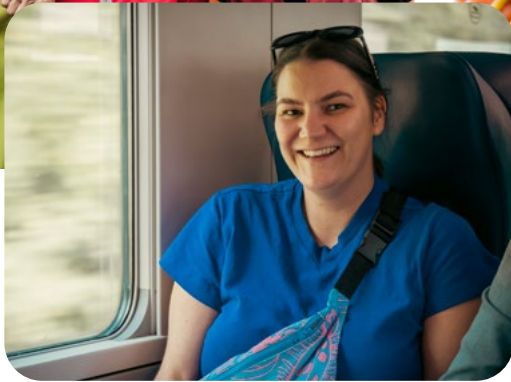




*How to be a*  
**CHAMPION  
OF CHANGE**

An agent's guide to understanding sustainable travel



## Travellers across all geographies and generations are seeking more sustainable and responsible travel experiences.

As travel professionals, we provide the gateway for our customers to celebrate cultures, support local economies and communities and to visit the wonders of our planet.

Our industry is at the forefront of the climate emergency. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, travel generates about 8% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. The industry is also grappling with social challenges like overtourism, cultural erosion and tourism leakage.

There is still time to make a difference, but we must all step up and embrace a new era of conscious travel.

This guide is an invitation for all travel professionals to join us on the journey to a more sustainable future. Its objective is to help advisors understand sustainability, talk to their customers about it and offer solutions to travellers looking to move through the world in a responsible way.

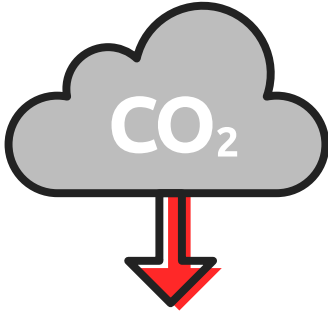
It's not a one size fits all solution, and we encourage all advisors to do their own research. The most important thing is getting started! There's plenty of easy actions you and your customers can start taking today.

By working together, we can protect our home and create a better and brighter future for travel.



**Dr Susanne Etti**  
*Global Environmental  
Impact Manager*  
Intrepid Travel

# DID YOU KNOW?



**64% of adults** don't know what their carbon footprint is.



**7 in 10 adults** say they are willing to change their everyday actions and purchases to minimise their carbon footprint, even if it's more costly or inconvenient.



**About 6 in 10 adults** say they are more likely to book their travels from companies that are transparent about sustainability and carbon reduction efforts.



**Less than 2 in 5 adults** say it's easy to find information about the carbon impact of their holiday.

**'I chose to go paper-free to foster a more sustainable culture within my business. Now operating 100% digitally, I've decreased waste, improved information accessibility and efficiency, and reduced cost!'**

**Holly Velardo**  
*Director at HollyDay Travel*



## **WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL?**

**Sustainable travel, green travel, responsible travel... What does it mean and is it really that important?**

According to the UN World Tourism Organisation, sustainable travel can be defined as: 'Travel that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.'

# SELLING SUSTAINABILITY

**By understanding what sustainable travel is, you can help your clients make better decisions when they travel.**

It might seem daunting, but there are easy ways to bring up sustainability in your conversations with customers. Try using a fact from this guide as an icebreaker or get familiar with the sustainability impact of the products in your portfolio and include this information when providing options to your clients.

Here's three simple questions to help guide your conversation with customers:

## 1. Where should you go?

- **Consider visiting a lesser-known or emerging destination**, as iconic tourist hotspots that attract millions of visitors each year are the most at risk of unsustainable impact. Plus, these places can offer some of the most unique and authentic travel experiences in the world!
- **Not everyone will want to go off-the-beaten path**, and that's okay! Visiting in the shoulder season is another way to help reduce the negative impacts of overtourism on a destination.



## Case study

### Albania

It may be an under-the-radar-travel destination, but when it comes to dazzling landscapes and fascinating culture, Albania is every bit as magnificent as its more popular neighbours! [Intrepid's 9-day Albania Expedition](#) was developed in partnership with non-profit ecotourism organisation MEET to support tourism development, promote conservation and help shape the Mediterranean into a leading sustainable tourism destination.



## 2. How should you get around?

- **If you can, take public transport** to get between more distant locations rather than flying. Don't forget, taking the train or the bus can embed the journey as one of the best parts in seeing a destination!
- **Consider jumping on a bicycle or walking** to switch fuel power for muscle power altogether!

