

26 FOR COP26

PART ONE OF TWO | NOVEMBER 2021

26 Actions for Destinations and the Tourism Industry
to Address Climate Change and Become More Sustainable,
Liveable & Welcoming to Visitors

MilesPartnership.com/ClimateChange

“ We are at a unique stage in our history. Never before have we had such an awareness of what we are doing to the planet, and never before have we had the power to do something about that. Surely we all have a responsibility to care for our Blue Planet. ”

– Sir David Attenborough

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For Actions 14-26, see part two of this action plan, to be published December 2021.

NORWAY





Travel and tourism is at the front lines of both the challenges and solutions of climate change.

Few, if any, other industries are as exposed to climate change's impacts or can contribute in such meaningful ways to address it. And perhaps no other industry has as much to gain from addressing climate change and the connected crisis of the loss and deterioration of the Earth's natural areas and biodiversity.

It has become both a business and social imperative. Action on climate change is not only critical for ensuring tourism will be sustainable in the future but in demonstrating to both residents and visitors that

tourism is moving from being part of the problem to helping make the world a better, more equitable and sustainable place.

With the close of the COP26 conference in Glasgow, Scotland in November 2021, it's time to review and refine the role of tourism. This guide outlines four foundational priorities and describes 26 specific areas of action for tourism - many of which can be led or facilitated by destination marketing and/or management organizations (DMOs).

Note on Examples and Resources: For each element in this plan, there are examples and resources such as additional research, best practice guidelines and references to help guide you. There is a range of primary research and white papers that helped guide the overall development of this white paper in the list of sources at the end.

Contributors: "26 for COP26" was developed by Miles Partnership in association with our agency partners at Coraggio Group, Group NAO and Global Destination Sustainability Movement. Suggestions on updates or additional ways to contribute to practical solutions are welcome. Please contact Chris Adams, Head of Research & Insights, Miles Partnership: Chris.Adams@MilesPartnership.com

FOUR FOUNDATION PRIORITIES

Real, practical action on climate change requires getting some fundamental policies and priorities aligned in your destination:

1. **Commit and Have a Plan for Action.** Declare your commitment to addressing climate change with a credible plan for action. Identify specific steps on climate change within a broader focus on sustainability and regenerative tourism. These should be included in a long-term master plan and/or sustainable tourism strategy for your destination. Your plan should have specific, practical and measurable objectives against which progress can be assessed.

Resources:

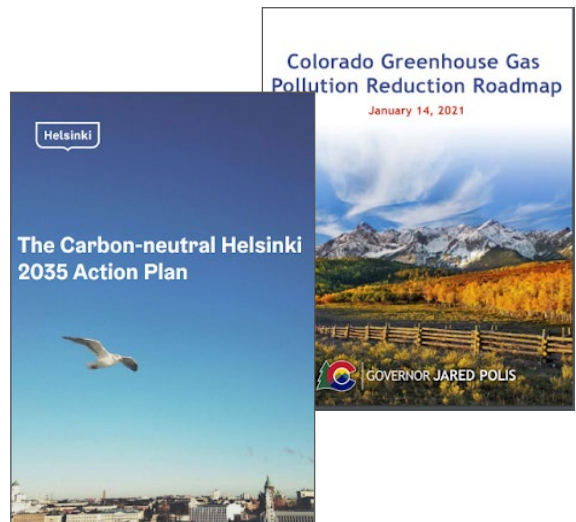
A leading example of a clear, public commitment is [The Glasgow Declaration](#) (facilitated by the UNWTO and the Travel Foundation) highlighting the commitment of more than 300 tourism organizations to reduce their carbon footprint 50% by 2030.

Miles has a toolkit of best practices and resources for developing a destination master plan or sustainable tourism strategy. See [“Strategy Toolkit for Building Back Better.”](#)

2. **Collaborate and Coordinate.** Meaningful action on climate change will require coordination across multiple public and private organizations. Tourism should encourage and participate in the development or updating of a climate action plan for your destination, and then coordinate with others on the specific, practical actions that tourism can take.

Resources:

Collaborate with your city, state, province or nation on their efforts to work with others, sharing insights and knowledge. One example is the [Global Covenant of Mayors](#) - 470 mayors and communities working together around climate action including initiatives such as [“Innovate4Cities”](#) and [their recent global conference](#) on how cities and destinations can accelerate their climate change initiatives.



