

A More Sustainable Tourism Sector

With the latest season of *The White Lotus* airing on Max, Koh Samui – the island off the coast of Thailand where the season was filmed – is bracing for a Hollywood-driven tourism craze. Thailand has suffered from such an event before, when *The Beach* came out and overtourism nearly destroyed Maya Bay. It took four years of being closed to the public for the Bay to be restored, and strict regulations remain in place today.

In many areas of the world, various communities have a dependence on tourism dollars and endure the impacts of overtourism, though it often causes conflict with local ecosystems and strains natural resources.

Sarah Stodola, who deconstructs the tourism industry in the Substack newsletter “Flung,” has insights

on ways the industry can improve sustainably and equitably. She believes that the key to having a successful tourism industry is to prioritize the needs and wellbeing of the local community first.

For example, she cites a high-end resort, NIHI Sumba, that created tourism activities on an Indonesian island with high rates of malaria. “They gave mosquito nets to the entire community, and malaria deaths have decreased exponentially in the population around that resort,” Stodola says. “So that’s a really positive outcome.”

However, there is no magic formula for sustainable tourism. Stodola notes that more sustainable tourism might require an overhaul of tourism as it currently stands. “I think, partially, travelers have gotten away from expecting to have to adapt somewhat to a place... Shifting that mindset to expect to have to kind of assimilate into the

place that you’re going, rather than the other way around, would be a really big positive,” she said.

[-Grist](#)

Destinations Limiting Visitors for Conservation

Sustainable tourism should allow visitors to experience a location’s natural offerings without jeopardizing its future. This can be achieved with visitor caps to manage tourist flow and protect the environment. The following destinations have implemented visitor restrictions in order to shield their ecosystems while also promoting their natural beauty to the world.

1. Galápagos Islands, Ecuador: As of 2023, only 100,000 visitors are permitted annually. The goal is to minimize impact to the islands’ endemic species, such as the Galápagos tortoise.

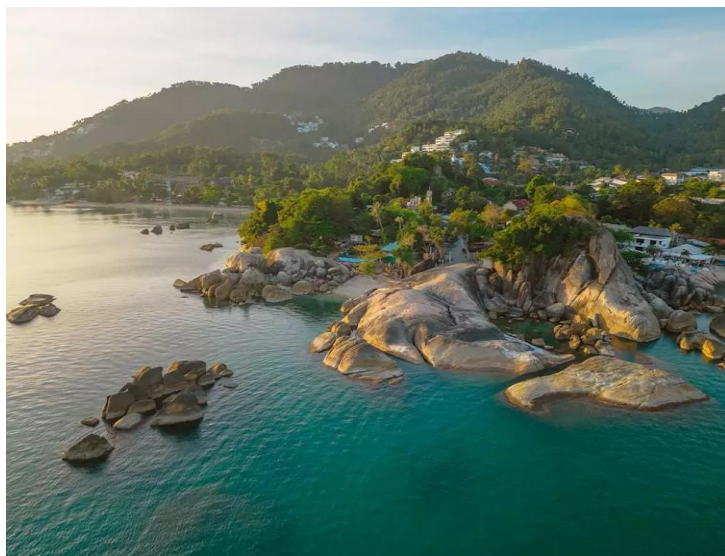


Image courtesy of [Audley Travel](#)



Image courtesy of [Galapagos Conversation Trust](#)

2. Yosemite National Park, USA: Daily visitor limits are set at 20,000. This helps the National Park Service reduce overcrowding, protect natural resources, and enhance its conservation efforts.

3. The Great Barrier Reef, Australia: Not only are daily visitor numbers capped, but tour operators must adhere to strict guidelines to protect the reef.

-[MSN](#)

Boosting Economies, Protecting Natural Treasures

Sustainable tourism is an economically viable approach to travel that attracts higher-spending visitors seeking authentic experiences – who then generate more revenue with fewer environmental impacts.

Natural preservation is a top priority for sustainable tourism efforts. Destinations that maintain their natural integrity and attract travelers seeking pristine vacations have a competitive advantage. Authenticity is a marketable asset. With that in mind, conservation is as economically sensible as it is environmentally sound.

Some technologies currently support sustainability efforts – such as data analytics to optimize tourism flows, and digital platforms connecting

travelers with local service providers.

The consumer also has a role in sustainable tourism, and it is important for destinations to emphasize this point to their guests. Tourists can boost a destination's sustainability efforts by choosing locally-owned accommodations, respecting cultural norms, and visiting during shoulder season. When destinations encourage these options, shared values are created between visitors, communities, and environments.

- [Journée Mondiale](#)

The Rise of Scenic, Eco-Friendly Journeys

Scenic, slower-paced journeys that emphasize sustainability and immersive experiences are becoming increasingly attractive to travelers. This development is emerging as a travel trend that benefits local economies and travelers seeking a deeper connection with their destinations.

Trains are significantly friendlier to the environment than flights, with lower carbon emissions. Trains have an eco-conscious appeal for travelers who want to reduce their environmental footprint without sacrificing comfort.

According to a recent report from Visa Business and Economic Insights (VBEI), the growth of train tourism represents a fast-growing and data-backed movement that is

reshaping the travel industry. Rail travel has the potential to enter a new golden age, driven by a combination of luxury, sustainability, and significant economic impact.

As rail tourism continues to grow, the land-based, slow-paced travel style it promotes will likely have a lasting impact on local economies and global exploration.

-[Travel and Tour World](#)

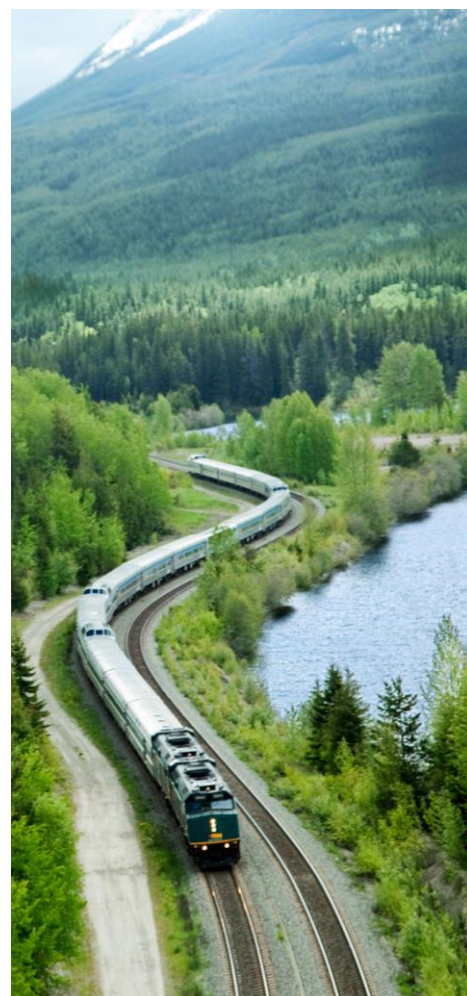


Image courtesy of [Canadian Train Vacations](#)