DEFINING THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL
**Table of Contents**

**Skift Magazine / Issue 14**

**P. 06 — The Greening of Travel**  
*Embracing the Responsibility* by Andrew Sheivachman  
The travel industry has a responsibility to help the same communities it profits from. The sector also needs to accept that green business practices will be the next major competitive advantage for brands selling to consumers and business travelers alike.

**P. 22 — EveryoneNeeds to Get On Board**  
*Against Plastics* by Sarah Enelow-Snyder

**P. 34 — It’s High Time**  
National Geographic Partners Chairman Lays Out a Vision for Travel’s Obligation to the World by Tom Lowry

**P. 40 — Skift Global Forum 2019**

- P. 41  Sponsors
- P. 42  Speakers
- P. 50  Schedule of Events

Cover illustration by Melody Shih

---

Hospitality—it can be imagined? Tous, it’s an art that knows no bounds—it sparks infinite inspired moments, whether you want to Live, Work, or Play. To unlock life lived limitless, we’ve created a holistic lifestyle ecosystem, and the innovative solutions to power it all. Because the future belongs to those who design it, and we’re here to bring you there—first.
The Greening of Travel
Embracing the Responsibility

The travel industry has a responsibility to help the same communities it profits from. The sector also needs to accept that green business practices will be the next major competitive advantage for brands selling to consumers and business travelers alike.

By Andrew Sheivachman

Serious change is necessary. Instead of designing marketing initiatives to assuage the fears of travelers, leaders across travel need to help build an industry defined by a commitment to green practices. Business as usual, or a rush to make money before the sector is truly disrupted by environmental or political issues, may very well doom global travel in an era of nationalism, nativism, and political polarization.

Here are eight tenets for global travel and its sectors to become leaders in the fight against climate change — and to help create a more equitable path forward and the foundation for travel’s future growth.

TAP THE BRAKES, GROW RESPONSIBLY

Travel, as an industry that helps connect people around the world, has a duty to limit its destructive effect on the environment and tourist destinations.

Global population growth has led to many problems around the world. Travel has helped exacerbate them, adding an increased burden to cities and countries that have become magnets for visitors.
Tourism companies and hotels, in particular, have built their businesses on the infrastructure and resources made available to locals. In a quest to compete and drive profit, these companies have no long-term commitment to any particular destination and often choose to grow quickly instead of sustainably.

Tourists have deluged cities in Western Europe, Barcelona and Venice in particular, altering the fabric of local society and leaving authorities at a loss for how to repair the changes. Remote destinations as well, ranging from Bali to the Galapagos Islands, have scrambled to find ways to limit tourism as rapacious travel companies prioritize profit over responsibility.

While travel has the power to build opportunity in developing countries, creating new jobs and providing a tangible path out of poverty, the increased number of visitors these destinations serve have a destructive effect on communities and the environment. Populist backlash — and the coming wave of climate change — mean global travel must redefine how it does business and plan for the future.

LISTEN TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

Global consumers are ahead of the industry right now in their concern about climate change. The general polarization of the world, when married to climate change, is leading to more radical calls for change, like the Green New Deal.

The travel industry’s words have rung hollow when it comes to truly protecting the environment and adopting green business practices.

In the last few years, however, consumer sentiment toward making more responsible purchasing decisions has shifted. Skift Research’s Millennial and Gen Z Traveler Survey 2019, released in August, found that more than half of millennial and Gen Z travelers from the U.S., UK, Australia, China, and India find it important to choose travel companies that prioritize sustainability. Most of those travelers are also willing to pay more for experiences from companies with a track record of green operations.

If legacy travel brands are unable to adapt to this new set of demands from consumers, forward-thinking companies and brands will emerge to take advantage. Leaders and workers alike also will resist joining companies that they view as unethical.

BE TRANSPARENT

Companies must commit to tracking their environmental impact and become much more transparent about sustainability, allowing consumers to make an educated purchasing decision.

It’s not enough to encourage individual travelers to make more mindful decisions about their impact on the environment when the structure of the travel industry itself leads to not just pollution but the erosion of destinations around the world.

Airlines are one of the largest contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions, as the technology used to power planes is inherently pollutive. The bigger an airline, the more carbon it emits into the atmosphere.

Importance of Environmental Responsibility vs. Willingness to Pay More for It: Choosing environmentally sustainable travel businesses is especially important in China and India, but fewer millennial/Gen Z travelers in all five markets are willing to pay more to use these businesses.

-9% -8% -14% -12% -5%
59% 59% 60% 90% 78%
50% 51% 46% 81% 76%
U.S. UK Australia China India

Source: Skift Research

U.S. N=1046, UK N=509, Australia N=523, China N=1143, India N=1015

It is important to me to choose travel businesses that prioritize environmentally sustainable business practices (% Very + Somewhat important)

I’m willing to pay higher rates/fares to use a travel service provider who demonstrates environmental responsibility (% Strongly + Somewhat agree)
skies around the world. Sustainability reports from major global airlines show an increase in emissions and waste over the last few years.

The three major global cruise lines also release giant reports touting sustainability bona fides and the various partnerships they strike around the world to reduce their impacts. The problem is that the core data regarding carbon output and energy use show that the companies’ impact on the environment isn’t shrinking at all.

Even if a consumer were to scour one of these sustainability reports, she would possibly be manipulated by the misleading nature of the document. These lies obscure the truth that public companies in particular operate to maximize shareholder value instead of showing a greater responsibility for their operating practices to the wider world.

There is also the issue of quantifying the impact that tour operators have on a destination. There is a need for standards that cut across borders to give travelers perspective on the impact their chosen vacation has on where they’re going. Companies have the opportunity to set industry metrics for tracking and communicating their environmental impact; in a few years time, this likely will be mandated by law in countries most at risk from the dangers of climate change.

USE YOUR EFFORTS AS A MARKETING UPSIDE

The narrative of traditional travel marketing will have to shift as the disruption from climate change affects tourist destinations. Destinations that make a greater effort to mitigate the impact of climate change will have a major competitive advantage in the future.

As destinations become stressed and global calls for truly green business practices rise, travel marketing will have to reinvent itself once again. The images of empty European streets, bucolic hikes, and isolated beaches already don’t reflect the reality facing most travelers once they land in a destination.