Encourage and participate in the development or updating of a climate action plan for your destination. Destinations such as [Colorado](#) and [Helsinki, Finland](#) have strategies like this in place. Helsinki recently strengthened their plan and is now planning to become carbon neutral by 2030.

3. **Develop a Future-Focused Funding Strategy.** Action takes resources. Make sure your strategy includes a budget for the funds, staffing and other resources you will need. You will need funding that is resilient, sustainable and sufficient for taking on an expanded role in destination management and sustainability including action on climate change. In 2020, Miles Partnership, Group NAO and GDSM, along with other partners, led the largest ever studies on tourism taxation and funding models. The global best practices were summarized in [“Funding For Tomorrow”](#) with the detail of taxation options and opportunities in the respective North American study [“Funding Futures”](#) and European study [“Tourism Taxes by Design.”](#)

Resources: [“Funding For Tomorrow”](#) included a review of options and opportunities for funding sustainable tourism and climate change action. The Global Covenant of Mayors has helped coordinate [the City Climate Finance Gap Fund with the World Bank](#) for communities to fund critical [climate change action](#).



4. **Benchmark and Report on Successes and Shortfalls.** Building credibility and support for long-term investment requires reporting against clear and measurable goals. Work to estimate the carbon footprint of your overall tourism industry (e.g.: using the LEED for Cities and Communities certification) but more importantly, empower industry groups or individual businesses to audit their own performance by providing support and highlighting online calculators that can be used. Engage with other destinations on this journey - both to benchmark your relative performance and to check in for inspiration and ideas.

Resources:

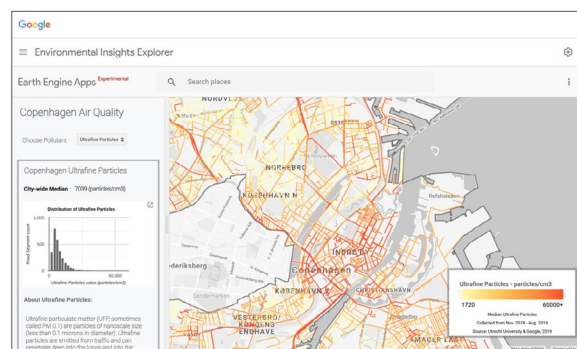
Measurement of your destination’s carbon footprint should be part of your climate change action plan (e.g.: [LEED for Cities and Communities certification](#)). Work within the development of this overall plan to measure the contribution and progress of tourism.

[Google’s Environmental Insights Explorer](#) offers a large range of free data to help estimate the global emissions and renewable energy potential of thousands of cities around the world.

For individual businesses, here are several calculators to assess your carbon footprint:

- [CarbonFund.org’s Business emissions calculators](#)
- [Cool Effect Business carbon offset calculator](#)
- [Cool Effect Travel carbon offset calculator](#)

Look at top performers in reducing their emissions. [Euromonitor](#) includes Sweden, Finland, Austria, Estonia and Norway in the top five countries for sustainable tourism in 2021. These destinations are a great benchmark to use in implementing your sustainability initiatives.



26 ACTION STEPS

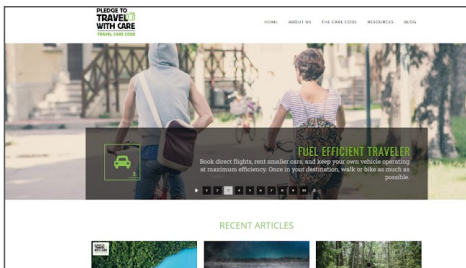
Develop your own action plan by prioritizing and customizing these steps to adapt them for your destination.

ACTION STEPS 1-4

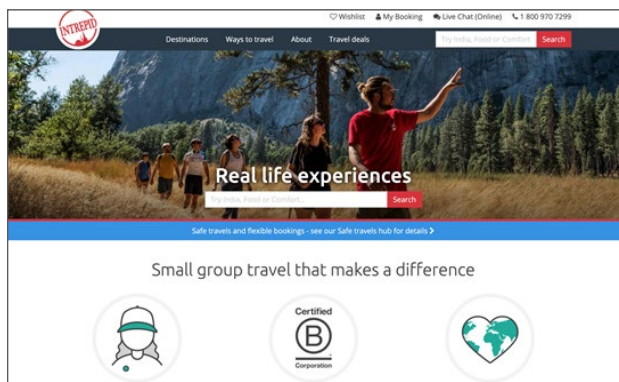
A. SUSTAINABLE MARKETING - INFLUENCING TRAVEL DEMAND AND BEHAVIOR

1. **Educate Your Visitors on Responsible Travel.** Emphasize more sustainable types of travel in your communications including fewer and longer trips, choosing more energy efficient forms of travel and selecting businesses with a commitment to sustainability. This includes developing or updating visitor responsibility messaging that addresses these issues (see resources below) and leveraging sustainable travel.

