



Future of Tourism Coalition Reset Tourism Webinar Series: Local and Sustainable Supply Chains

We discussed local entrepreneurship and product innovation to boost employment and increase the amount of locally owned businesses in the tourism supply chain, to create authentic, positive, low-impact experiences, and to transition to a low-carbon, circular economy.

- [Watch the webinar recording](#)
- [View the presentation slides](#)

Key takeaways:

- In the past, tourism was more of a one-way relationship that benefitted the visitor but came at a cost to local people, destinations, and the environment. Now the tide is turning as travelers are demanding more regenerative travel experiences that meet community needs, create positive social impact, restore the planet, and strengthen destination resilience. If we continue to strive towards this new model of tourism, the industry will not only benefit but this paradigm shift is important for its survival.
- Achieving holistic sustainability requires looking beyond your business's direct activities, to also account for the impacts that are being created across the entire supply chain. Every part of the visitor experience is an opportunity to make intentional choices to integrate local communities and reduce the environmental footprint. Our planet has finite resources and now is the time to better manage tourism's impacts to avoid returning to the destructive model of the past.
- Realizing sustainability at scale requires intentional collaboration between stakeholders across the sector – destinations, communities, tourism businesses, suppliers, etc. – to build connections, give local communities a voice, and work towards shared goals. This notion aligns with the Future of Tourism's pillar of "radical collaboration."
- "You can't manage what you don't measure" – this webinar reinforced the importance of setting goals and measuring progress, a point that was touched upon in great detail during the second webinar in our Reset Tourism series.

Keynote - The Path to Localizing and Decarbonizing Tourism Supply Chains

Presented by Paloma Zapata, Sustainable Travel International

- Tourism plays a role in the climate crisis, generating emissions via every activity in the value chain. Though global carbon emissions declined in 2020, this drop was due to the pandemic and not intentionally orchestrated. Thus, many economies are now seeing emissions climb above pre-COVID levels. In order to truly reduce emissions, we need a well-managed and structural transformation.
- There are three primary steps that we must take to curb the effects of climate change: 1. reducing emissions by minimizing fossil fuel use; 2. changing the way we interact with ecosystems to protect and restore the earth's natural carbon-storing capacity; and 3. advancing technological solutions that help reduce and remove emissions.
- Becoming a carbon neutral tourism business begins with understanding the amount of emissions being generated via your operations and supply chain, and then setting ambitious and holistic reduction targets. Businesses can reduce their footprint by reconsidering their product design and choosing less carbon intensive options, and by supporting their suppliers in introducing more sustainable practices. To drive change at scale, there must be sector-wide collaboration and companies must institutionalize climate action.
- We can also look at carbon neutrality at a more macro level by looking at the destination as a whole. Destinations can work towards carbon neutrality by encouraging the tourism industry to adopt energy efficient practices, implementing policies that protect and restore local ecosystems, and expanding their clean energy infrastructure. Climate finance, such as tourist carbon offsetting programs, can be a mechanism to finance local conservation and clean energy initiatives. The pandemic also highlighted the importance of creating strong and efficient local supply chains and there is an opportunity to further integrate local products into the tourism experience. This type of carbon neutral destination approach also generates other social and environmental impacts, while boosting the resilience of local communities.
- "The time to act is now, otherwise the next generation won't have anything left to protect and conserve."

Keynote - Local Tourism Supply Chains: At the Intersection of Purpose and Product

Presented by Paula Vlamings, Tourism Cares

- Travelers today are seeking out businesses and destinations that are taking action to sustain and positively impact the communities, environments, and places they visit.
- Nearly every part of the visitor experience is an opportunity to create shared value across the tourism value chain and strengthen the health and resilience of local communities and destinations. We can accomplish this by creating sustainable, community-centered tourism supply chains. As a tourism business, this means thinking about the product you are providing and where there are opportunities to expand your local impact – for instance, could you be sourcing more items directly

from local producers or partnering with organizations that provide opportunities for marginalized communities?

- A few real-life examples of how to integrate social enterprises into tourism supply chain for greater sustainability:
 - Global Himalayan Expeditions: offers trips that bring solar energy to remote villages in Nepal, while providing benefits to local communities.
 - Plastic Whale: offers canal tours in Amsterdam where travelers fish for plastic that gets repurposed into furniture and boats.
 - Refill NOT Landfill: sets up free water refill stations in partnership with local hotels to reduce the consumption of disposable plastic bottles.
 - Jordan: 12 social enterprises integrated into tourism itineraries and the Meaningful Map of Jordan.
- Though there are countless social enterprises and NGOs out there; the challenge is that many of them lack connections to the tourism market. This requires a participatory process and continuous feedback loop.
- There needs to be a mindset shift – instead of focusing only on what value we get from communities and nature, we must think about how we can give back to the destination and help it thrive. This concept is reflected in the following quote from Arnie Weismann: “ If we who profit from the desire of people to experience the world don't also invest in preserving, protecting and revitalizing the places we send travelers, we don't have sustainable business models.”

