your communications such as recommending 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.

#### Resources:

[The Travel Care Code](#), managed at Purdue University's School of Tourism & Hospitality Research Center, supports destinations and businesses developing their own responsible traveler education programs.

An increasing number of destinations from Iceland to Colorado and Palau to New Zealand have visitor responsibility codes.



### 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. For example, Nelson Tasman in New Zealand has added to its marketing of Zero Carbon Itineraries by launching a [Zero Carbon Certified Business program](#).

#### Resources:

Google has greatly expanded [information for making sustainable travel decisions](#) across its 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 accommodations can add and [manage for free](#). Booking.com has launched [“Travel Sustainable,”](#) a new major program to empower travelers to make sustainable choices. Work with your industry to leverage platforms like Google and Booking.com to highlight a commitment to sustainability.

[Intrepid Travel](#) is a world leader in developing sustainable tour options, and it has a commitment to reduce its carbon emissions in half by 2030. The World Travel & Tourism Council has [a case study on Intrepid Travel to learn more](#). Work with local companies and international partners like

Encourage hotels in your destination to invest in sustainability management platforms such as [Weevea](#) to measure and manage their sustainability practices including their carbon footprint.

### 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, such as a lower carbon footprint. This includes 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.

#### Resources:

Destinations like Amsterdam and Croatia are among 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 tourism outcomes you want to encourage in your destination.

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

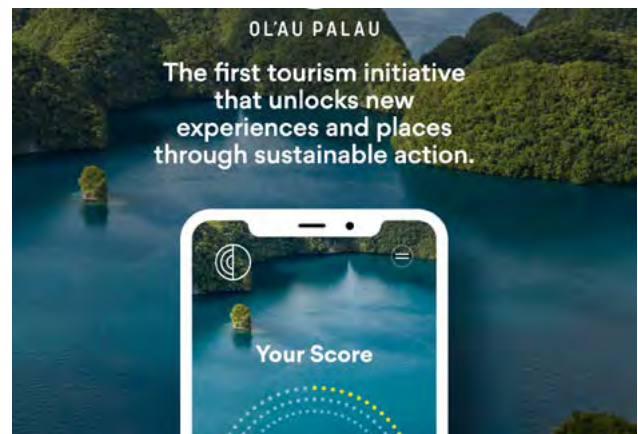
### 4. Develop More Sustainable Loyalty Programs.

A more sustainable tourism industry means travel that is more thoughtful and responsible. This likely means less travel—fewer trips but longer, 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 start this conversation. This presents an opportunity for tourism businesses with a loyalty program to distinguish themselves by incorporating sustainability recognition into their rewards system.

#### Resources:

[Accor](#) has made a number of ambitious steps in migrating its hospitality business to a more sustainable structure.

[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.



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)

## B. Nature-Based Solutions – Tackling Climate Change & Enhancing Both Nature & Communities

The climate change crisis is linked to the degradation of natural areas, loss of biodiversity and impacts on communities. Interrelated issues like wildfires contribute to climate change, habitat loss, and environmental degradation for locals and visitors alike. Nature-based Solutions (NbS) like forest or wetlands restoration can address these challenges by restoring natural areas to absorb carbon and enhance the environment as a great place to visit, work, and live.\*



\*This section focuses on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) rather than Natural Climate Solutions (NCS). While NCS primarily addresses carbon capture, NbS extends to broader environmental and societal challenges, including biodiversity restoration and climate adaptation. Recent research indicates that by 2030, NbS could contribute 30-37% of the cost-effective mitigation needed to limit warming below 2°C. (Seddon et al., 2020; UNEP, 2021a, 2021b; UNEP and IUCN, 2021)

## 5. Protect & Restore Forests & Natural Habitats.

Destination organizations should be more active in protecting the forest, prairie and other natural habitats that would otherwise be degraded or developed on. Partner with the public sector, non-governmental organization (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.

### Resources:

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

The white paper, [“Climate Action through Regeneration: Unlocking the Power of Communities and Nature through Tourism.”](#) outlines five core principles and action steps for tourism businesses to catalyze effective NbS that enhance biodiversity, 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. The tourism industry and destination organizations 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).

### Resources:

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 reforestation.