## Case study

### Vietnam

On Intrepid's 15-day [Scenic Vietnam](#) itinerary, a flight from Hoi An to Ho Chi Minh City was replaced with an overnight train. With no change in trip length, this reduces the carbon emissions per person per day by 12 percent – which will eliminate thousands of kgs of CO<sub>2</sub>-e each year. With this change, travellers are also given two additional opportunities to experience local culture: meeting a martial arts master in Quy Nhon and visiting a unique ancient citadel – both of which were only made possible by the train route.



## 3. What should you buy?

- **Purchase your souvenirs from local businesses** that produce environmentally friendly and culturally significant products.
- **Reduce single use plastic on your journey** by packing your water bottle (consider a bottle with a built-in filter, if tap water is not safe to drink), and reusable bags.
- **Eat local** and consider opting for plant-based meals that use seasonal produce.

## Case study

### Morocco

The kitchen at the Tawesna Association, nestled in the foothills of Morocco's vast clay fortress, Ait Benhaddou, provides employment opportunities to local women who battle cultural stereotypes which discourage them from working. On a number of [Intrepid's Morocco itineraries](#), travellers have a chance to enjoy sizzling tagines and support the women behind the project. 'This association is a window for us to meet people from all over the world. It makes us independent and gives us our own income,' says Head Chef Nadia Baa Bouz.



# DEBUNKING MYTHS

**The good news is sustainability doesn't have to equal sacrifice.**

There are more travel products designed with sustainability in mind than ever before, but many of your clients may have misconceptions about sustainable travel. You can help them by debunking some common myths:

## **MYTH: Sustainable travel is more expensive**

In some cases, sustainable travel can actually be more affordable. For example, taking public transport like buses or trains is generally cheaper than flying, as is staying in a locally owned and run homestay as opposed to a chain hotel.

## **MYTH: A traveller doesn't have any control over whether travel is sustainable or not**

Everyone has the power to reduce their impact. Whether it's small choices, like not purchasing single-use plastic, or bigger contributions, like offsetting flights, every step taken by an individual traveller to enjoy a more sustainable journey can create a positive impact.



## *Case study*

### **Sri Lanka**

At Sri Lanka's UNESCO world heritage listed rock fortress, Sigiriya, severe plastic pollution threatens to damage the natural environment. In 2023, a group of generous travellers visiting the site joined the Intrepid Foundation and its partner [Zero Plastic](#) to clean up 5000 kg of plastic. This was completely voluntarily, and took only a few hours out of their holiday, but drove massive impact for the destination and its delicate ecosystem.

## **MYTH:** Sustainability is only about environmental impact

Travelling sustainably is not just about lessening your impact on the environment. While this is one part, delivering a 'sustainable' experience is about generating positive impact, or reducing harm, on a whole range of stakeholders, like suppliers, host communities and animals.

Are your dollars going directly into the hands of the community? Are wildlife experiences operating in line with welfare guidelines, like Intrepid and World Animal Protection's [Animal Welfare Policy](#)? Is your supply chain adhering to modern slavery rules? All of these considerations work together to create a product that is sustainable.

## **MYTH:** Sustainable travel is only possible in a handful of destinations

Some countries like Costa Rica and Iceland are well known for ecotourism. Not every destination is this advanced, but sustainable choices can be made no matter where you are in the world.

## *Case study*

### **Italy**

Rome is one of the most visited cities in the world, and one of the worst affected by overtourism. At the Borghetto San Carlo Agricultural Estate on the outskirts of the capital, 22 hectares of unused farmland has been converted into a unique sustainable tourism project, addressing the issue of declining green space and offering education in sustainable farming. Travellers can visit the estate, run by Intrepid Foundation partner [Cooperativa Coraggio](#), to enjoy fresh, organic meals and support the local community.

## **MYTH:** I have to give up flying or luxury travel in order to travel sustainably

While flying is one of the most carbon intensive activities, we know that air travel is often the most practical way for customers to get between destinations.



If flying is the best option, booking economy class and as direct as possible to avoid unnecessary stopovers is a good way to reduce your personal footprint. Purchasing carbon offsets is also a good way to take responsibility for your unavoidable emissions.

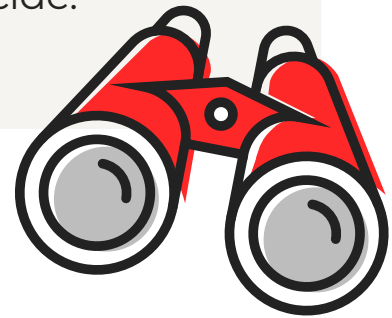




# *How to spot* **FALSE SUSTAINABILITY CLAIMS**

Greenwashing is the practice of exaggerating or being dishonest about environmental impacts to appear more sustainable, and it's becoming more prevalent in travel.

