

Sustainability and Greening your Business

A business toolkit for developing a
sustainable tourism enterprise

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In the age of David Attenborough's Blue Planet II, Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion, developing a sustainable approach to your tourism enterprise makes strong business sense. A greener outlook can help you cut costs, develop local business relationships, improve your visitor experience, give you the leading edge over a competitor and help the environment.

As the travelling public and tourism SMEs come to terms with Covid-19 and its long-term impact, it's becoming clear that there's an appetite for the tourism industry to reboot with sustainability at its heart. In June 2020, the One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme, led by the World Tourism Organization, announced its new vision for global tourism – "growing better, stronger, and balancing the needs of people, planet and prosperity."

And with sustainability issues underlining three of the five key trends in ABTA's Travel Trends 2020 report, there's little doubt the movement is here to stay.

But what does a sustainable tourism business look like? Gone are the days when the phrase 'sustainable travel' suggested a compromise on quality and comfort. Today's sustainable tourism businesses are more efficient and more considerate of their impact on the local economy, community, culture and local environment – while maintaining or even raising standards for customers.

Wherever possible, sustainability should underpin every business decision you make, from choosing a green energy provider or eliminating single-use plastic to providing local jobs, sourcing local produce or promoting biodiversity.

As far as your customers are concerned, your sustainable business helps them feel connected to the local area and positive about their environmental impact – something they'll want to shout about to their friends and family.

It's something that many West Sussex tourism businesses have already recognized. For example, The Kayak Coach's river 'clean-up' trips and TJ Boardhire's overnight 'leave no trace' river camping experiences have both proven popular with visitors.

Developing a sustainable approach to tourism makes sense for you, your visitors and the environment.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM



Case study

Tourism growth is normally a cause for celebration but in Amsterdam, visitor numbers swelled to an unsustainable level. Before the global pandemic, the city's 800,000 inhabitants were swamped by 9 million overnight tourists (2019).

Untourist Guide Amsterdam is an unusual response to the situation. The responsible tourism initiative helps to ease the city's burden by offering visitors a way to give back, and by helping locals and tourists connect. Instead of following the crowds to the honeypot sights, Untourists take part in experiences that contribute to the city and its people. They help fish plastic out of the canals, join tours on ex-refugee boats run by former refugees, or 'Feed the Dutch' with a free picnic designed to encourage cultural exchanges. You can even 'marry' an Amsterdammer for the day – the honeymoon is spent exploring parts of Amsterdam that most visitors pass by.





ABTA's Holiday Habits Report 2019 report shows that sustainability, once considered a niche issue, is now mainstream with 50% of Brits saying that "the green credentials of a travel company are important or essential when choosing a holiday." In fact, the number of people who say they would choose one travel company over another if they have better sustainability practices has increased by 10% in just four years.

Booking.com's 2019 sustainable travel report reveals a similar inclination worldwide: 55% of global travellers are more determined to make sustainable travel choices than they were just one year ago.



The UK government has set a target of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, a policy that reflects the public's current priorities.

Who's your audience?



If you think sustainable tourism is a younger traveller's game, think again.

Booking.com's 2019 sustainable travel report reveals that 72% of travellers believe that people need to make sustainable travel choices now to save the planet for future generations, with those beliefs consistently strong across the generations. Almost three quarters (74%) of 46-55 year olds believed this most strongly, followed by 71% of millennials.

Global research by Booking.com into Gen Z (those aged 16-24) and the future of sustainable travel revealed more surprising stats. While 56% of Gen Z travellers have good intentions about staying in green/eco-friendly accommodation, it's the Baby Boomers (62%), Gen X (60%) and Millennials (58%) who are more likely to back up their beliefs with action when it comes to booking.



Case study



The Yoga Garden runs yoga classes, workshops and retreats in locally handmade yurts set within the Knepp Estate's re-wilding project.