Sustainability will soon become not just a selling point but something mandatory, although not in the sense that travelers will only partake in eco-tourism or voluntourism. >
Places protected from both overtourism and increased pollution will have the best chances of becoming premier tourism destinations in the future.

With premium destinations like Bali and the Faroe Islands already closing to tourists in a variety of ways, expect more destinations to follow suit.

Skift Research found that 53 percent of global travelers are willing to pay more for products that demonstrate environmental responsibility, an increase from 40 percent in 2018.

The destinations and companies that commit the soonest to green practices will have a competitive edge as global competition for travelers heats up.

**ADDRESS ALL WASTE, NOT JUST PLASTICS**

The reduction of single-use plastics is an important first step for the travel sector. Work must be done, however, to shift the approach of companies toward food waste, water waste, and reckless use of other natural resources.

Food waste is a surprisingly difficult challenge to tackle given the gluttonous reality of most commodity travel. Hotels and attractions that piggyback on the local resources around the world will face pressure to cut back on their usage as natural resources become stressed.

With recent research showing the need for changes to how land is used for farming, destinations will have to make difficult decisions about how to feed their population in an environmentally friendly way. Many authorities

The shift by hotel companies and airlines to reduce their waste by removing common single-use plastics from their operations is already under way. The first companies to take action will get a nice publicity boost, but the ease at which companies have taken action belies just how difficult serious change will be in other areas.
will choose to target elements of the travel sector as particularly wasteful and restrict the availability of their market to the travel sector.

THINK HARDER ABOUT WHERE YOU BUILD AND DEVELOP

Rising sea levels will force lodging companies to reconceptualize not just their growth strategies but the way the contemporary hotel operates in general. Cities that meet this challenge head-on will be better prepared to compete in the marketplace for global travelers as well.

With coastlines across the world at risk from rising sea levels and an increase in dangerous, volatile weather patterns, global hospitality giants will have to reevaluate their development strategies. Coastal cities and beaches will become less attractive destinations for travelers, disrupting the traditional business of hospitality. Business travel destinations will shift as well; the rise of secondary cities across North America and Europe will provide alternative travel options for leisure and business travelers alike.

As quintessential vacation destinations become less attractive to consumers over time, a shift will take place in how hotel companies do business and build their businesses outside of traditional leisure destinations.

Before long, smart money will put itself behind projects with less risk from rising sea levels and other extreme weather caused by climate change. Cities with a geographic advantage or long-term planning to mitigate these events will become more attractive destinations for visitation.

BE RESPONSIBLE WITH YOUR MARKETING

Destination marketing organizations must become destination management groups, helping steward destinations into the future with a dual focus on visitor growth and sustainable economic expansion.

The role of the destination marketing organization in a world impacted by overtourism and climate change will have to evolve. Growing tourism in an age of overconsumption isn’t sustainable, and backlash is already happening across Europe and Asia.

Destinations will have to more closely monitor and adjust policies as a stronger effort is made to reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment and local communities.

Identify, understand, and target travelers at all stages of their path to purchase.

Sojern is built on more than a decade of expertise analyzing the complete traveler path to purchase. The company drives travelers from dream to destination by activating multi-channel branding and performance solutions on the Sojern Traveler Platform for more than 8,500 customers around the globe.
impact of travel. Managing a destination is quickly becoming more important than marketing one as social media moves to the forefront of travel inspiration.

As backlash to overtourism has increased, adjacent industries have leveraged the importance of travel to further their own goals. The threat of disrupting the lucrative summer tourism season has been used as a bargaining chip in labor negotiations across Europe, for instance.

A key role that destination groups can play is around creating a consensus built around the needs of politicians, locals, and business groups in terms of planning for long-term sustainable growth. By devising a plan that incorporates the needs of all a destination’s stakeholders, and iterating on it, the travel sector can work together with destinations to produce more positive outcomes.

**START TODAY: YOUR BUSINESS DEPENDS ON IT**

By playing a pivotal, proactive role in the embrace of green business practices, travel can not only repair its image as a destructive force but set the stage for a new phase of global growth.

The effects of overtourism, waste, and pollution caused by the travel industry represent an existential threat to its continued worldwide growth. Environmental restrictions and a backlash against tourism are all but assured should the travel industry not become more proactive in engaging with stakeholders around the planet.

Companies and leaders that transition to operating in a green framework will have an advantage once climate change becomes more severe. Companies that begin the transition now will have an easier time attracting the new wave of eco-conscious travelers emerging across all age groups.

With the fate of not just travel but the wider world at stake, it’s time for the industry to step up and become part of the solution as a stakeholder in global affairs. Anything less represents an abdication of travel’s responsibility to not just bring people together, but to build a better world.

---

**Driving Growth and Innovation with Mastercard Data & Services**

Leverage unique spend-based insights and proprietary analytic platforms to drive profitable growth and engagement

**Mastercard Data & Services is the professional services arm of Mastercard, focused on driving value beyond the transaction**

**BENEFITS**

- **Scope and Scale of Data**
  Understand external market landscapes with Mastercard’s anonymized and aggregated spend insights, encompassing 73 billion transactions per year and 47+ million merchants

- **Unparalleled Analytics**
  Turn insights into action with compelling test vs. control analyses, detailed macro-economic trends, and data-driven recommendations

- **Deep Industry Expertise**
  Leverage Mastercard’s deep travel and analytics expertise in identifying high-value segments, driving loyalty, and optimizing initiatives from co-brands to loyalty programs

**CAPABILITIES**

Mastercard Data & Services empowers leading travel companies to supercharge initiatives across key business priorities:

- **Make data-driven decisions** with powerful advanced analytics platforms and reports
- **Manage change** by partnering with top experts in bringing ideas from concept to market
- **Engage consumers** using end-to-end marketing and customer journey solutions
- **Deliver great experiences** with digital-first, state-of-the-art loyalty programs and rewards

Learn more about our services at: [www.mastercardservices.com](http://www.mastercardservices.com)
Travel, as an industry that helps connect people around the world, has a responsibility to limit its destructive effect on the environment and tourist destinations.

1. Companies must commit to tracking their environmental impact and become more transparent about sustainability, allowing consumers to make a more educated purchasing decision.

2. The narrative of traditional travel marketing will have to shift as the disruption from climate change affects tourist destinations. Destinations that make a greater effort to mitigate the impact of climate change will have a major competitive advantage in the future.

