



Agoda Sustainable Travel Trends Survey Reveals People's Top Concerns about Tourism's Impact, and Measures to Make Travel More Sustainable

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SINGAPORE, June 3, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Easy identification of sustainable eco-friendly travel options, limited use of single-use plastics and financial incentives for accommodation providers who maximize energy efficiencies are the top three additional measures needed to make travel more sustainable according to Agoda's Sustainable Travel Trends Survey. Establishing more protected areas to limit tourist numbers and removal of single-use bathroom amenities round out the top five global measures.



The findings from the Survey launched today to mark World Environment Day 2021 (5 June) also revealed globally that overtourism, and pollution of beaches and waterways are the top two concerns of the impact of tourism, with deforestation and energy inefficiencies (including overconsumption of electricity/water) ranking joint third.

Governments considered most responsible for making changes to make travel more sustainable

Globally, the public considers Governments most accountable for making positive environmental changes around travel, followed by tourism authorities and individuals themselves. When it came to holding governments most accountable, those in Indonesia and UK were most likely to do so (36%), Mainland China followed not too far behind at 33%, with Australia and Malaysia in fourth and fifth spot (28% and 27% respectively). The markets most likely to cite themselves or individuals as most responsible for making changes to traveling sustainably were Thailand (30%), Japan (29%) and the US (28%). Meanwhile, Mainland China (11%), the UK (13%), and Vietnam (14%) were least likely to attribute responsibility to the individual.

When asked what they would pledge to do better in a post COVID travel scenario, the top responses globally were #1 manage their waste including using less single-use plastics, #2 switch off the air con and lights when leaving their accommodation, and #3 always look for eco-friendly accommodation. Interestingly, despite overtourism being the biggest concern, going to lesser-known destinations only ranked seventh of out of 10 as a pledge to do better.

No 'one size fits all for' sustainability

The top practices most associated with environmentally friendly or sustainable travel are #1 renewable energy and resources like solar, wind, hydroelectric and water, #2 no single-use plastics, joint number #3 animal conservation and creating a smaller carbon footprint.

Other energy saving solutions such as key cards or motion sensors, using natural cleaning products are the other key practices. Interestingly, buying locally sourced products, reusing bedding or towels during holiday stays and visiting off-the-beaten track destinations are the bottom three practices out of 10 associated with sustainable travel.

"We can see from the Agoda Sustainable Travel Trends Survey that the messages of taking simple steps such as switching off lights and air conditioning when leaving the room or reducing waste by minimizing use of single-use plastics are being embraced by the public across the globe. What is also clear is that while globally the message is Governments need to take the lead on managing sustainable travel, there is recognition that some responsibility lies with people's own behavior," explains John Brown, CEO Agoda.

"While there are different interpretations of what practices are eco-friendly or sustainable, most of the public are keen to be able to do their part, by actively pledging to choose eco-friendly properties or make smarter environmental choices when traveling. One of the easiest ways to counter concerns about overtourism is to consider traveling to off the beaten track destinations. This past year at Agoda, we have seen a shift in travel patterns as people, limited to domestic travel, explore lesser-known areas. If managed well, not only does this help support independent hoteliers and accommodation providers that rely economically on the tourist dollar, it can help lessen the environmental burden on overcrowded areas.

"As an industry, we need to continue to find ways to help individuals achieve these goals be it making it easier to search and find sustainable properties on Agoda or supporting and encouraging more partners to use key cards for power, use renewable energy sources or offering carbon-offsetting options for travel products." continued Brown.

COVID negatively impacts attitudes to sustainable travel

The increase in desire to travel more sustainably was most prevalent among respondents from South Korea, India and Taiwan, 35%, 31% and 31% respectively. However, looking at the figures globally, while 25% have an increased desire to travel more sustainably this compares with 35% whose desire to do so decreased. The markets reporting the biggest proportional decrease were Indonesia (56%), Thailand (51%) and the Philippines (50%).

"It's concerning that many people see sustainable travel as less important today than they did before COVID-19, but I hope that is just a short-term effect, driven by people's thirst to get back out there and travel any way they can," John Brown concluded.

