



Millennials and Gen Z are set to become the biggest cohort of travelers in the tourism sector. This younger demographic grew up with a heightened awareness of the climate crisis and are, therefore, more conscious of their impact as travelers. As many popular destinations face resource scarcity due in part to over-tourism, this new type of values-driven traveler could help to stem the tide with their dedication to taking care of the environment and supporting local communities. Young travelers are demonstrating their commitment to eco-tourism with actions, such as using less carbon-intensive transport modes, staying at eco-lodges, participating in social impact projects, and more that we've outlined in this report. With their desire to give back, Millennials and Gen Z are leading the way towards a more conscious, sustainable, and compassionate tourism industry.



1 TRAVEL

Air travel accounts for 2.5% of total carbon emissions, yet contributes to the majority of a traveler's overall carbon footprint. Innovations in sustainable air travel, such as carbon-negative fuels and electric planes, have not yet proven to be reliable or scalable. **In order to achieve global GHG reduction targets, vital changes in the modes and frequency of travel need to be made.** France is leading a shift towards air travel reductions with their recent ban on short-haul domestic flights, while Sweden's popularized term Tagskryt (or "train bragging") encourages citizens to trade jet-setting for slower travel by rail. While more travelers are becoming aware of their impact and wish to reduce their individual emissions, many do not want to be inconvenienced or pay excessively to do so, according to a report by The Vacationer. Is it, therefore, imperative for organizations to provide emission reduction and transportation options that are accessible, reliable, and affordable. Education will also play a key role in influencing conscious transportation choices.

INFLUENCERS

1 B Corp-certified Byway Travel is a service helping users find flight-free travel routes via train or bus. Although mostly EU-based, Byway Travel encourages travelers to skip the planes and reduce their individual travel emissions by up to 90% by choosing grounded and shared transportation options.

2 Good Travel is making it easier for tourists to explore New Zealand in electric cars. The organization creates comprehensive guides that plot out all charging stations along the way. The guide also includes discount codes for EV rentals and accommodation options committed to sustainable tourism.

3 If air travel is part of the itinerary, it is possible to offset those excess emissions through carbon reduction initiatives. Organizations like Cool Effect and Gold Standard help users calculate their individual emissions and link them to vetted offsetting projects, like biodiversity restoration in Honduras or a wind farm project in Indonesia. For long flights, offsetting pricing can range from \$20-35 per leg.

2 STAY

As younger and more environmentally aware travelers become widespread, so will the demand for sustainable accommodations. According to Booking's 2021 sustainability report, 73% of travelers would be more likely to choose an accommodation if it has implemented sustainability practices. In another report by Operto, 53% of respondents said they check for "eco-friendliness" when searching for accommodation options. **With this growing priority in mind, hotels are starting to communicate their sustainability efforts through certifications and pledges.** UNESCO's Sustainable Travel Pledge motivates properties to publicly commit to actions that will reduce their environmental impact, as well as contribute to community resilience and conservation. Expedia reported that of the 43,000 hotels that signed the pledge, 25% saw an increase in week-over-week bookings and averaged longer-length stays. Being able to clearly communicate sustainability efforts could help garner more guests and foster a more conscious and loyal customer base.

INFLUENCERS

1 Alladale Wilderness Reserve in the Scottish Highlands offers guests a remote, 23,000-acre nature utopia. The estate focuses on rewilding projects that reintroduce plant and animal species, such as the Scottish wildcat, back into their native environment. The guests' accommodation fee contributes directly to the work of Alladale's charity partner, The European Nature Trust, which supports wildlife and conservation projects across Europe.

2 The Ribino Alpine Resort in Bled, Slovenia is committed to sustainable development, especially in the field of waste. They are the first hotel in Europe to obtain the European Zero Waste Business Certificate. Even their furniture is consciously considered by being made from local, recycled wood.