3. The reduction of single-use plastics is an important first step for the travel sector. Work must be done, however, to shift the approach of companies toward food waste, water waste, and wasteful use of other natural resources.

4. Aviation must commit to a widespread greening of its operations, from more effective aircraft to the airport environment and onboard experience.

5. Rising sea levels will force lodging companies to change not just their growth strategies, but the way the contemporary hotel is operated in general. Cities that meet this challenge head-on will be better prepared to compete in the marketplace for global travelers as well.

6. Destination marketing organizations must become destination management groups, helping steward destinations into the future with a dual focus on visitor growth and sustainable economic expansion.

7. By playing a pivotal, proactive role in the embrace of green business practices, travel can not only repair its image as a destructive force but set the stage for a new phase of global growth.

8. Aviation must commit to a widespread greening of its operations, from more effective aircraft to the airport environment and onboard experience.
The Skift Design Awards is the travel industry’s recognition of the spaces, services, and initiatives transforming the traveler experience.

Celebrating the businesses and designers driving positive change and innovation across sectors, the Skift Design Awards recognizes excellence in holistic, human-centered design in all its forms, from architecture to interiors, digital to events, tech and transportation, and strategic programs that inspire transformative moments and reduce friction across travel.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2019 WINNERS!

AR, VR, or Mixed Reality Experience - Melbourne Convention Bureau
Aviation Experience - Oman Air
Business Traveler Experience - NH Hotel Group
Cruise Experience - Carnival Corporation
Design for Well-Being - Blue Lagoon Iceland/Design Group Italia
Eco-Friendly Design - Singita Sweni
Entertainment Space - Club Med/Cirque du Soleil
Event Activation - Moxy Times Square
Event Networking Experience - e180
Event/Meeting Space - Jumeirah
F&B or Entertainment Experience - The Infatuation
Guest Experience - Atelier Ace/Maison de la Luz
In-Destination Experience - Helsinki Marketing
Public Space - 25hours Hotel Langstrasse
Retail Environment - Carnival Corporation/Publicis Sapient

See the full results and sign up for next year’s competition at skift.com/awards
Everyone Needs to Get On Board Against Plastics

By Sarah Enelow-Snyder

Plastics awareness in travel is trending right now. Companies and travelers alike are skipping the straw and saying no to single-use bottled water. What’s missing from the current dialog is that straws and bottles are just the low-hanging fruit, an easy PR win, and something for influencers to tweet about.

There’s a chain of responsibility here, and the buck stops at no one in particular because everyone needs accountability. Making choices based on convenience and affordability, which plastics provide in spades, is just human nature. Pressure must be applied from one party to the next, or else skipping the straw is all we’ll ever accomplish. That’s why we at Skift decided to dig into this topic with a new series this year: Travel Beyond Plastics.

We know the alarming stats behind the microplastics in our drinking water and the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. A ridiculous 91 percent of plastic waste isn’t successfully recycled, 73 percent of beach litter is plastic, and nearly one million plastic beverage bottles are sold every minute worldwide, according to National Geographic.

The solution comes in strengthening every link in the responsibility chain: governments, travel companies, travelers, and the rest of the world.

“It takes a whole spectrum of players,” said Dianna Cohen, CEO of Plastic Pollution Coalition. “All the players have an equally important role.”

Identity Marketing: Identify & Acquire Customers with Gated Offers
Governments

At the top of the chain, governments must pass legislation that forces hotels, airlines, cruise lines, and other travel companies to use less plastic. The European Union has one of the more extensive laws slated for 2021, but even so, it only targets specific items like cutlery, plates, straws, and cotton bud sticks. California sets a good example by targeting toiletries in hotels, but most U.S. states don’t go that far.

“I think they’re critical,” said George Leonard, chief scientist at the Ocean Conservancy, of laws on plastics. “Most environmental solutions have some component involving a top-down government mandate.” Leonard said we’re just now seeing the first wave of plastics solutions.

“These legislations severely impact the airline industry,” said Anne De Hauw, founder of Monaco-based design firm In Air Travel Experience. “Airline catering often relies heavily on single-use plastic and its lucrative waste management, and is not prepared for such impactful change.”

When referring to these laws, there’s also a problem with casually using the phrase “plastic ban,” which is concise but misleading. None of these laws constitutes a complete ban on plastics, but rather a specific set of restrictions, frequently on single-use plastics and not plastics that are designed for multiple uses, which end up in landfills as well. The same logical fallacy applies to “zero-waste” flights, which often only aim to divert waste from landfills, not to actually produce no waste.

Travel Companies

Most companies will only do what’s mandated by law, which is why non-binding pledges from companies to reduce plastics mean nothing. This also explains why companies, when they do take action preemptively, will typically do something simple, easy, and quick like cutting straws and bottles.

“Once again we’re going to scratch the surface and leave the big issues under the rug,” said Benjamin Lephilibert, founder and managing director of Bangkok-based LightBlue Environmental Consulting. “Governments should impose stricter rules on plastics producers first and foremost, regardless of which industry the end product is destined to.”

he added by email.
Companies avoid digging into the hardest part: pressuring their producers, suppliers, tenants, and other stakeholders to stop creating and shipping products like food and cleaning supplies with plastic. “Fortunately there is a growing awareness that airlines and airports need to foster an omnichannel aggregated ecosystem and align their interests,” said De Hauw. Marriott and InterContinental Hotels Group report working actively with their supply chains, potentially creating a bigger ripple effect than small hotel companies pursuing the same goal.

Cruise lines have especially bad optics because they literally operate in the oceans that their plastic waste pollutes. The Cruise Lines International Association claims that some ships repurpose 100 percent of the waste generated on board, which is awfully hard to believe, given the low rates of success with plastic recycling.

There’s a data problem here too. Almost none of the travel companies we’ve spoken to in 2019 can say how much plastic they use, in large part because no one requires them to tabulate it. Hotels keep numbers for water and energy use through utility companies, and airlines and cruise lines keep track of fuel, but no one makes them tally every last pound of plastic. Some hotels count voluntarily at specific properties — which is better than nothing — but these numbers are self-reported and we must take them with a huge grain of salt.

**Travelers**

When asked, most travelers will say they want to save the environment and are willing to pay more — in money and convenience — to do so. They’re ready to shell out for an ecododge or a dubious carbon offset, and they’re ready to cram a heavy, reusable, glass thermos with a metal straw into their tiny carry-ons.