It can be challenging for advisors and travellers to spot a legitimate claim. Here are some questions to help you decide:



**Is there data** or evidence backing up the claim being made?

**Is all the information available**, or is something missing?

**Does the company measure** and report on their carbon footprint?

**Do they have an independent certification** holding them to account, such as B Corp?

**Have they signed up to collective change** efforts, like the Glasgow Declaration for Climate Action in Tourism?

# BEING A CHAMPION OF CHANGE

'At Travel Matters, we make it our business to not only organise holidays which minimise negative impact but that educate our clients on how travel, when done right, can positively change the world.'

**Karen Simmonds**

*CEO & Founder at Travel Matters and the Intrepid Sustainable Travel Champion of the Year 2024*



Everyone has a role to play in protecting our home planet. Walk the talk by taking action in your everyday life:

- **Use your website or social media to share why you care** about the planet and climate, and how it relates to your business of selling travel.
- **Use recycled paper or plant-based ink for brochures**, or go paper free by emailing brochures to your customers.
- **Take time to learn what the latest science says** and think about how you can reduce your personal carbon footprint (check out the handy resources at the end of this guide to help you get started).
- **Adopt sustainable practices at home**, such as using renewable energy or reducing household water consumption by installing an energy-efficient dishwasher or taking shorter showers.
- **Share inspiring stories** about your clients' – or your own – sustainable travel experiences with your friends, family and colleagues.
- **Follow and engage** with travel companies who share your values.
- **Get involved in community activism** such as a local climate rally or send a letter to your local politician.

No matter where you are on your climate journey, make it a priority to take the next step and translate your commitment into action in your travel business. By adding sustainability to your toolbox of skills, you can not only sell more product, but become a champion of change and create a new generation of conscious travellers.

# GLOSSARY

<b>Climate change</b>	Significant, long-term changes in the average weather patterns on Earth.
<b>Greenhouse gases</b>	Gases in the atmosphere, like carbon dioxide (CO <sup>2</sup> ), that raise the surface temperature.
<b>Carbon footprint</b>	A measure of the total amount of CO <sup>2</sup> and other greenhouse gases emitted directly or indirectly.
<b>Decarbonisation</b>	The removal or reduction of CO <sup>2</sup> output in the atmosphere.
<b>Renewable energy</b>	Energy generated from natural sources, i.e., wind and solar that are constantly replenished and produce little to no greenhouse gas emissions compared to fossil fuels.
<b>Carbon offsetting</b>	A way to balance out CO <sup>2</sup> emissions by investing in environmental projects that either reduce future emissions or absorb CO <sup>2</sup> from the atmosphere.
<b>Greenwashing</b>	A practice to create a misleading impression that products, services, or policies are environmentally friendly.
<b>Greenhushing</b>	A practice to deliberately downplay or withhold information about environmental and sustainability initiatives.
<b>Biodegradable</b>	Materials that have the ability to be broken down naturally.
<b>Recycling</b>	The process of collecting, processing, and repurposing materials that would otherwise be discarded as waste.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	The variety and variability of life on Earth at all levels.
<b>Tourism leakage</b>	The phenomenon where a significant portion of the revenue generated by tourism in a destination is not retained by the local economy, but instead leaves the area.
<b>Overtourism</b>	The phenomenon where a destination experiences an unsustainable influx of tourists, leading to negative impacts on the environment, infrastructure, local communities, and the overall visitor experience.
<b>B Corp</b>	A for-profit company that has received independent certification from <a href="#">B Lab</a> , a non-profit organisation that evaluates social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability.

# Find out more:


## Learn

 [About the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals](#)

 What your ecological footprint is using [WWF's footprint calculator](#)

## Read

 [The Climate Book](#)  
by Greta Thunberg

 [The Future We Choose](#) by  
Christiana Figueres & Tom  
Rivett-Carnac

## Watch & Listen

 [2040](#) by award-winning  
director Damon Gameau

 [Exploring our natural world](#) with  
Sir David Attenborough by WWF

Intrepid is a certified B Corp, which means we're more dedicated and accountable than ever to being better. It means being committed to creating benefit for all. It's not only our official pledge to be a responsible business, but also to use travel as a force for good in the world.



**We want your feedback!**

[responsible.business@intrepidtravel.com](mailto:responsible.business@intrepidtravel.com)