The Guardian’s article, [“Tree Planting has ‘Mind Blowing Potential’ to Tackle Climate Change,”](#) (2019) shares that research indicates that a trillion trees could be planted to capture huge amounts of carbon dioxide. Global Change Biology Review also shares [“10 Golden Rules for Reforestation to optimize carbon sequestration & biodiversity recovery”](#) (2021).



## 7. Focus on Wetlands Protection or Restoration.

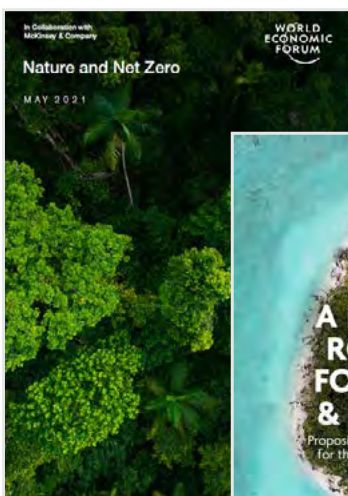
Wetlands are vital ecosystems that both help capture carbon and address adaptation challenges, but their health is in serious decline globally. Wetlands restoration can be an effective Nature based Solution to climate change including enhancing biodiversity and/or its use in waste water management.

### Resources:

[Cape Cod invested in a new treatment facility](#) to better manage the visitor community’s wastewater, and it also included restoring wetlands as part of the process. This was partly funded by the introduction of a short-term rental bed tax. More steps are outlined in its [“State of the Waters Action Plan.”](#)

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). (screenshot of cover) nature.net.zero.png

Expanding on NbS to climate change, the World Travel & Tourism Council has outlined a vision for [“Nature Positive Travel & Tourism.”](#)



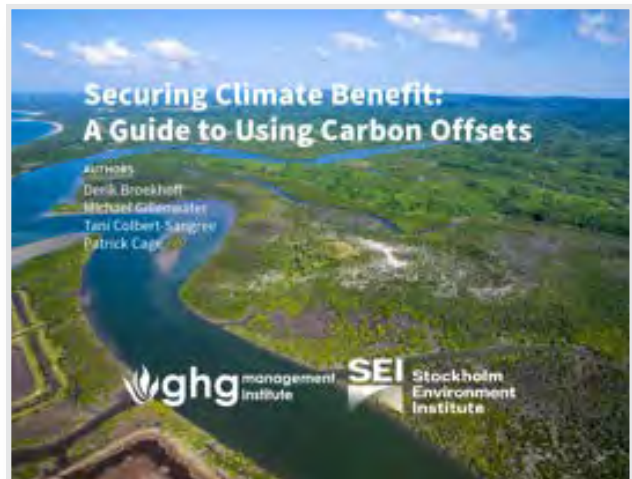
## 8. Highlight Carbon Offset Programs.

Carbon offsetting can be an important tool for tourism when preceded and complemented by a significant reduction in carbon emissions. Carbon offsetting programs should not be simply planting trees or other initiatives that maximize carbon capture, but NbS that meaningfully contribute to biodiversity and enhance local communities. Work with a credible partner to identify offset programs and opportunities that offer these important environmental and/or community benefits.

You can also directly offset your own organization’s carbon footprint, and highlight these opportunities to your visitors and community partners to encourage their action.

### Resources:

[Cool Effect](#) provides carbon offsets for individuals and businesses, ensuring financial strength and ethical soundness through rigorous research and monitoring of each program. Selected programs prioritize strong secondary benefits for the natural environment and communities. For example, Cool Effect collaborated with the Stockholm Environmental Institute and Greenhouse Gas Management Institute to create [a business guide](#) to carbon offset programs.



## C. Public Transportation & Community Infrastructure

### 9. Expand Public Transportation.

Foster collaboration with local and national government partners, as well as the private sector, to optimize public transportation for visitors. Recognize the distinct needs of visitors in transit planning, ensuring seamless integration across various modes such as rail, light rail, ferries, buses, bikes, and scooters. Create an integrated and user-friendly public transit system that caters to the diverse requirements of both locals and visitors.

Work with your public transit partner to introduce simple contactless payment options including “tap on, tap off” with a credit card. This allows any traveler to use public transport simply and easily.