But one glance at an airport will tell you that in the heat of the moment, flyers want their lunch in a plastic to-go container with plastic cutlery stuffed into a plastic bag, so they can sling it over one arm while they grab an iced coffee from Starbucks and dash to the gate. And Cibo isn’t helping when it wraps every individual apple in plastic.

Many travelers will also not stop to recycle properly unless the airport forces them in the right direction, according to a study conducted at San Francisco Airport by design firm Gensler. The study found that on average, with SFO’s new test bins, 54 percent of trash was placed into recycling or composting, compared to just 25 percent with preexisting bins.

**AI-Augmented CUSTOMER MARKETING with tinyclues**

Reach bookers for specific flight destinations or hotels, increase conversions within strategic booking windows, optimize yield management and reinforce engagement with relevance at scale. Tinyclues empowers marketers to find the best audiences, topics, and plan for their targeted campaigns.

Optimize your campaign plan, lower customer fatigue and increase revenue in just a few clicks.

**Empowering Marketers, Delighting Customers, Driving Results**

- **+178%** CAMPAIGN REVENUE
- **+66%** CONVERSION RATE
- **+122%** BOOKING RATE
"Just because something has some kind of recycling symbol on it does not mean it is recycled, will be recycled, or could be recycled, particularly in the United States," said Cohen. "It just identifies the type of plastic."

Companies also have a big opportunity to incentivize travelers to avoid plastic by offering discounts or other rewards for using their own reusable containers, according to Cohen. This can often result in stronger customer loyalty.

Citizens

Lastly we have general outrage from non-traveling citizens, who can force an issue into the mainstream media, bringing it to governments’ attention so new laws can be drafted. This might be a tenuous link in the chain, but every now and then, protests can actually nudge the world in the right direction.

The Skip the Straw movement might only be the tip of the plastic iceberg, but it’s a good example of the general public influencing corporate behavior, as companies cite the movement while enacting new policies. Plastic bag bans, which arguably target grocery and everyday retail more than travel, are popping up worldwide in recent years. Then again, non-traveling citizens can fall into the same lazy trap as travelers, and need to participate in the system by recycling properly and practicing what they preach.

"There’s nothing that beats consumer pressure," said Cohen. IHG CEO Keith Barr reached a similar conclusion, telling Skift that guests, not government mandates, apply stronger pressure for companies to change their practices.

"I am a firm believer in consumers as an extremely powerful agent of change, a change that can be remarkably swift in the context of today’s hyperconnectivity," said Lephilibert. "The issue is that travelers only have a limited knowledge, so they can skip the plastic straw but would have no clue about what alternative is best, bioplastics versus biodegradable."

The Bottom Line

The travel industry is capable of closing these gaps. Each participant needs to commit, hold one another accountable, and start to collect more reliable data. This is a crucial part of promoting a circular plastics economy, in which plastics get continuously reused to lengthen their life span, and this requires a lot of collaboration and awareness.

"I wonder how many people drink that coffee that’s in their hotel room," said Martine Volmar, frequent traveler and member of Nomadness Travel Tribe, when asked about in-room coffee makers and Keurig K-Cups.

We bet the hotel doesn’t know either.
The people defining the future of travel don’t have time for boring stories.

We create meaningful content and experiences for brands who want to reach the smartest decision makers in travel.

See our work at SkiftX.com
Listen to Skift Podcasts No Matter Where You Are

**Skift Daily Briefing** Every weekday morning, this is your insight into the business of travel from the industry’s most trusted authority.

**Skift Airline Weekly Lounge** Catch a front-row seat to the latest aviation industry news and analysis from our editors, as well as interviews with leading airline industry executives.

**Skift Podcast** Discover insights and perspectives from creatives, executives, and entrepreneurs across the travel industry.

Learn more at www.travelsify.com
**National Geographic Partners**

**Chairman Lays Out a Vision for Travel's Obligation to the World**

We asked Gary Knell to offer recommendations for the travel industry to make itself more accountable to the world. So why Knell? First off, as chairman of National Geographic Partners and earlier CEO of National Geographic Society, Knell knows a thing or two about running a mission-driven organization. He’s also been a global business executive for decades, having also led NPR and Sesame Workshop. And lastly, we wanted a less-obvious voice, somebody who could look objectively at travel and lay out the hard truths.

What follows is an edited interview with Skift Editor-in-Chief Tom Lowry.

**Skift:** What advice would you give to companies in travel that might not have had an activist mindset as part of their original corporate DNA?

**Knell:** You have a great business opportunity. According to a research report that we plan to release on September 27, World Tourism Day, only 15 percent of Americans are familiar with the concept of sustainable travel today, yet 42 percent of Americans would be willing to prioritize traveling sustainably in the future. Since three-fourths of Americans have taken a leisure trip in the past year, I’d say to any travel company: It’s high time to begin a conversation around sustainable travel with your customers. You also need to work to change your company culture from the inside. Help your employees participate in your efforts by setting a series of internal sustainability goals, both short- and long-term. For example, National Geographic’s cafeteria offers meatless Mondays where employees get 5 percent off for choosing planet-friendly foods. And we have no waste baskets — employees must recycle their trash. Small steps, perhaps, and we’re introducing more, but it makes our people realize everyone has a part to play in this effort.

**Skift:** What ultimately will push companies to pursue ethical product sourcing through their supply chains, an unsexy area of operations that many consumers don’t see?

**Knell:** Both their employees and customers will demand it. For example: For those travelers who understand the sustainable travel concept, 56 percent realize travel has an impact on local communities and that it’s important to protect natural sites and cultural places.

Our National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World members are making a real positive impact in this area. We have a rigorous sustainability screening process to select properties that are committed to local product sourcing as well as giving back to the local community. A National Geographic sustainable tourism expert has spent time at each lodge ensuring that they incorporate innovative sustainability practices into their everyday operations, support natural and cultural heritage, and engage with the local community in tangible ways.

For example, in South Africa, Grootbos’ Masakhane Community Farm and Training Centre teaches food production and entrepreneurship to the local community. Through this program, the lodge has given plots of land to people who have completed the training, increasing their income and access to local, healthy foods. They have localized their supply chain and the lodge has an incredible story to tell guests who enjoy the food — more than 138 community members had participated in the program by the end of 2018.