Guest Speaker Highlights

- **Representing the Hawai'i Tourism Authority, John De Fries, CEO** spoke about the Hawaiian cultural value of Mālama, which means to protect or care for the things that we love - and how the future of Hawaiian tourism must embody this mindset. He challenged us to think of the earth as an island, and emphasized the obligation we have to conserve our limited natural resources for future generations. John shared HTA's [Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#) which focuses on a regenerative tourism model, as well as the community-based destination management plans for the islands (links below) that were developed via a participatory process.

Hawai'i Destination Management Action Plans:

- [Kaua'i Destination Management Action Plan](#)
 - [Maui Nui Destination Management Action Plan](#)
 - [Hawai'i Island Destination Management Action Plan](#)
 - *Note: the O'ahu plan is currently under development*
- **Representing the Town of Vail (Colorado, USA), Beth Markham, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator** shared how Vail is addressing some of the sustainability challenges that affect mountain resort communities. In particular, she provided an overview of Vail's [Actively Green](#) sustainable business certification program which provides a bottom up approach to improving the sustainability of the destination. Beth

also highlighted the role that the Mountain IDEAL standard played in propelling Vail towards in achieving its destination sustainability goals.

- **Representing Contiki Holidays (a subsidiary of the Travel Corporation), Kirsten Bain, VP of Operations** shared the six step process that they've taken to reviewing their trips across the supply chain. This included developing their Make Travel Matter Experience Calculator which measures the impact of their trips relative to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and setting targets to enhance these experiences.
- **Representing IMPULSE Travel, Rodrigo Atuesta, CEO & Co-Founder** spoke about the role that Impulse Travel plays in creating tourism experiences that solve local challenges and drive social transformation. He explained that Impulse Travel acts as a connector by crafting products that link impact-oriented community initiatives to the tourism value chain.
- **Representing Altruvistas, Malia Everette, CEO & Founder** spoke about social justice issues in tourism and emphasized the importance of philanthropy and engaging in the local experience as a means to retain more visitor spending in the local economy.

Speaker Bios

Paloma Zapata

CEO, [Sustainable Travel International](#)

As CEO of Sustainable Travel International Paloma leads the organization's global efforts to maximize tourism's contribution to conservation and development in order to protect destinations, preserve natural environments, and improve community well-being. Her work has ranged from addressing the shortcomings of the current tourism supply to deriving sustainable development strategies and formulating policies for destinations. With over 15 years of experience in sustainable tourism and economic development, Paloma has designed and implemented impactful initiatives and projects in 25 nations across the globe. Currently, she leads the organizations carbon offsetting program and is leading the efforts in defining the first Carbon Neutral Destination approach for island nations to follow.

Paula Vlamings

Chief Impact Officer, [Tourism Cares](#)

Paula Vlamings is the Chief Impact Officer for Tourism Cares and leads the organization's strategy for positive social and environmental impact through travel. For more than a decade, Paula has worked at the intersection of tourism and sustainability. Her more than 10 years in politics prior to moving into the sustainability world provided her with a unique set of skills in diplomacy, fundraising, and cross-sector collaboration. Prior to Tourism Cares, Paula was the Executive Director of The Planeterra Foundation, the nonprofit foundation of the global travel company, G Adventures, where she pioneered incubating social enterprises supporting women, youth, and indigenous communities into the tourism supply chain. Paula's sustainability work includes leading a national multi-stakeholder Food for the Parks

initiative at the Institute at the Golden Gate, a program of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. That effort resulted in a national policy change to more sustainable practices in our nation's parks, in collaboration with First Lady Michelle Obama's Council on Environmental Equality. Paula has traveled to over 75 countries on all 7 continents and is an international speaker on sustainable tourism.

John De Fries

CEO, [Hawai'i Tourism Authority](#)

John De Fries was appointed as president and chief executive officer of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) on September 16, 2020. HTA is the State of Hawai'i agency responsible for strategically managing its support of the tourism industry. Its mission is to manage Hawai'i tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural resources, community desires and visitor industry needs.

Born and raised in Waikīkī, De Fries was raised by family elders steeped in Hawaiian culture. He has more than 40 years of professional experience in the tourism and resort development industries. His recent visitor industry experience includes serving as executive director of the Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association. He is also president and principal advisor for Native Sun Business Group, a business consulting and project management firm focused on Hawai'i's hospitality and real estate development industries.

De Fries previously led the Department of Research and Development for the County of Hawai'i, a division responsible for stimulating economic growth in sectors including tourism, agriculture and renewable energy. Prior to that, he served as president and CEO of Hōkūli'a, a luxury residential community on Hawai'i Island.