#### Resources:

An increasing number of airlines are also promoting intermodal travel, using both flights and trains. [Star Alliance](#) announced that the German Railways (Deutsche Bahn) is the first intermodal partner of the airline alliance, increasing options for air and rail combined itineraries.

Explore avenues to utilize public funds in your community for the betterment of visitors. The U.S., historically lagging in public transit, is poised for unprecedented investment following the [2021 infrastructure bill](#). Engage with government and public transit partners to incorporate tourism considerations into this substantial investment.

### 10. Enhance Transit Between the Airport & City.

Building or improving public transit from the airport is a crucial aspect of visitor transportation. While promoting airport public transit may face resistance from certain stakeholders (e.g.: taxi companies), it benefits the environment, alleviates traffic and proves more cost-effective for visitors. It also introduces travelers to public transportation options they can utilize throughout their stay. Collaborate with your airport and public transportation authorities to streamline these options for speed and convenience.

#### Resources:

In Geneva, Switzerland, the city and airport are seamlessly connected by both rail and light rail services. Notably, Geneva Airport offers a convenient ticket machine providing complimentary public transit tickets for all arriving passengers heading into the city. An increasing number of U.S. cities, [including Minneapolis and St. Paul](#), utilize rail and light rail options to and from the airport.



## 11. Market Public Transit Options.

Destination organizations should collaborate with both public and private sector partners to create robust marketing programs that emphasize and facilitate easy access to public transit for visitors. Begin by offering contributions to the marketing and communication strategies of public transit entities.

### Resources:

Many European cities have developed “tourist cards” that include easy-to-buy, discounted full-day or multi-day passes to public transport, such as the [Berlin Welcome Card](#). Cards often include savings on a range of other city attractions and activities.

C40 Knowledge Hub also shares details on [“How to make public transport an attractive option in your city.”](#)



## 12. Support Smart Urban & Regional Planning.

Develop a low-carbon, energy-efficient destination through strategic, long-term urban planning and smart development. [Research highlights](#) the appeal of compact, walkable communities for both visitors and locals, enhancing overall quality of life. Work with public and private partners to advocate policies fostering a more accessible, walkable community.

### Resources:

The San Antonio Riverwalk exemplifies the transformative impact of long-term urban design on destination appeal for both locals and visitors. This type of walkable downtown entertainment model, also common in historic European and Asian cities, has been replicated in the redevelopment of riverfront destinations globally, including Baltimore, Maryland; Vancouver, Canada; and Auckland, New Zealand. Kittleson & Associates shares [“5 Ways to Make Cities More Walkable.”](#)

## 13. Build Resilience Including a Crisis Management Plan.

Climate change is inevitable, and its repercussions, such as extreme weather events and wildfires, will impact destinations globally. Destination organizations must collaborate with public agencies to strengthen and enhance critical visitor infrastructure, like airports and major roads, against these effects. Funding for such measures may involve contributions from visitor taxes and levies. Given the other external risks, including potential new pandemics, it's imperative for destination organizations to regularly review and update their crisis management plans.

### Resources:

[“Funding Futures 2021”](#) details funding models that could help strengthen visitor infrastructure.

## D. Visitor Transportation

### 14. Support the Growth & Reliability of Electric Vehicle Charging Stations.

In the next decade, there will be a historic shift toward electric vehicles (EV), supported by significant government infrastructure investments globally to accelerate the transition. Destination organizations and the tourism industry should play a pivotal role in planning and facilitating this, ensuring comprehensive charging infrastructure along both major touring and regional routes. Addressing accessibility and reliability challenges, particularly with older stations, is crucial, considering issues like payments and technical problems. A November 2023 [Wall Street Journal investigation](#) found that 40% of EV charging stations in Los Angeles County had problems that prevented use. Work with private and public sectors to enhance and promote the reliability of EV charging infrastructure in your destination.

#### Resources:

Miles Partnership and Longwoods International conduct annual research examining U.S. travelers' use of EVs for trips and have identified the most critical issues that tourism must help address to support the growth of these road trips. At the forefront are the distribution, access and reliability of EV charging infrastructure for travelers. Explore this [research along with case studies](#) from Colorado and Arizona.