Another example, Topas Ecolodge in Vietnam, provides guests the opportunity to learn about the diverse cultural traditions of the Red Dao ethnic minority during their stay. On village walks, guests witness artisans at work, learn about medicinal plants, and make rice paper. The lodge’s on-site marketplace showcases the hill tribe’s handicrafts, and annual lodge events — such as the Vietnam Mountain Marathon — help raise funds for community needs.

**Skift:** What will it take for companies to make better progress with racial inclusion, not just gender inclusion, within their ranks?

**Knell:** Companies are starting to realize they need to do a better job reflecting the audiences they serve. Especially as it pertains to travel. In order to have a unique travel experience, it has to be authentic to the region. We are proud of the fact that 43 percent of our Unique Lodges of the World members hire 77 percent or more of their staff from local communities.

**Skift:** What do companies have to gain or lose by waiting for government legislation to define sustainability for them?

Gary Knell, chairman of National Geographic Partners

Photo: National Geographic Partners

---

Photo: [Tom Lowry](https://skift.com/)

---

34 SKIFT.COM
Knell: The risk for companies that don’t begin sustained action now is that their voices will not be heard when the government legislates — on the federal, state, and local levels. It’s better to get involved than hang back because change is coming. The travel industry is more dependent than most industries on the health of local communities, environments, and cultures. To continue to provide authentic travel experiences, we also need to invest in the resilience of these places in the face of big challenges like overtourism and climate change. We are looking at a population of 10 billion by 2050 and that is going to take a massive toll on our resources. The companies that will thrive will be the ones that have learned to be creative and innovative with sustainability.

Skift: Many sustainable measures are more expensive than cheaper avenues, for example relying on plastics. What would have to happen for companies to choose the more expensive fork in the road without being legally required to do so?

Knell: They might look to travelers for inspiration. Again, our new survey results will better inform the industry about sustainability issues most important to travelers and how much they are willing to financially support those initiatives.

At National Geographic, we’re looking at the long-term picture. Our Expeditions trip business looks at creating the best possible experience for our travelers — complete with world-renowned experts as their guides — to create a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We believe it’s that experience that keeps them coming back. Issues like overtourism and plastics are not going away, and it’s time for the leaders in the travel industry to step up and address the issues, and not just because the government requires it.

One of the reasons we embarked on this study was to have a better understanding of what consumers really want and what sorts of sustainability practices matter to them.

Skift: What can airlines and hotels learn in the pursuit of sustainability from what you’ve accomplished at National Geographic?

Knell: Lean in with your key values. For us, it’s storytelling — what we’ve been doing since our founding in 1888. We have been showing people the world for over 130 years, and today we are reaching more than 700 million consumers. We are now dedicated to alerting them to climate change’s impacts, other environmental assaults upon the planet, and showcasing solutions for them — celebrating human ingenuity because it’s going to take all of us to solve the problem. As storytellers, we at National Geographic believe it’s important to celebrate the beauty in the world, natural and cultural, so that people are keen to take the steps necessary to protect it.
DOWNLOAD OUR MOBILE APP

1. Search "Skift Forums" in app store
2. Enter the email you used to register
3. Create your password and login

View "Session Q&A" to ask questions live!

Sponsored by The Red Sea Development Company

ACCESS WIFI

Network: Skift
Password: Klook2connect

Sponsored by KLOOK

Thoughtfully designed for modern travel

At Away we know the details make a world of difference and empower you to get more out of every trip.

Take any suitcase on the road for 100 days at awaytravel.com
Thank you to our sponsors
Speaker Bios

Rafat Ali
Founder and CEO, Skift

Andrea Bonilla
Co-Founder, Cayuga Sustainable
Hospitality

Eric Bresn
Founder and CEO, Vacasa

Andrea Bonilla is a native Costa Rican with a B.S. in hotel administration from Cornell. Bonilla has over 15 years of industry experience to Cayuga from intern positions at MGM studios, Disney World, and the Hampton Inn Costa Rica to management work in Costa Rica and Zanzibar. She has been instrumental in the opening of such properties as the Harmony Hotel. Morgan’s Rock, and Arenas Del Mar. Cayuga won the Conde Nast World Savers Awards 2010 in all categories on a worldwide level in the category of small hotel chains, as well as Travel + Leisure's environmental leadership category for the Global Vision Awards 2010.

Eric Bresn founded Vacasa in November 2009 after acquiring the responsibility of managing a family member's vacation home and currently serves as the company's founder and CEO. He has since grown the company from two to over 3,500 employees, with 60 percent year-over-year revenue growth in October 2017. Bresn secured $301.5 million in Series B funding for Vacasa, one of the largest rounds in the vacation rental industry. Bresn’s background is in venture capital and analytics.

Harsha Chanrai
CEO, Sara Hospitality

Harsha Chanrai was educated in London and developed a passion for luxury hospitality as director of marketing for Six Senses Resorts and Residences in Asia. She continued in hotel operations as the food and beverage marketing manager for the Fullerton Hotel, Singapore, and at the Amaran Resort, Sri Lanka. Sara Hospitality won Delta’s 2016 Business Travel Competition. Sara creates pop-up schools to empower communities for hospitality employment. Sara has graduated 175 students with 100 percent return on investment to partners including Virgin Limited Edition, Rosewood Hotels, Autograph Collection, Bunkhouse Group, and Costa Pacifica Cruise.

Stephen Cluskey
CEO, Mobility Mijo

Stephen Cluskey is a global leader in accessibility, particularly in the hospitality sector. He is co-founder of award-winning Mobility Mijo, which helps hotels improve and promote their accessible facilities. He was recently endowed by Virgin Group founder Sir Richard Branson as someone who will change the world.

Oliver Dowling
Co-Founder and CEO, Kiwicom

Oliver Dowling leads Kiwicom and shapes the company as it expands globally. Kiwicom is powered by Virtual Interlining, a proprietary algorithm that allows users to combine various means of transport from more than 750 carriers into a single itinerary. Founded five years ago, Kiwicom powers over 100 million flight searches every day and employs more than 2,900 people worldwide. Selling over 35,000 seats daily, the company generated a turnover of €1.1 billion in 2018 and is still growing. Dowling appeared in the Financial Times New Europe 100 list of Central and Eastern Europe’s brightest and best people in 2015. He was also named as one of Forbes 30 under 30 in travel.

