
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES: BEST IDEAS TO MAKE 2010 A BETTER YEAR

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My favorite souvenir was not mass-produced or even marketed. It's a hat—not a logo cap or a set of ears—made by hand in a small shop in Uppsala, Sweden. It embodies everything I loved about living and traveling abroad.

I didn't know it then, but I was a sustainable tourist. I bought local products produced by local artists and invested myself in the local culture. As tourism marketers, this is what we want for our visitors. We want them to get to know us and care about our region, to leave us as good as, if not better, than when they arrived. And tourists increasingly want this as well.

Nearly 45 percent of U.S. travelers are influenced by a destination's authenticity and how well they can minimize the local impact of their visit. But these savvy travelers can spot greenwashers a click away. They won't trust our sustainability promotions if we don't employ sustainable practices within our own businesses.



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1 SUSTAINABILITY BEGINS AT HOME

Greenwashers talk the talk, but don't walk the walk. Review your business practices across the board – consider the local economy, culture and environment in everything you do.

2 KEEP IT LOCAL

Does your company reinvest its money in the local economy? Do you hire local talent? Do you help ensure a local, qualified workforce through training and internships? Do you purchase goods and services from local vendors, farmers and artists?

3 GET INVOLVED

Does your company invest in community projects? Do you provide free services to local charities? Do you encourage your employees to do so?

4 BE GREEN

Are you minimizing your company's impact on the environment? Do you minimize water usage for landscaping, conduct more business online and require that all products purchased be recycled or salvaged?

THE POINT:

Your commitment to sustainable business practices will translate into tourism dollars. Walk the walk and you'll become your region's trusted, go-to source for all things sustainable – capturing the attention and business of millions of U.S. travelers.

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

E-mail comments to jsaxon@barnettcox.com.