ChargeNY has an excellent [“Best Practice Guide & Cases”](#) for communities and industries to decide where and how to install charging stations.

Investigate the government funding available to support the rollout of electric charging stations and EVs in your destination. Note that the [2021 U.S. infrastructure bill includes \\$7.5 billion](#) for adding 500,000 additional electric charging stations.

### 15. Expand Electric Rental Vehicles.

Once you have a clear plan for electric charging infrastructure, engage with your rental vehicle companies to support the adoption of EV rentals in your destination. Additionally, collaborate with your airport(s), who are critical partners in addressing the technical and operational challenges of migrating to EV rentals at scale, including integrating charging capability into rental vehicle depots.

#### Resources:

Hertz built the [largest electric rental vehicle fleet](#) in the world, including an initial deal to purchase 100,000 EV vehicles from Tesla. Connect with rental vehicle partners, such as Hertz, to identify ways to highlight and promote their electric vehicles.

[The Economist](#) offers a range of resources on the challenges that aviation, and all industry sectors, will need to address to migrate to net zero.





## 16. Advance Airline Renewable Energy.

A significant portion of tourism's carbon footprint is attributed to aviation, contributing to 2-3% of global emissions. The phenomenon of "[flight shaming](#)" has made it a prominent target for action by politicians and a cause for concern among consumers. European governments, such as Sweden, France and the [UK](#), have introduced climate change taxes on air travel, particularly for long-haul flights. Some of this revenue is directed toward subsidizing rail travel as a more sustainable alternative for short- to medium-length trips. To actively participate in this debate and influence policy settings, tourism entities, including destination organizations, must collaborate with airlines, airports and government stakeholders.

### Resources:

The airline KLM is a leader in embracing the challenge of sustainable aviation. Its "[Fly Responsibly](#)" program has educated passengers on the need for more thoughtful and responsible flying. In conjunction with their sister airline, Air France, KLM also has an [ambitious biofuels program](#).

An increasing range of airlines from Canada's [Harbor Air](#) (the world's first 100% electric airline) to [United Airlines](#) in the U.S. or [Air New Zealand](#) are flying or buying electric aircraft. Air New Zealand's [sustainability report](#) exemplifies the increasing proactivity of airlines in addressing sustainability and climate change action.

["Not 100% - but four steps closer to sustainable tourism"](#) (2021) by the New Zealand Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment includes a detailed proposal for taxing flights to invest in sustainable aviation solutions.

## 17. Port & Cruise Ship Infrastructure.

Ships utilizing shore power when docked eliminate substantial air pollution and cut carbon emissions. Similar to airports, port companies play a crucial role in promoting sustainability in the tourism sector. Advocate for the cruise industry and ports to universally adopt shore power for all cruise ships, and actively support broader initiatives to enhance industry sustainability. Like aviation, the cruise and shipping sectors need to gradually shift towards electric and biofuels for a more sustainable long-term future.

### Resources:

The Port of Seattle now has [over half of cruise ships being plugged into shore power](#). Working with the cruise industry, they aim to have close to 100% of cruise ships using shore power in the next few years.

The Cruise Line Industry Association (CLIA) is working with its members across a range of [sustainable programs for the cruise industry](#).



## E. Working with Business & Industry Partners

### 18. Support Business Sustainability Programs.

Tourism's carbon footprint largely comes from industry-related businesses like accommodations, activities and restaurants. Destination organizations can contribute significantly to tackling climate change by supporting partners in transitioning to more sustainable practices.

#### Resources:

Helsinki's [Think Sustainably Program](#) collaborates with local businesses to support sustainability efforts. Part of the citywide Sustainable City 360 commitment, the program provides specific sustainability criteria for various business types such as [restaurants, attractions and events](#). This aligns with the broader national commitment in Finland, operating under the "[Sustainable Travel Finland](#)" program, aiming for a net zero target by 2035. The initiative supports companies in long-term sustainable development and provides a helpful 7-step checklist for destinations to approach sustainable travel.

[The Hotel Sustainability Roadmap in Singapore](#) is a collaborative effort between the Singapore Tourism Board and the Singapore Hotel Association. They have set a target to accurately track emissions by 2023 and reduce emissions by 2030, with the ultimate goal of achieving [net zero emissions by 2050](#).