Example: [The Travel Care Code](#), managed at Purdue University’s School of Tourism & Hospitality Research Center, directly addresses how travelers can minimize their carbon footprint in its guidelines. The Code is available to be customized and used by DMOs and tourism businesses for free and under a public use license.



Resources:
An increasing number of destinations from [Iceland](#) to [Colorado](#) and [Palau](#) to [New Zealand](#) have visitor responsibility codes. While these include other sustainable travel messages, they can be updated to directly address ways in which visitors can minimize or offset their carbon footprint.

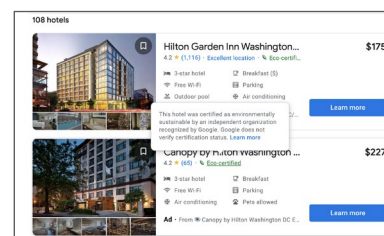


2. **Highlight & Support Sustainable Businesses & Low Carbon Travel.** Work with your industry to help develop and promote businesses making a significant commitment to sustainability including reducing their carbon footprint. Examples include assisting activities, attractions and tours to develop new sustainable products in your destination or training on how to leverage media on major digital platforms (such as Google) to promote their sustainability credentials.

Examples: Google has greatly expanded information for making [sustainable travel decisions across their products](#). Google Maps and Google Flights highlight the most energy efficient options. Google hotel listings now feature a wide range of sustainability criteria that hotels and other accommodation [can add and manage for free](#). Booking.com has launched [“Travel Sustainable.”](#) a major new program to empower travelers to make sustainable choices. Work with your industry to leverage platforms like Google and Booking.com to highlight their commitment to sustainability.

[Intrepid Travel](#) is a world leader in developing sustainable tour options including a commitment to reduce their carbon emissions in half by 2030. See the [World Travel & Tourism Council case study on Intrepid Travel here](#). Work with local companies and international partners like Intrepid Travel to develop sustainable tours and experiences.

Resources:
Google has launched a wide range of sustainability solutions including options for hotels and accommodations to highlight their green credentials with Google Search, Maps and Business Listings for free. [Building a Sustainable Future for Travel - Google Blog](#) (September 22, 2021)





Amsterdam



Croatia

3. **Use Outcome-Based Pricing to Reward Sustainable Travel.** Update your visitor taxes and fees to make them differential, focusing on the outcomes that your destination wants to encourage - including travel with a lower carbon footprint. Taxes that are lower in the off-season and higher in the peak season, reward longer visits and encourage dispersed travel out to less visited regions.

Example: Destinations like Amsterdam and Croatia are amongst a small but growing number of destinations that are varying visitor taxes and fees by season or type of travel. This differential pricing sends powerful market signals on the outcomes from tourism you want to encourage in your destination.

Resources:

The updated 2021 edition of [“Funding Futures”](#) and the [“Tourism Taxation by Design”](#) (2020) study both have a range of examples of these types of outcome-based pricing in tourism taxes and visitor fees.

“Travel companies should also leverage the continuing popularity of their [loyalty] programs for good...find environmentally friendly ways to earn and spend points, keeping travel players involved without the need to achieve a certain mileage or stays.”

(Skift Environmental Impact of Hotel & Airline Loyalty Programs” July 2021)

4. **Develop More Sustainable Loyalty Programs.** A more sustainable tourism industry means travel that is more thoughtful and responsible. This likely means less travel - fewer trips but longer and more rewarding experiences. Airline and hotel loyalty programs need to evolve away from “frequency” to encourage more responsible types of travel. Collaborate with your industry partners to have this conversation. This provides an opportunity for any tourism businesses with a loyalty program to use recognizing sustainability in their rewards as a point of differentiation.

Example: Accor has made a number of ambitious steps in migrating their hospitality business to a more sustainable structure (e.g.: [Accor Planet 21](#)). This [Skift report](#) identified Accor’s loyalty program as one model less tied to just the frequency of travel itself but rather to other signals of “loyalty”.

Resources:

Skift’s July 2021 report [“Environmental Impact of Hotel & Airline Loyalty Programs”](#) broke new ground by estimating the environmental impact of loyalty programs and options for making loyalty programs more sustainable.