3 Voted "Best Sustainable Hotel in the World" in 2014 by International Hotel Awards, Eden Lodge in Madagascar runs completely off solar power. The hotel is also committed to preserving the rich fauna and flora of the country and supports the local economy by sourcing building materials and food from indigenous communities.



Connor Mollison (Photographer)



Ribno Alpine Resort (Company)



Eden Resort & Suites (Company)



Marius Rua (Photographer)



Tomomi Iwanaka (Photographer)



Emma's Torch (Company)

3

EAT

While many popular destinations have historically attempted to cater to the more watered-down “tourist palate,” many travelers today are seeking authentic and place-based food and drink that honors the heritage of the site they are visiting. According to a report by [World Food Travel](#), 81% of surveyed tourists believe that local food helps them better understand the culture of their destination, while 93% claim to have participated in at least one authentic culinary experience in the last two years. **In addition to enhancing one’s cultural experience, eating locally can also help to lower an individual’s “foodprint” (food-related carbon footprint).** Locally and sustainably sourced food and drink options can provide a memorable and unique experience for tourists, while strengthening local systems. Go beyond farm-to-table offerings by engaging travelers in [indigenous food tours](#), community garden visits and foraging, or social impact culinary initiatives.

INFLUENCERS

1 [Røros, Norway](#) has established itself as a sought-after food destination. With crops growing in cool climates and in long, bright summer nights, Røros’ food showcases unique and diverse flavor profiles. The town’s so-called “food safaris” offer tourists an intimate culinary experience that celebrates local cuisine and the history of food in the Røros region.

2 [The Traveling Spoon](#) is an online platform that connects local hosts around the world with tourists eager to have an authentic culinary experience. Hosts invite travelers into their abodes for a homemade meal, where local traditions are shared and meaningful connections are forged.

3 New American eatery [Emma’s Torch](#) in Brooklyn, New York, has created a program for refugees, asylees, and survivors of human trafficking that teaches culinary skills and career development, including English classes. The student-backed restaurant offers a menu that is both locally-sourced and seasonal.

4

PARTICIPATE

The negative impacts of over-tourism on popular destinations like [Maya Bay, Thailand](#) and [Tulum, Mexico](#) are starting to come to light, and this awareness is inspiring more conscientious travel behavior. In a survey by travel company Virtuoso, 72% responded that **tourism should support local communities and economies, preserve cultural heritage, and protect the planet**. Today, organizations have the opportunity to provide tourists with diverse experiences that result in positive environmental and social impacts, while still being unique, fun, and culturally enriching.

INFLUENCERS

1 [Surfers Against Sewage](#) (SAS) harnesses citizen science by asking members in various UK regions to report on water conditions at their respective surf sites and to take action where needed. SAS also provides users with interactive maps illustrating where it is safe to surf and which areas to avoid due to instances like sewage overflow.

2 Travelers looking for a budget-friendly trip and who want to connect closely with the earth could join a [WWOOF](#) program. Standing for Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms, WWOOF links volunteers with organic farmers and artisans around the world for a cultural and educational exchange. Volunteers get to learn about conscious, place-based farming and sustainability practices, while hosts benefit from community participation.

3 [Penda Photo Tours](#) offers affordable photo tours and photography volunteer programs in diverse settings in Cape Town, South Africa. In addition to gaining photography skills, participants have the opportunity to benefit local organizations in need by providing them with high-quality images to be used for vital promotion and outreach purposes.



Surfers Against Sewage (Company)



LINC Foods (Brand)



Piotr Motyka (Photographer)

1

CONSIDER ACCESSIBLE, LOW-IMPACT TRANSPORTATION

Help travelers explore “lighter” by providing low-carbon transportation options. This could include helping tourists navigate via grounded transportation or creating a map with all EV charging stations along popular driving routes. Making individual carbon footprint calculations and offsetting initiatives more accessible is another way to help reduce transportation emissions.