### 19. Support Low or Zero Carbon Events & Conferences.

Festivals, conferences and events present a focused opportunity to substantially reduce your destination's carbon footprint. Connect with and assist event organizers in crafting low or zero-carbon events. This involves more than just purchasing carbon offsets (see Action Step #8); it requires a comprehensive assessment of the entire event, encompassing venue energy usage, food sourcing and waste management.

#### Resources:

Gothenburg, Sweden—renowned for sustainability and ranked #1 in the [Global Destination Sustainability Index](#) from 2016-2020—considers events crucial for showcasing “green practices,” emphasizing low or zero-carbon event support and development. The city collaborates with events on a [sustainability certification program](#), aligning with ISO 14001 standards to assess their carbon footprint.

Helsinki's Think Sustainably Criteria includes a simple set of [guidelines for event organizers](#).

[Net zero carbon events](#) are an initiative of the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) offering best practices, consistent measurement and supply chain collaboration to drive the industry towards net zero.



## 20. Support Sustainable, Local “Slow” Food.

Dining and cuisine are major motivators for visitors that distinguish your destination and connect the experience with local food stakeholders. Showcase food producers and local farmers' markets to both visitors and locals. Empower local chefs and eateries to source local and feature sustainable options, including diverse vegetarian and vegan choices. Embrace "slow food" principles for a revitalized culinary experience.



**Denmark is a leader in food tourism, built on its local food movement and innovative cuisine.**

### Resources:

Many European countries have well-established local and “slow food” traditions tightly integrated into tourism. Denmark is a particularly impressive example of how tourism can help expand the local food movement and innovation in local cuisine, including its leadership in the [“New Nordic” food movement](#).

The UNWTO has produced the [“Guidelines for the Development of Gastronomy Tourism”](#) based on core principles of sustainability. Utilize a wide range of resources from industry marketing and advisory groups, such as the [World Food Travel Association](#) and [Slow Food International](#).

## 21. Leverage Credible Certification Programs.

There are numerous sustainable business recognition programs that provide a certificate for businesses who are making a commitment to sustainability. “Greenwashing” is a significant challenge in tourism, as many certification and labeling efforts focus heavily on marketing and communications but lack meaningful change and impact. Ensure you are supporting and promoting certification and labeling programs that are credible and meaningful.

### Resources:

The [Global Sustainable Tourism Council \(GSTC\)](#) was established in 2007 by a global group of NGOs, including the Rainforest Alliance and United National Environmental Program (UNEP), with an important mission: to establish international standards in tourism certification programs (e.g: be the “certifier of the certifiers”). Though GSTC has only achieved partial success in creating an [international framework of standards](#), this goal remains a critical mission for the wider tourism industry.

[Google’s new sustainability criteria for hotels](#) currently recognizes more than [30 certification programs](#). Programs need to apply for recognition and demonstrate an assessment across a minimum of these four categories: energy efficiency, water conservation, waste reduction and sustainable sourcing. They must also undertake onsite audits of the business to validate the property’s claims.

## F. Working with Business & Industry Partners

### 22. Decrease Food Waste.

Destination organizations can partner with their restaurant, events and food catering sectors to address food waste. This starts by minimizing or avoiding waste through efficient supply chain management and better alignment of supply with demand. In cases of unused food, adopt a two-tiered strategy: prioritize donation or repurposing, and if not feasible, emphasize composting. Many cities are investing in composting programs as part of zero-waste initiatives, often beginning with restaurants and the broader food sector. Encourage and highlight these programs to your industry partners.

#### Resources:

Many destinations, including [Australia](#), [Rhode Island](#) and [Denmark](#), have sector-wide initiatives tackling food waste as part of a broader commitment to a strong, vibrant and sustainable food scene. Collaborate with initiatives in your destination and champion and support their efforts.

The National Resource Defense Council offers a [toolkit](#) for restaurants and their tourism and government partners to tackle food waste.

The [United Nations](#), including its [Food and Agricultural Office \(FAO\)](#), provides a wide range of resources on understanding and tackling food waste.