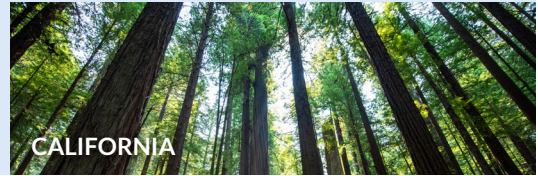
ACTION STEPS 5-8

B. NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS - PROTECTING & RESTORING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Introduction to Natural Climate Solutions: Natural climate solutions (NCS) are of growing importance in the fight against climate change. Protecting or restoring natural areas including forest and wetlands can absorb (“sequester”) huge amounts of carbon from the atmosphere. Natural carbon solutions are estimated to make up to more than 30% of the carbon reductions needed to limit temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius. For tourism, there is a major secondary benefit. These protected or restored natural areas can be used, appreciated and enjoyed by both locals and visitors. For this reason, Natural climate solutions form part of a wider movement of “regenerative tourism” and are a critical part of how many destinations tackle climate change.



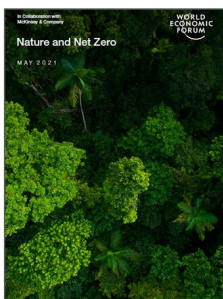
MAINE



CALIFORNIA

5. Protect & Restore Forests & Natural Habitats. Tourism, led and facilitated by DMOs, should take a more active role in protecting forest, prairie and other natural habitats that would otherwise be degraded or developed. Partner with public or private agencies with similar goals. This could include supporting one-off investments or donations, or it could be part of a longer term tourism-based funding model that helps protect natural areas in your community.

Example: Iceland, New Zealand and the Balearic Islands in Spain are examples of destinations that have conservation programs for natural areas funded by visitor taxes or fees. See [“Funding Futures 2021 Edition”](#) for more information.



Resources: The World Economic Forum and McKinsey & Company published a report in July 2021 that outlines the potential and practical guidance for investing in natural climate solutions (NCS). Download the report [here](#).

6. Support Reforestation Programs. To have a significant impact on climate change, large scale reforestation programs will be needed. Tourism and DMOs can support these programs at the simplest level by encouraging visitors or businesses to donate or participate as volunteers. However, to scale these efforts, tourism will likely need to make a more direct, long-term contribution from tourism taxes or fees to fund reforestation programs (which could be part of a carbon offset program; see Action Step 8).

Example: Since 2020, Tourism New Zealand has partnered with “Trees that Count,” a reforestation program in New Zealand. They have encouraged both visitors, potential visitors and [tourism businesses to donate](#) and support native forest reforestation efforts. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the campaign [encouraged people to plant a “forest of hope.”](#)

Resources: [“Tree Planting has ‘Mind Blowing Potential’ to Tackle Climate Change”](#) - The Guardian (2020), [“10 Golden Rules for Reforestation to optimize carbon sequestration & biodiversity recovery”](#) (2021) - GCB Review.



ICELAND



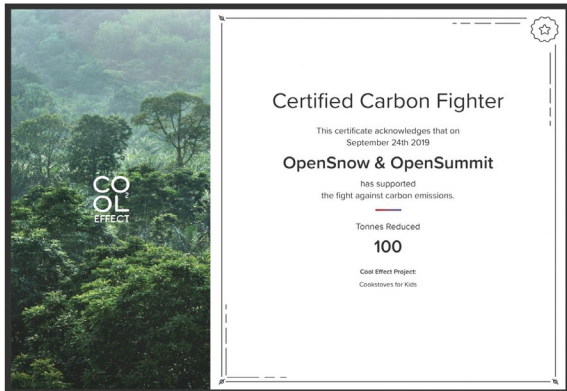
NEW ZEALAND



BALEARIC ISLANDS

7. **Focus on Wetlands Protection, Restoration or Construction Projects.** Wetlands are vital parts of the natural ecosystem and are critical to mitigating the impact of climate change. They can also be used in the treatment of wastewater from communities - including those grappling with the growth of visitors. DMOs and tourism bureaus should work with government and public utilities to identify opportunities to combine upgrading of infrastructure to service locals and visitors while also protecting, restoring or even “constructing” wetlands in the region.

Example: Cape Cod in Massachusetts invested in a new treatment facility to better manage the visitor community’s wastewater. This was partly funded by the introduction of a short-term rental bed tax and included restored wetlands for the final part of the treatment process. See a summary of the project [here](#) or the wider “State of the Waters Action Plan [here](#).