Owner Nina Fowkes believes that their strong sustainability ethos is "crucial" to the success of The Yoga Garden, and it's echoed in their marketing strategy. *"This year, we introduced a Tree Pass - a 20-class yoga pass purchased for a reduced amount, but with £30 of the £130 purchase price being paid directly to Tree Sisters...This meant that for every yoga class attended, five trees were planted in the tropics."*

www.the-yoga-garden.co.uk





How to start

There is no quick fix when it comes to greening your tourism business. Instead, it's best viewed as a series on ongoing improvements, with a sustainable ethos influencing every choice you make for your business. Having said that, there are a few things you can do straight away.

You don't have to make major changes to be more sustainable. Small changes, whether operational or aesthetic, can add up to a big difference so wherever you can, reduce, reuse or recycle. It's almost impossible for a business to be perfectly

sustainable in all areas, but it's worth striving for.

In the long-term, work towards becoming certified by an officially recognised green accreditation scheme so you and your visitors can be sure that your accommodation or attraction really is as green as you say.

Green Tourism's free GreenCheck quiz will tell you whether your business is already eligible for an internationally acknowledged Green Tourism award. If not, they can offer straightforward support and practical advice to help you adopt a more sustainable outlook across

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT?

Green accreditation will make you seem more trustworthy and credible, and help you stand out from your competitors.

your business, from saving money by reducing waste to attracting customers by devising eco-activities with partner enterprises. Once you've earned a Green Tourism award, you can display your Green Tourism plaque and certificate and use the logo on your website and across your marketing.

The sustainable initiatives you choose to implement will benefit the environment, your visitors' experience and your business's bills and reputation straight away.

KICKSTART YOUR SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

Top tips



Reduce energy use by insulating lofts, eliminating draughts or installing an energy-efficient boiler.



Encourage car-free visits by making it easier for guests to reach you via public transport.



Allow customers to offset the carbon generated by their visit (but be aware that carbon offsetting has its critics).



Collaborate with nearby tourism businesses to offer authentic, local experiences for your customers.



Source ethical, seasonal food that's grown locally to minimise food miles and support local producers.



Save water by introducing a grey water system and installing low-flow shower heads.

Marketing Magic



How to tell your customers about your green credentials

As more and more tourists cite sustainability as a critical part of their decision-making process, your green credentials can help you stand out – if you communicate them effectively.

Fortunately, a sustainable ethos creates more marketing opportunities and you can use easily accessible communication tools to share your sustainable vision with existing and new customers. You could use your social media channels to take part in national campaigns to promote sustainability; the greater profile of campaigns such as ABTA's annual Making Holidays Greener campaign will help expose you to a wider audience.

Other examples include earning and displaying the symbol of a green accreditation scheme on your website and flyers; using in-room messages to convey how many previous guests chose to re-use their towels and save water; giving detailed information about local suppliers on restaurant menus; and updating staff on your green efforts so they can enthuse to customers directly.

Across your marketing, communicate your sustainability with honesty, pride and authenticity, highlighting how your approach helps your customers have a better experience, as well as benefiting the environment and community.

Find out more

[!\[\]\(bd3b31712ad9bab5a241210fa6925cdd_img.jpg\) VisitBritain/VisitEngland: Make your business sustainable](#)

[!\[\]\(0fb13ad0bfa3d86868cdd3883e5665b3_img.jpg\) VisitEngland: Green accreditation schemes](#)

[!\[\]\(799877f5c2f906134441300079881630_img.jpg\) Green Tourism](#)

[!\[\]\(41aea2746216b27a6939d696d8e035da_img.jpg\) ABTA: Travel Trends and Holiday Habits reports](#)

[!\[\]\(7bc43b319a082987e20f7bf78f4bab80_img.jpg\) Global Sustainable Tourism Council](#)

[!\[\]\(e50091943b385fe16d3277389202856f_img.jpg\) ABTA: Travellife – Make Holidays Greener](#)

[!\[\]\(4436e6b00b9d5e62c2a161129eb3e4d0_img.jpg\) European Commission: Take a green step](#)

[!\[\]\(179f167ede0522ebb4ea025b3ad78ca7_img.jpg\) VisitScotland: Supporting your business Sustainable Tourism](#)