### 23. Phase Out Single-Use Plastics.

Single-use plastics contribute significantly to global waste and pollution, and they are major contributors to climate change. Destination organizations should actively support the reduction and elimination of single-use plastics in their communities, including phasing them out in the food sector, supermarkets and other retail outlets. Two key initiatives involve working with the accommodation sector to offer reusable bags to guests and working with all tourism businesses to transition from single-use plastic bottles to alternative water options.

#### Resources:

Gothenburg provides options to single use plastic bottles at major events. Katarina Thorstensson, Sustainability Strategist of Göteborg & Co. shared this and four other sustainability initiatives at [Global All-Stars 2021](#) during Destinations International's Annual Convention.

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has a comprehensive guide titled, "[Rethinking Single-Use Plastics in Travel & Tourism](#)," that shares recommendations and case studies.

Reducing and eliminating single-use plastics will also be a major theme of [Earth Day 2024](#).



## G. Buildings & Energy for Tomorrow

### 24. Advocate for Green Building Standards.

Elevating buildings to extremely high energy conservation standards stands out as a primary avenue for reducing a destination's carbon footprint. Beyond environmental benefits, this approach often offers substantial operational cost savings in the medium to long term. The use of low-carbon construction materials, such as recycled concrete, is critical. Destination organizations must actively champion ambitious green standards in tourism buildings and take the initiative in implementing high standards, like LEED certification, particularly in properties under their ownership or management, such as conference centers.

The recently expanded [Broward County Convention Center](#) is a Leeds Gold Certified Building and illustrates the range of sustainability initiatives undertaken by leading venues. This includes water conservation initiatives, high-efficiency mechanical and energy systems, robust recycling and food waste management systems.

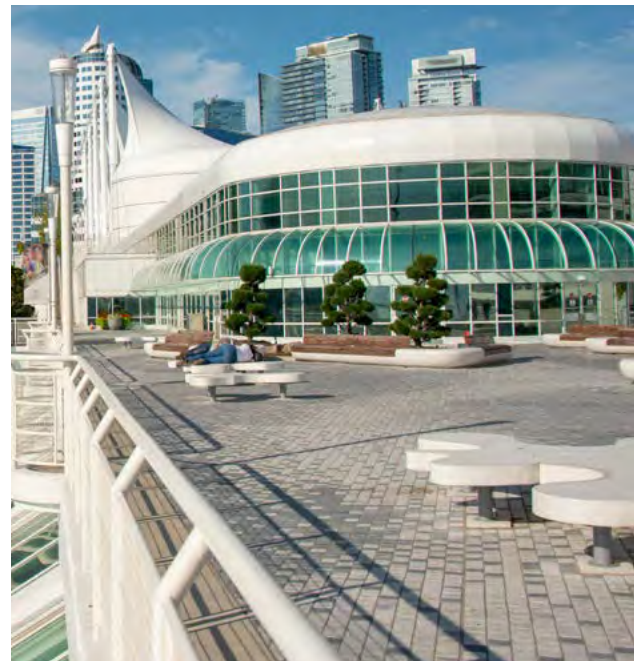
#### Resources:

There are two major international standards in green building standards and certifications: [LEED](#) and [ISO 14001](#).

The [Vancouver Convention Centre](#) and [David L. Lawrence Convention Center](#) in Pittsburgh are among a few LEED Platinum Certified Convention Centers. The [Convention Centre Dublin](#) is a more recent (2018) example of a world leading green building both in construction materials and design (ISO 14001).

McKinsey & Company's article, "[Seizing the decarbonization opportunity in construction.](#)" discusses construction's major role in achieving global sustainability goals.

The [United States](#) and the [European Union](#) both offer green building standards and resources.



## 25. Utilize Energy Efficiency Programs.

Immediate and significant energy savings can be generated by working with your industry on energy efficiency programs—replacing lighting, technology or appliances with more energy efficient options and upgrading insulation and windows. These investments usually result in cost savings for the business in addition to reducing emissions in your destination.

Additionally, changes to roofs can drive significant energy savings. Starting with large facilities (e.g.: convention centers or hotels), encourage your industry to invest in [cool roof solutions](#) or incorporate other green roof solutions such as living roofs. Many cities, including New York, Denver and Sydney, have subsidized programs.