US

- More Americans are most concerned about polluted beaches, followed by overtourism, and energy inefficiencies.
- Americans take complete accountability, with 28% claiming they themselves are responsible for making changes around tourism to make traveling more sustainable, followed by both tourism authorities and Governments tied at 16%
- US top pledges to travel more sustainably post-Covid are #1 switch off air conditioner and lights when leaving their hotel room, #2 reuse hotel amenities such as towels or bedding and joint #3 shopping local or independent businesses and managing their waste
- Practices that are considered most helpful to travel sustainably by Americans are accommodations using renewable energy or water source, key cards to power electricity in an accommodation, and destinations that are not high-density tourist spots
- What do they associate with sustainable travel? Use of renewable energy 36%, energy saving 26%, no single use plastics and buying local both tie at 25%
- The additional measures to help make travel more sustainable according to Americans are easy identification of eco-friendly travel options, limiting use of single-use plastic in airlines or accommodations, and financial incentives to accommodation providers who maximize energy efficiency

Diving deep into the data

On additional measures:

- While making it compulsory for travelers to pay a sum for carbon off-setting is selected by the least as a measure that could be implemented to make travel more sustainable, respondents in India were most likely to support this concept, versus Mainland China which is the market least likely to do so, followed by US and Taiwan markets.
- Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, Mainland China and Australia are the markets most likely to suggest financial incentives for accommodation providers who maximize energy efficiency
- Japan is the market least likely to recommend more protected areas to limit tourist numbers followed by South Korea and the US. Meanwhile, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia markets are most likely to
- UK tops the list as the market most likely to support limiting use of single-use plastics in airlines or accommodation, closely followed by Australia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Mainland China, Taiwan, the US and Japan are least likely to suggest this measure
- Malaysian, Filipinos and Indonesians are most favorable for easy identification of sustainable or eco-friendly travel options, such as flagging with an environmental tag on a digital travel platform. While still their number one measure overall, US and Japan are the bottom two markets for such identification
- Removal of single-use bathroom amenities is most favored by Taiwan, Japan and UK

On responsibility for change to make travel more sustainable:

- All generations selected governments as the top response for who is most responsible except for the Silent Gen (those born before 1946), who has the largest proportion which consider individuals as most responsible
- Men are marginally more likely to cite governments as most responsible (28%), followed by tourism authorities (21%) and Themselves (20%). An equal portion of women hold government and tourism authorities as most responsible (25%), followed by themselves, (19%).

On Pledges for more sustainable travel

Global Top Ten pledges to travel more sustainably

1. Manage my waste during my travel period (e.g., use less single-use plastics)
2. Switch the air conditioner and lights off when I leave my room
3. Always look for eco-friendly accommodation
4. Try to manage my carbon footprint (e.g., taking most journeys by bus, train or boat, or paying for a carbon offset)
5. Do my part to reuse hotel amenities such as towels or bedding
6. Shop local/choose independent businesses
7. Going to lesser-known destinations
8. Pick up litter when I visit the beach
9. Requesting for no toiletries in the room as I can bring my own
10. Use reef-friendly products on beach trips

- Philippines, Malaysia and India are most likely of all markets to pledge to look for eco-friendly accommodation
- Singapore, UK and Australia are the markets most likely to pledge to reuse hotel amenities such as towels and bedding, compared to Indonesia, Philippines, Mainland China and Thailand which are the least likely to
- Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia most likely to pledge to go to lesser-known destinations to travel more sustainably, with Japan, UK and Taiwan least likely to
- While managing waste including using less single-use plastics is a top three pledge for all markets, South Korea, Thailand and Philippines are the markets most likely to pledge this
- Despite pollution of waterways being cited as the number two concern for the impact of travel, picking up litter off beaches ranks only #8 out of 10 in pledges to travel more sustainably, with only 18% pledging to do so
- Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines and Mainland China are top markets to pledge to pick up litter when visiting the beach. Respondents in Singapore, Taiwan and Japan are least likely to
- Shopping local is at #6 in the pledges with Australia (35%), UK (31%) and US (28%) most likely to pledge this, and Japan (5%), Mainland China (9%) and Taiwan (11%) least likely to
- Higher percentage of women pledge to manage waste (44% versus 40%) and switched off aircon/lights (44% versus 36%) than men
- Bottom five pledges globally from last - using reef friendly products on beach trips (14%), requesting no toiletries as can bring my own (17%), picking up litter when visiting the beach (18%) going to lesser-known destinations (19%), and shopping local (21%)
- While both women and men's top three pledges are the same, women's top four is rounded out by a pledge to reuse hotel amenities, versus men who pledge bigger actions such as trying to manage carbon footprint in their fourth spot
- Singaporeans are more likely to pledge to switch off aircon and lights when they leave the room and reuse amenities, compared to other markets
- Philippines (49%), Malaysia (43%) and India (42%) are most likely to always look for eco-friendly accommodation when they travel post COVID-19
- Conversely, public in the UK (14%), Mainland China (17%), US (17%), Japan (18%) and South Korea (18%) are least likely to look for eco-friendly accommodation as a pledge

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