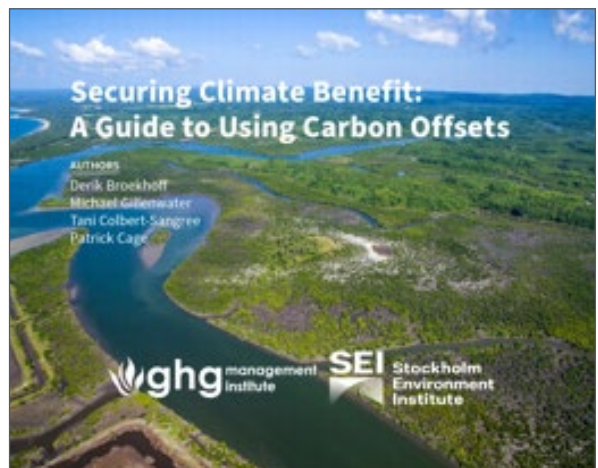


8. **Highlight Carbon Offset Programs.** These programs can provide a framework for taking action on natural climate solutions as well as other types of climate change mitigation (e.g.: shifting to renewable energy). Carbon offsets must be scientifically based and are most credible if they are one part of a wider program of climate change actions, like the other actions mentioned in this study. We recommend working with a credible partner that also offers strong secondary benefits (e.g.: improving the natural environment and biodiversity) - ideally with some offset opportunities in your community or region. Directly offset your own organization’s carbon footprint plus highlight these opportunities to your visitors and business/community partners for them to take action.

Example: [Cool Effect](#)* offers carbon offsets for both individuals and businesses. It rigorously researches, monitors and reports on each offset program to guarantee they are financially strong and ethically sound. Programs are selected with strong secondary benefits to the natural environment and communities. They have a range of carbon offset programs around the world.

*CoolEffect is the carbon offset program that Miles works with to mitigate the emissions we can't reduce.

Resources: Cool Effect worked with the Stockholm Environmental Institute & Greenhouse Gas Management Institute [to create a guide to carbon offsets programs](#) by business.



ACTION STEPS 9-13:

C. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

9. Expand Public Transit in Your Destination.
Collaborate with your local and national government partners, and the private sector, to enhance public transportation for visitors. Visitors have different needs than locals, and these needs should be considered in planning for public transit. Public transit should be integrated and seamless across different modes including rail, light rail, ferries, buses, bikes and/or scooters, etc.

Example: Minneapolis and St Paul’s [public transit system](#) saw amongst the strongest growth in ridership, including use by visitors, of any major U.S. city in the decade leading up to the pandemic.

Resources:
Investigate the opportunities to leverage public money in your community to benefit visitors. A longtime straggler in the public transit space, the U.S. will see an unprecedented investment from the [2021 Infrastructure Bill - see a summary here](#). Then connect with your government and public transit partners and discuss how tourism can be considered as part of this investment.

10. Enhance Transit Between the Airport & City.
Building or enhancing public transit from the airport is a critical part of transportation for visitors. Encouraging visitors to use public transit from the airport may not be popular with some (e.g.: taxi companies), but it is good for the planet, reduces traffic and is far less costly for visitors. It also introduces travelers to public transportation that they can use throughout their visit. Work with your airport and public transportation authorities to make these options fast and convenient.

Example: The city of Geneva and Geneva Airport in Switzerland is connected by both rail and light rail services. The airport provides a ticket machine that gives out free public transit tickets for travel into the city for all arriving passengers. An increasing number of cities in the U.S. such as [Minneapolis and St Paul](#) have a rail/light rail to the airport which visitors can be encouraged to use.



11. **Market Public Transit Options.** DMOs should also work with their public and private sector partners to develop enhanced marketing programs that highlight public transit and make it easily accessible to visitors. Start by providing input into your public transit’s marketing and communications strategies. Many are developed without any input from tourism and DMOs.

Example: Many European cities such as [Berlin’s Welcome Card](#) have developed “tourist cards” that include easy-to-buy, discounted full-day or multi-day passes to public transport. They often include (as in Berlin) savings on a range of other city attractions and activities. In many European cities, they derive significant revenue to the DMO.

Resources:
[“How to make public transport an attractive option in your City”](#) C40 City Climate Change Leadership Group.