### Resources:

Visit Scotland has one of the most comprehensive and ambitious climate change action plans of any tourism sector in the world. Its [“Destination Net Zero Climate Action Plan”](#) integrates tourism within the national government [energy efficiency program](#).

Collaborate with your power providers to share energy efficiency and renewable power options. Two great starter resources are the [EPA guide to energy efficiency in hotels](#) and Green Tourism Canada’s [12 practical tips for reducing energy in tourism businesses](#).



[NYC CoolRoofs](#) offers training opportunities and experience through a workforce development program. The city’s [Javits Center](#) also features several rooftop habitats to strengthen the community and ecosystem.

## 26. Encourage the Move to Renewable Energy.

Public and private entities are heavily investing in renewable energy to meet emissions reduction goals. Tourism should align with these efforts to expedite the transition of businesses to renewable energy such as by implementing solar panels or purchasing renewable energy. Collaborate with partners to highlight options and guide tourism companies on accessing government and power provider subsidies and support.

### Resources:

The [Airport Association of India \(AAI\)](#) has set a goal for the majority of airports in the country to achieve 100% renewable energy by 2024 and attain net-zero status by 2030.

[MGM Resorts](#) built out a 100 megawatt solar array to power its 13 hotels on the Las Vegas strip.

The U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) produced the [“Solar Futures Study,”](#) highlighting the role of solar energy in the shift toward a carbon-free electric grid.



Christchurch International Airport in New Zealand is investing in [Kōwhai Park](#), a 150 megawatt renewable energy facility, to power industries well beyond its own needs.

## H. Commit to Action

### 27. Join the Glasgow Declaration.

The [Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action](#) is the global initiative for tourism businesses, destination organizations, governments and other organizations to make a commitment towards climate change action. It is led by the World Tourism Organization and operates within the framework of the UN's One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme.

The declaration aligns with the worldwide commitment to reduce tourism emissions by 50% by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions ideally before 2050. Each participating organization is obligated to submit a climate action plan within one year and subsequently provide annual progress reports.

#### Resources:

As an example, Visit Scotland, with support from The Travel Foundation, utilized the Glasgow Declaration's framework to [demonstrate climate action planning](#) that includes emission reductions across tourism's wider [value chain](#).



### 28. Partner & Empower Community Action.

Finally, look for opportunities to partner with and empower community initiatives on climate action and/or more broadly sustainable and regenerative tourism. This includes supporting industry sustainability efforts (see Action Step 18), supporting community-led conservation programs or developing volunteer opportunities for the tourism industry and/or visitors with local community initiatives or events.

#### Resources:

The Hawaii Tourism Authority works on a range of [community initiatives on regenerative tourism](#), and tourism members in New Zealand are working with the [Wao Collective](#) on community-led initiatives.

[Time for DMOcracy](#) is a major research and education program identifying best practices for destination organizations engaging effectively with their local community.



# Sources

In addition to the references and resources quoted throughout this white paper, additional sources were used in multiple ways to develop these actions.

- [Funding Futures](#) - research on the options and opportunities in tourism taxation and DMO funding (Miles Partnership with Civitas, Tourism Economics and Future Partners)
- Funding for Tomorrow - 10 Global Best Practices 2020
- McKinsey & Company's research and Insights on [climate change](#) and [travel and tourism](#) including "[Accelerating the Path to Net Zero Travel](#)" (September 2022)
- [Project Drawdown](#) - carbon reduction science and solutions for governments, industry and communities, a not-for-profit foundation
- Skift's resources on [climate change](#)
- UNWTO's resources on [climate change](#), including
  - [UNWTO & Travel Foundation Glasgow Declaration](#)
  - [One Planet - UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- World Travel & Tourism Council Reports & Resources including:
  - [A Net Zero Road Map for Travel & Tourism - 2021](#)
  - [Nature Positive Travel & Tourism](#)
  - [Towards Destination Stewardship - 2021](#)
- Insights and resources from the white paper's collaborating partners
  - [Miles Partnership](#)
  - [Group NAO](#)
  - [The Travel Foundation](#)
    - [The Future of Tourism Coalition](#)
  - [Global Destination Sustainability Movement](#)
  - [Coraggio Group](#)





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