Arnold Donald
President and CEO, Carnival Corporation

Arnold Donald has been president and CEO of Carnival Corporation since 2013. Prior to that he served on the board for 12 years. In 2017, he was appointed chair of the Cruise Lines Industry Association (CLIA). He currently serves on the board of Bank of America Corporation and Crown Holdings, Inc. Donald spent over 20 years at Montego Company. Following Montego, Donald was chairman of Merisant Company, which manufactures leading global sweeter brands Equal and Canderel. Immediately prior to that he was executive chairman of Donald was president and CEO of the Executive Leadership Council, a professional network and Black Economic Forum. Donald is the former chairman of Fortune 500 companies, and president and CEO of Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International.

Glenn Fogel
President and CEO, Booking Holdings

Glenn Fogel has been president and CEO of Booking Holdings since 2017. He previously served as the head of worldwide strategy and planning, an office he had held since 2010. He was also executive vice president of corporate development, held since 2009; and was responsible for worldwide mergers, acquisitions, and strategic alliances. Fogel joined Booking Holdings in February 2000. Prior to that he was a trader at a global asset management firm and prior to that an investment banker specializing in the air transportation industry. Fogel is a member of the New York State Bar (retired).

Weuster Geerts
Senior Research Analyst, Skift Research

In his role as senior research analyst, Wouter Geerts focuses on research predominantly on the hotel sector, alternative accommodations and technology. Geerts completed a PhD on sustainability in the hospitality industry at Royal Holloway, University of London, and worked for over five years for a global market research firm. He holds a bachelor’s degree in international hospitality management and has worked in different roles and with the hotel industry.

John Gunter
President and CEO, Frontiers North Adventures

John Gunter is the president and CEO of Frontiers North Adventures, a full-service travel company hosting guests in the subarctic community of Churchill, Canada, to dine under the northern lights, kayak among curious beluga whales, and lock our gaze with polar bear. The company maintains a sharp focus on its corporate social responsibility with the goal of having guests remain invested in the destination even after their trip concludes. Gunter enjoys spending time being active out in nature with his wife and three children.

Brent Handler
Founder and CEO, Inspiro

Brent Handler is an entrepreneur and pioneer of the destination club industry in 2002. Handler and his brother founded Exclusive Resorts. Handler served as the company’s president from 2002 to 2009. During which time Exclusive Resorts set the standards for the industry. In January 2011, Brent, his brother, and their partners launched Inspiro, providing luxury travelers access to a curated collection of exceptional vacation experiences combined with expert travel planning and personalized service, but without the six-figure upfront fees previously common in the industry. In July 2019, Handler launched the world’s first travel subscription service called Inspiro Pass. Handler graduated from the University of Colorado with a bachelor's degree in business.

Cathilí Højgaard
Director of Visit Faroe Islands, Tourist Board of the Faroe Islands

With an M.B.A. in international marketing and communications and a degree in hospitality business, Cathilí Højgaard has worked as a marketing manager and marketing manager for Visit Denmark in Sweden. In 2012 she moved back to her native islands where she is now a director of Visit Faroe Islands, where her main task is to make the islands a must-see destination. Højgaard received the 2016 Public Leader of the Year Award and Visit Faroe Islands has won several international marketing awards including Golden Lions in Cannes, Clio Awards, Epica Awards, and World Media Awards. In 2019 Højgaard made the top 30 list, the first-ever tourism director on the list.

Steve Kaufer
President and CEO, TripAdvisor

Steve Kaufer co-founded TripAdvisor in 2000. Under his leadership TripAdvisor has grown into one of the largest travel sites in the world. As CEO, Kaufer has led the growth of TripAdvisor, Inc, which includes 24 other travel media brands that operate in 48 markets worldwide. Prior to co-founding TripAdvisor, Kaufer was president of CDS, Inc., an independent software vendor, and prior to that, was co-founder and vice president of engineering of Centerline Software. Kaufer holds several software patents. Kaufer was inducted into the 2015 British Travel and Hospitality Hall of Fame, receiving the 2015 Pioneer Award by the International Society of Hospitality Professionals. Kaufer’s awards also include Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Kaufer has a degree in computer science from Harvard University.

Derek Kerr
Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, American Airlines

Derek Kerr oversees financial planning and analysis, corporate planning treasury, purchasing, controller, and audit functions as well as investor relations. Previously Kerr served as executive vice president and chief financial officer for US Airways. He joined America West in 1996 and served in a variety of finance and planning roles. He was named chief financial officer in 2002 and was promoted to executive vice president and chief financial officer in 2009. Kerr also worked in financial planning and analysis.
Seema Mody is a global markets reporter for CNBC focusing on the intersection of foreign policy and business. She hosts the CNBC Digital show Futures New and the European Close, a daily segment on CNBC’s Squawk Alley. She also covers the travel industry for the network, which includes hotels, cruises and online travel operators. Mody graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in biological sciences and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Christopher Nassetta joined Hilton in 2007. Previously he was president and CEO of Host Hotels & Resorts since 2000. Before joining Host, Nassetta co-founded Bailey Capital Corporation in 1991, where he was responsible for the operations of the real estate investment and advisory firm. Prior to this he spent seven years at The Oliver Carr Company, ultimately serving as chief development officer. In this role, he was responsible for all development and related activities for one of the largest commercial real estate companies in the mid-Atlantic region. Nassetta graduated from the University of Virginia McIntire School of Commerce with a degree in finance. He currently serves on McIntire’s Advisory Board.

Leeny Oberg specializes in the intersection of media, technology and travel. As a writer and journalist for the past two decades, she has written for a variety of publications including USA Today, Travel + Leisure, Bloomberg and The New York Times among many others. Oberg co-founded HotelTonight, the mobile-first hotel booking platform acquired by🏨 Expedia in 2015. Before joining Avis Budget Group, Oberg served as the chief brand officer for Avis, a global lifestyle brand designing thoughtful experiences to make travel more seamless. Before starting at Avis in 2013, Oberg worked at Canoe Ventures, LLC, a joint venture of the Ritz-Carlton and Rockefeller Group, where she served as chief technology officer and chief product officer. Oberg has a B.A from Columbia University.