De Fries serves as an advisor and board member to many community organizations, including the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability at Arizona State University, the Astronaut Ellison Onizuka Memorial Committee, Bishop Museum, Hawai'i Green Growth, Friends of the Future, the Keāhole Center for Sustainability, and Kualoa Ranch.

In recent years, De Fries has been a part of rare gatherings in Hawai'i that highlight opportunities for leadership in sustainable living, human rights, and embracing native intelligence. He has engaged with His Holiness the Dalai Lama; members of the Rapid Evaluation Team from Google X; Gro Harlem Brundtland, the first female prime minister of Norway; Hina Jilani, a renowned lawyer, pro-democracy campaigner, and a leading activist in Pakistan's women's movement; Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu of Cape Town, South Africa; and New Zealand's Sir Sidney Moko Mead, Ph.D., who created the country's first department of Māori Studies at Victoria University of Wellington.

Beth Markham

Environmental Sustainability Coordinator, [Town of Vail](#)

Beth Markham is the Environmental Sustainability Coordinator for the Town of Vail and is responsible for implementing programs to achieve goals established in the Town of Vail Environmental Sustainability Strategic Plan and the adopted Climate Action Plan for the Eagle County Community. Focus areas include waste diversion, sustainable transportation,

energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emissions reduction, climate adaptation and resiliency, and sustainable business and tourism. Education and outreach are at the heart of her work. Markham partners with Walking Mountains Science Center on the implementation of the Actively Green sustainable business certification program and manages Vail's certification as a Sustainable Destination under the Mountain IDEAL standard. Prior to her role with the Town of Vail, Markham spent a decade of her career in environmental education, connecting youth of all ages to the natural world through hands on, outdoor, and experiential science and sustainability programs. Fueling her passion for teaching youth and adults, residents and visitors, Markham is guided by the Baba Dioum quote, "In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught."

Kirsten Bain

VP of Operations, [Contiki Holidays](#) (a subsidiary of the Travel Corporation)

Kirsten has been with the Travel Corporation for 17 years working across 5 continents and a variety of roles in the Training, Operations and Product Development teams. Her work in integrating socially responsible travel experiences and sustainability initiatives has seen the Contiki brand move forward as a leader in the 18-35 age bracket for conscious travel. A member of the Contiki x Treadright sustainability steering committee and providing global support in developing the TTC's Make Travel Matter experiences, Kirsten believes that travel with purpose and conscience is the future of our industry. She is currently based in California, overseeing the product, operations and supply chain review for North, South & Central America.

Rodrigo Atuesta

CEO & Co-Founder, [IMPULSE Travel](#)

Co-founder and CEO of IMPULSE Travel, a tours and activities start-up whose purpose is to create experiences that have a positive impact in the lives of locals and travelers. Rodrigo and his team have created experiences with community driven projects that have been key for the sustainable development of post-war Colombia. They currently work with the government and NGOs to use tourism as a force for change, while providing international visitors extraordinary experiences that make a highlight in their trips, and replace negative stereotypes about Colombia. Rebranding a country one tour at a time.

Malia Everette

CEO and Founder, [Altruvistas](#)

Malía Everette, CEO and Founder of Altruvistas promotes in-depth experiential education and socially responsible travel as an alternative to the type of "sun and fun" tourism that often results in cultural homogenization and does little to benefit local communities and host economies. From 1997-2012, Malía was the Director of Global Exchange's Reality Tours program where she oversaw the growth and development of alternative travel programs, study seminars and fact finding human rights delegations to over 45 global destinations. After two decades of experience pioneering cultural and educational exchanges, and ecotours, for other organizations, foundations, educational institutions, and families, she founded Altruvistas, a foundation and travel company to promote transformational philanthropy and social responsibility in the travel industry. Altruvistas customized journey program creates privately branded trips for our partners utilizing the pillars of experiential education, philanthropy and social responsibility while our intentional meso-financing

programs & professional fellowships provide communities the financial tools they need to improve their lives and benefit from the tourism sector. Malía facilitates regenerative experiences around the world focusing on international relations, human rights, political economy, sustainable development, ecological conservation, women's issues and the resilience of indigenous cultures, and much more. Altruvistas organizes journeys to over 70 domestic (USA) and international destinations. Malía has a Bachelors of Art in English Literature and a Masters of Arts in International Relations. She has written numerous articles about socially responsible travel and is a regular speaker and lecturer. She shares her model on how to vet the supply chain, address equity and capital flight in the tourism industry as a contributor to *Good Company: Sustainability in Hospitality, Tourism and Wine* (2015)

<http://www.businessexpertpress.com/books/good-company-sustainability-hospitality-tourism-and-wine>. She deeply believes that sustainable tourism can be a transformational tool for good.