2

COMMUNICATE YOUR SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

Travelers are spending more time researching and comparing accommodation options before booking. They are also more eager to support establishments that integrate sustainability. Hotels, lodges, and guesthouses can stand out by clearly communicating their sustainability efforts on their website and social media channels. Adding substantiated pledges and certifications is another way to demonstrate your commitments.

3

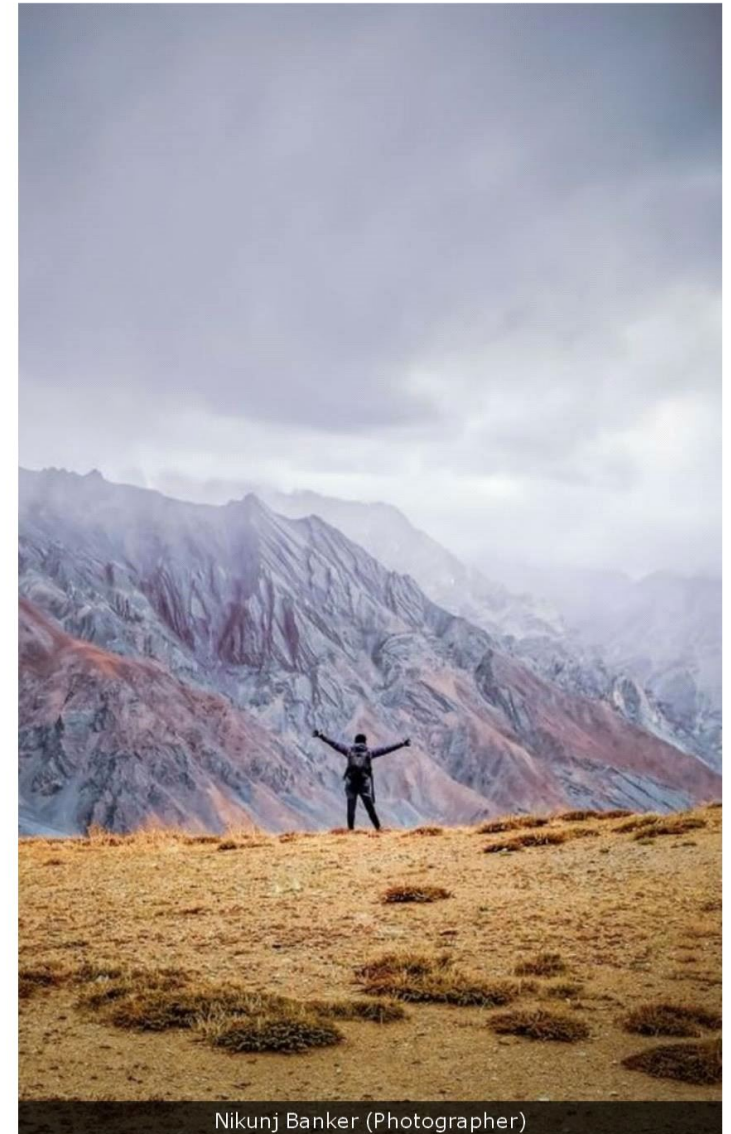
OFFER EXPERIENCES THAT ARE AUTHENTIC AND UNIQUE

Cater to Gen Z and Millennial tourists by providing experiences that are rooted in authenticity, locality, and uniqueness. From adventure to cultural experiences, ensure that your offerings support local systems, while providing a sense of personalization and novelty. For example, [Hotel Xcaret Arte](#) in Playa Del Carmen, Mexico markets itself as an all-inclusive resort, yet fully embraces local culture and traditions to elevate the guest experience.

4

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES WHERE TRAVELERS CAN GIVE BACK

More tourists are seeking to travel with purpose. Provide initiatives that give back to communities and/or supports the environment, while still being accessible, engaging, and culturally enriching—for example, a scenic photo tour, in which a percentage of the proceeds go to NGOs in need.



Nikunj Banker (Photographer)