Mark Okerstrom served as executive vice president of operations and chief financial officer. He first joined the company in 2006, Okerstrom was with Bain & Company in Boston and San Francisco and he worked for UBS Investment Bank in London. Okerstrom also practiced as an attorney with Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer in London. He earned his MBA from Harvard Business School and holds a J.D. from the University of British Columbia.

Mark Okerstrom served as chief financial officer in 2018 of Marriott International, and he has been chief executive officer since 2015. Prior to his current role, Okerstrom was executive vice president and chief operating officer at Expedia Group. Okerstrom holds a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of Michigan.

Dennis Schaad is Skift's head of business development and executive vice president of the company. Oder has a B.A from Columbia University.

Since her arrival as president of Skift in 2016, Canvin Kremsin has expanded Skift’s global footprint into Europe, Latin America, and Asia, driving revenue increase of more than 50 percent year-over-year for the past few years. She works in lockstep with the founder and CEO illustrating media, research, and events on behalf of the company. Kremsin is an award-winning recognized media executive and brand building expert who built incubator brands (Skift, Maxim, The Week, Cookies) and reimagined venerable brands (Brides, Conde Nast Traveler, epicurious) to fuel success.

Jeremy Kreissmann is a research editor at Skift, where he helps manage editorial and social media channels, coordinate advertising and journalism experience to the SkiftX team, where he helps manage editorial and social media channels, coordinate advertising and journalism experience to the development of Skift’s sponsored content partners. This former New Yorker currently lives in Los Angeles, California, where he spends most of his free time hiking, camping, and enjoying the great outdoors.

Tom Lowry is a literary agent and editor based in Los Angeles. Tom Lowry oversees the global editorial strategy and workflow for Skift’s news, analysis, and data through mobile, desktop, and mobile website. He previously worked for CNBC, The Daily, BusinessWeek, USA Today, and the Daily News. Lowry is an alumus of the Knight-Bagehot Fellowship in Business and Economics Journalism at Columbia University.

Elizabeth Oder is an accomplished creative, marketing and brand advertising, media, database, direct, and interactive marketing. As an expert on airlines, Schaad has been teaching journalism since 2014, Kernen has been teaching journalism since 2010, Tom Lowry has been teaching journalism since 2008. Oder has a B.A from Columbia University.

Sam Shank served as Expedia Group’s chief marketing officer from 2017 through 2020, where he was responsible for all development and related activities for one of the largest commercial real estate companies in the mid-Atlantic region. Prior to his current role, he was chief technology officer and chief product officer. Oder has a B.A from Columbia University.

Sam Shank is head of hotels and apartments services at Airbnb and CEO of HotelTonight, the mobile-first hotel booking platform he co-founded in 2010. As a travel obsessed serial entrepreneur, Shank previously founded and was CEO of DealBass. Shank got his start as an engineer and was CEO of TravelPost, a hotel review site. SideStep acquired TravelPost and Shank worked there as vice president of business development. Shank also worked in comparison shopping at Exelis, CNET, and Nextag. Shank attended the University of Virginia and received an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.

Sean O’Neill is Skift’s travel tech editor focusing on startups and business-to-business tech (not consumer tech). He was previously an editor in London. He now lives with his husband in the Philadelphia area.

Sean O’Neill is Skift’s travel tech editor focusing on startups and business-to-business tech (not consumer tech). He was previously an editor in London. He now lives with his husband in the Philadelphia area.

Sean O’Neill is Skift’s travel tech editor focusing on startups and business-to-business tech (not consumer tech). He was previously an editor in London. He now lives with his husband in the Philadelphia area.

Elizabeth Oder is an accomplished creative, marketing and brand advertising, media, database, direct, and interactive marketing. As an expert on airlines, Schaad has been teaching journalism since 2014, Kernen has been teaching journalism since 2010, Tom Lowry has been teaching journalism since 2008. Oder has a B.A from Columbia University.

Dennis Schaad is Skift’s founding editor and executive one. He has spent over a decade helping sources to ask them what’s happening at their companies, or if they know anything about the new business model, or if they know anything at all about the new business model. Schaad has been a journalist since way before many of you were born, and he has written about the business model for nearly 40 years. He still likes to go to work every day because you never know where it will lead.
Madhu Unnikrishnan joined Skift earlier this year as editor of Skift Airline Weekly, which Skift acquired in 2018. Unnikrishnan has covered the airline industry since 2004, previously as senior business editor at Aviation Week and as editor-in-chief of Aviation Week’s Aviation Daily. Unnikrishnan regularly comments on the airline industry for print and broadcast, and has spoken at industry conferences around the world. He previously worked for United and Virgin America. Unnikrishnan holds a magna cum laude degree from Tufts University and a master of science degree with honors from the London School of Economics.

Ethan Chuang is a vice president with Marriott International, leading some of its largest and most strategic client engagements. Chuang has over 20 years of international experience helping clients undergo transformational change programs and growth agendas. Chuang has a strong management consulting background in consumer goods and retail, bringing fresh thinking to the travel experience, along with deep experience in business strategy, digital technology, change management, and Global Business Services (GBS).

Audrey Hendley leads global travel and lifestyle services at American Express Travel, one of the largest multi-channel consumer travel agencies in the world. Hendley is responsible for delivering premium travel and lifestyle services to card members through a network of 5,000 plus travel consultants, overseeing the digital travel booking experience, travel benefits and programs, supplier partnerships, and marketing and engagement strategies for the premium card member base. Over the past two decades at American Express, Hendley has distinguished herself as an influential, innovative leader who has driven record results for businesses across the company.

Stephen Taylor oversees the global commercial team including sales, operations, product, partnerships, and marketing for Sojern’s Enterprise and SMB business units. A pioneer of data-driven marketing, Taylor drives corporate commercial strategy through the lens of his passion for building global businesses. Prior to Sojern, he served as the CEO of Qype, acquired by Yelp, which brought him to San Francisco from the United Kingdom. During his time in the UK, he led Yahoo’s European consumer business and was EMEA managing director for Overture. Early in his career, Taylor was one of the first employees at Air Miles, which was acquired by British Airways. Taylor holds a B.A. in English and politics from the University of Birmingham, where he graduated with honors.

To learn more visit www.aig.com/travel.
SKIFT AIRLINE WEEKLY IS REQUIRED READING.

Skift Airline Weekly is a subscription-only publication, read by industry professionals who value its in-depth coverage of the aviation industry.