12. **Support Smart Urban & Regional Planning.** Developing a low carbon, more energy efficient destination will be based on long-term urban or regional planning and smart development (or redevelopment). [Research has highlighted](#) that more walkable, compact communities are highly valued by both visitors and local residents who report a better quality of life. Work with your public and private sector partners to support and encourage policies and development that fosters a more compact, accessible and walkable community.

Example: The San Antonio Riverwalk is a world-famous example of what long-term thinking in urban design can do to make a destination more attractive to locals and visitors alike. This type of walkable downtown entertainment precinct (common in many historic European and Asian cities) has been copied in the redevelopment of many riverfront or waterfront destinations around the world including Baltimore, Maryland; Vancouver, Canada; and Auckland, New Zealand.

Resources:
[5 Ways to Make Cities More Walkable](#) - Kittleson & Asso. The University of Delaware has a [Walkable Communities Tool Box](#).

13. **Build Resilience Including a Crisis Management Plan.** Climate change is happening, and though we can minimize its impact, the effects (e.g. extreme weather events, wildfires, etc.) will be felt by destinations across the planet. DMOs should work with public agencies to ensure critical infrastructures used by visitors (e.g.: airports, major roads, walking and cycle trails) are being strengthened and made resilient to these impacts. These costs may need to include contributions from visitor taxes and levies. Colliding with other external risks (e.g.: a new pandemic), the growing impacts of climate change make it critical that your DMO has reviewed and updated its crisis management plan.

Example: As previously noted, [“Funding Futures”](#) includes a detailed discussion of funding models that could help strengthen visitor infrastructure.

Crisis Management: In addition to lessons from the current COVID-19 crisis in tourism (see this [selection of articles in Skift](#)), use this [Destinations International](#) article for an introduction and then this [UNWTO “toolbox” for crisis communication in tourism](#) for more detailed guidelines.



SAN ANTONIO



AUCKLAND

For Action Steps 14-26, see part two of 26 for COP26 to be published in December 2021.

SOURCES

In addition to the references, research and examples quoted in each “action step” above, some primary sources were used in multiple ways to develop these 26 actions:

Resources:

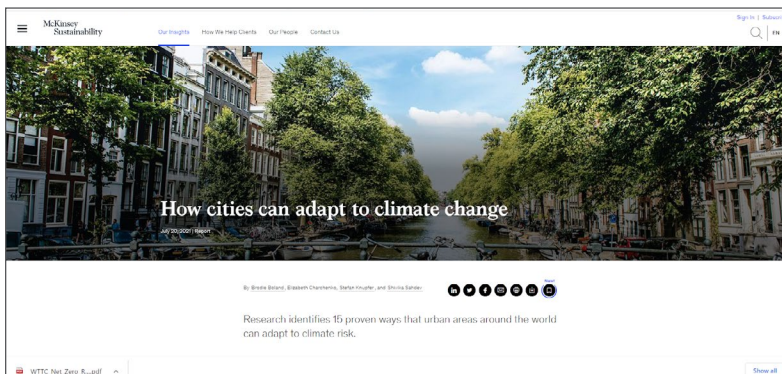
[Funding Futures](#) - Options & Opportunities in Tourism Taxation & DMO Funding (Miles Partnership with Civitas, Tourism Economics & Destination Analysts)

- [Funding Futures 2021 Edition](#) Report & Webinar
- [Funding for Tomorrow](#) - 10 Global Best Practices 2020 White Paper



McKinsey & Company Research, Analysis & Webinars on [Climate Change](#) & [Travel & Tourism](#) including:

- [How Cities can Adapt to Climate Change](#), October 2021
- [A Carbon Reduction Tool Kit for Global Cities](#), May 2019



[Project Drawdown](#) - carbon reduction science and solutions for governments, industry and communities, a not-for-profit foundation.

[Skift](#) Research & Analysis including:

- [Why the travel industry can't afford to dismiss the loudest climate change warning yet](#)
- [Sustainability in Travel 2021](#) - quantifying tourism emissions for destinations

[UNWTO](#) Resources on Climate Change & Tourism including:

- [UNWTO & Travel Foundation Glasgow Declaration](#)
- [One Planet - UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

[World Travel & Tourism Council](#) Reports & Resources including:

- [A Net Zero Road Map for Travel & Tourism - 2021](#)
- [Towards Destination Stewardship - A Framework 2021](#)

Plus insights, resources and/or advice from:

- [The Travel Foundation](#)
- [The Future of Travel Coalition](#)
- [Global Destination Sustainability Movement](#)
- [Group NAO](#)
- [Miles Partnership](#)