Delivered every Monday morning, Skift Airline Weekly arms readers with useful news and data for the business week including earnings reports, marketing initiatives, fleet updates, flight routes, and research reports. Most importantly, Skift Airline Weekly provides insightful analysis about the sector.

Use the code SGF2019 for a discount off of your individual subscription today. Speak to a team member about multiuser or companywide subscriptions by reaching out to airlineweekly@airlineweekly.com

Megatrends

This January check out the annual Skift Megatrends, which identify the big-picture narratives that are shaping travel in the coming year. Skift’s global team of journalists informs this curated list with our intensive daily coverage, long-term research, and countless hours talking to leaders in the travel industry.

Airlineweekly.com

*Discount code cannot be used retroactively. Offer expires, September 30, 2019
Schedule
Day 1
Wednesday, September 18

9:00 AM
Welcome to Skift Global Forum 2019
Rafat Ali
Founder and CEO, Skift

9:05 AM
Intention-Setting Exercise
Sponsored by: Octave Institute

9:10 AM
Introduction: Travel’s Responsibility to the World
Rafat Ali
Founder and CEO, Skift

9:20 AM
Navigating Global Scale: Opportunities and Challenges for the World’s Largest Cruise Line
Arnold Donald
President and CEO, Carnival Corporation
Interviewed by: Tom Lowry

9:50 AM
Building a Trusted Consumer Brand
Ed Bastian
CEO, Delta Air Lines
Interviewed by: Madhu Unnikrishnan

10:05 AM
The Consumer Experience Playbook: Making Moments Matter
Audrey Hendley
President, American Express Travel

10:20 AM
An Accessible World Is an Inclusive World
Stephen Cluskey
CEO, Mobility Mojo

10:45 AM
Networking Break

11:20 AM
Sustaining Impact: Private-Public Partnerships and Destination Management
Honorable Maria Amalia Revelo Raventós
Minister of Tourism, Costa Rica
Interviewed by: Rosie Spinks

11:45 AM
Charting the Next Phase of Growth and Profits
Christopher Nassetta
President and CEO, Hilton
Interviewed by: Seema Mody

12:10 PM
Responsible Travel Marketing in the Era of Data, Privacy and the Always-On Consumer
Stephen Taylor
Chief Revenue Officer, Sojern
Interviewed by: Jeremy Kressmann

12:20 PM
Building a Next-Generation Brand: It’s More Than Just a Carry-On
Jen Rubio
Co-Founder and Chief Brand Officer, Away
Interviewed by: Carolyn Kremins

12:45 PM
Lunch

1:10 PM
Skift Research Spotlight: The Short-Term Rental Ecosystem
Wouter Geerts
Senior Research Analyst, Skift

2:00 PM
Luxury Travel Welcomes the Subscription Model
Brent Handler
Founder and CEO, Inspirato
Interviewed by: Seth Borko

2:35 PM
Vacation Rentals: Making Bold Moves to Consolidate Inventory
Eric Breon
Founder and CEO, Vacasa
Interviewed by: Sean O’Neill

3:05 PM
Beyond Automation: Understanding AI’s True Power in Travel Marketing
David Bassis
Founder and CEO, Tincynotes
Interviewed by: Jeremy Kressmann

3:20 PM
How Micro-Mobility, Self-Driving Cars and Augmented Reality Will Shape the Future of Travel
Arthur Orlutia
Executive Vice President and Chief Innovation Officer, Avis Budget Group

3:45 PM
The Crowing Challenge of Meaningful Customer Engagement
Steve Kauffman
President and CEO, TripAdvisor
Interviewed by: Rafat Ali

4:25 PM
Tourism Stewardship: What’s Your Role and What’s Ours?
John Gunter
President and CEO, Frontiers North Adventures

4:50 PM
Rethinking Loyalty and Innovating With Confidence
Ethan Chuang
Vice President, Data and Services, Loyalty, Mastercard
Interviewed by: Elizabeth Onder

5:15 PM
Navigating the Economics of the World’s Largest Airline
Derek Kerr
Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, American Airlines
Interviewed by: Brian Simmers

5:45 PM
Financial Leadership: How Marriott Is Competing Globally and Scaling its Brands
Leeny Oberg
Chief Financial Officer, Marriott International
Interviewed by: Seema Mody

6:00 PM
Cocktail Reception

Schedule
Day 2
Thursday, September 19

9:00 AM
Welcome to Skift Global Forum 2019
Rafat Ali
Founder and CEO, Skift

9:10 AM
Expedia’s Next Big Move
Mark Okerstrom
President and CEO, Expedia Group, Inc.
Interviewed by: Dennis Schaal

9:35 AM
OTA Innovation: Strategic Shifts in the Market and What’s Next for Booking.com
Glenn Fogel
President and CEO, Booking Holdings
Interviewed by: Dennis Schaal

10:00 AM
How Attribute-Based Selling Works for Hotels
Bruno Chauvat
Co-Founder and CEO, Travelyze
Interviewed by: Jeremy Kressmann

10:15 AM
Striving for Simplicity and Consistency
Ben Smith
CEO, Air France-KLM
Interviewed by: Brian Simmers

10:40 AM
Networking Break
Empower your team. Future-proof your business. Subscribe to Skift Research.

Go to research.skift.com/subscribe and enter the code SGF2019

Discount is valid through September 30th 2019. Discount cannot be applied retroactively or towards multiuser subscriptions

The Skift Research Subscription

Premium subscribers receive:

- 50 new reports annually
- Access to our library of +150 previous reports
- Global perspectives + future looking insights
- Access to Skift Analysts all over the globe
- Access to Skift Forum tickets

Skift Research provides in-depth coverage in key areas that help drive insights and decision making:

- Industry Landscapes
- Sector and Company Deep-Dives
- Consumer Insights
- Market Estimates and Forecasts
- Travel Technology
- B2B Insights

“Skift Research provides the insights you need to make better business decisions.”

- Haixia Wang, VP of Research, Skift

To learn more, go to research.skift.com/subscribe

Contact: research@skift.com, to learn about gaining team and company access.
POPULIST BACKLASH, OVERTOURISM, AND THE COMING WAVE OF CLIMATE CHANGE MEAN THAT GLOBAL TRAVEL MUST TRANSFORM HOW IT DOES BUSINESS AND PLAN FOR THE FUTURE.