THE CONSCIOUS TRAVEL MANIFESTO*

We stand at the tipping point of a new future. The choices you and I make will impact the future of life for thousands of years. Rather than that being a burden, it gives us the opportunity to live the most meaningful lives any generation of human kind has ever lived.

WHY MUST WE CHANGE?

1. The **current industrial model of mass tourism is obsolete and needs replacing** if tourism is to realize its potential as a force for good and safeguard its future. Sustainability and philanthropic practices when bolted on to a failing model, while essential, will only slow passage towards an unattractive outcome. We need to change direction.

2. The **deficiencies are structural and systemic** stemming from an obsolete sense of purpose and an inaccurate, out-dated understanding of how the world works. Both can be up-dated to represent a more advanced understanding.

3. The **purpose of tourism should not be to grow** (as stated in almost all destination and corporate strategies) **but to create greater benefit to all stakeholders** i.e. to enable guest, hosts and communities to flourish. The make tourism bigger strategy accentuates and fails to alleviate tourism's biggest failure – to generate sufficient and acceptable net positive benefit to host communities.

4. **We have confused means with ends.** An economy exists to contribute to the common good – not to create growth for its own sake. Economic sectors, private enterprise and public policies were traditionally conceived as the means to achieve the goal of society-wide well-being. Under the current system, however, means have become the ends.

5. **Business is the most pervasive and powerful change agency on the planet**. Profitable enterprises will continue to be the primary engine of value generation and development provided that profit is viewed as an outcome of a higher purpose – to create the means whereby people and planet flourish.

6. **The current model deployed by mainstream tourism and hospitality depends on volume growth for its survival and contains harmful systemic flaws** that, over time, undermine its viability. Flaws produce a built-in tendency to generate lower yields, increase wealth disparity, environmental degradation, pollution (greenhouse gas emissions, waste), pressure on land and water, congestion, high labour turnover, more low paid, insecure jobs, worsening labour conditions, and more incidences of resident backlash.

7. **As the industrial, mass model matures and ages, it generates diminishing returns for all participants.** Less and less income "trickles down" to the resident population that often has to pay for the "externalities" avoided by those companies that generate much of the profit. Furthermore, host communities (residents) have little direct say in the scope, nature, scale or pace of tourism development and growth.

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* ***for evidence supporting the statements refer to the report Social Entrepreneurship in Tourism- The Conscious Travel Approach**

8. **A healthy tourism depends on a healthy biosphere** and an engaged population of hosts able and willing to serve guests. Current forecasts of just under 4% CAGR for an industry responsible for 1.2 billion international overnight trips are not compatible with the need to prevent unacceptable levels of global warming or resource utilization (land, water, food, materials).

9. **The best way to change a system is to change its purpose**. The purpose of a healthy visitor economy in the future should be to:

   • ensure all stakeholders (individuals, enterprises and communities) flourish i.e., achieve their best; their peak performance;
   • demonstrate that it generates the highest <u>**net**</u> **positive benefit** to host communities in terms of their environment, culture, society;
   • sustain a diversity of livelihoods over several generations; while
   • sustaining the healthy ecosystems and cultures on which it depends.

10. **This shift in purpose is unlikely to occur for as long as participants in the system have a false and inaccurate understanding of how life, the biosphere, society and the sector really work.** Change has to occur in our individual and collective **seeing, being and doing** – and in that order:

    Seeing: Discoveries of modern science reveal our fundamental interconnectedness with all forms of life and the value in thinking in wholes not pieces, through an ecological systems lens not a linear, mechanical one. Tourism operates as a dynamic, inter-connected network.

    Being*:* Such a shift in perspective is being combined with a global shift in the values that shape behavior, priorities and actions.

    Doing: When perspectives and values shift, we will act and behave differently. We will define success differently and therefore will need new metrics.

11. **Change won't happen by decree "from the top."** Systemic change is always the result of system participants seeing, being and doing differently and in response to changes within and without. Responsibility for change has to start at the individual level then be applied to enterprises and the community in which they function.

12. **Each individual, each enterprise and each destination community can and already does make a difference** – albeit unconsciously. Conscious Travel describes a set of concepts and mental pathways that participants can apply – in their own unique way – to building a better future that reflects their unique place in place and time.

WHAT FORM SHOULD THE CHANGE TAKE?

Conscious Hosts shift their focus from growing tourism (increasing its size) to making it better (increasing its net positive value and benefit experienced by more stakeholders).

It is a shift from an orientation towards "gross" to "net;" from quantitative expansion to qualitative development. Conscious travel is NOT about de-growth or anti growth but about returning to a more accurate understanding of what growth means in nature and society.

Better is defined as generating tangible, positive net benefits that are ecological, social, cultural, economic and spiritual in nature.

They are net in the sense that the assessed impact of tourist activity takes into account both the consumption, damage and deterioration of the place and people on which tourism depends and the generation of visitor satisfaction, business profit, employee engagement, environmental quality, resource use efficiency and community well-being.

Lasting, pervasive change can only occur if undertaken by communities. It is for each community to prioritise its outcomes and, through collective dialogue, research, knowledge and skills development, to create a mix of means that work for them and that result in a place that satisfies the needs of guest and host. The focus is one of empowerment and capacity building by individuals and enterprises learning and working collaboratively.

There are no silver bullets or standardized solutions – each community will deploy a unique mix of means to produce a set of desired outcomes. The desired end state of "better" will emerge as a result of several actions working synergistically. Thus the nature of the visitor experience and economy in a place will be distinctly unique and contribute to the diversity and robustness of the whole system.

HOW DO WE START AND CONTINUE?

Conscious Travel is based on individual and collective responsibility. It's up to each of us in tourism and hospitality to assume personal responsibility for making a contribution to the shift from an old outdated mode of operating to a better alternative. In the tourism domain, we must each become "Conscious Hosts" travelling and teaching our guests to travel consciously and that means:

1. Doing our own inner work to develop our own self-awareness. In other words:
   a. Do we understand the scope, depth and urgency for change?
   b. Are we committed to learning, collaborating and doing things differently together;
   c. Do we know our strengths and weaknesses?;
   d. Do we have a sense of personal, corporate and community purpose?
   e. Do we know what values and beliefs underpin our perception?
   f. Do we believe our contribution is vital?

2. Then reaching out, meeting up and joining with others in our community (not necessarily just tourism-related) to accept responsibility for our destiny and our contribution to the greater good. That means a willingness to identify and tap into the intelligence and creativity latent within all communities, learn together, understand and work out our differences, in order to co-create a shared goal and vision for the type of community and visitor economy we wish to create. That means seeing "our place" as a container – a "some where" in which a transformation in seeing, being and doing emerges.

3. Having established a working community, a mix of interventions can be deployed that have, in various combinations, the potential to significantly increase net yield from an existing volume of visitors. The table below illustrates a few. This type of growth does not require more physical capacity in the short-term but will require the investment of human capital (creativity and imagination). Qualitative development as opposed to expansion makes the established business community stronger and more resilient to external shocks. Businesses can operate for longer periods and, by stabilizing employee's income and sustaining year-round livelihoods, there is greater community ownership.

STRATEGIES FOR MAKING TOURISM BETTER

	DESIRED OUTCOMES	POTENTIAL INPUTS
INCREASE	Higher net benefit (incomes, profit, intangible benefits, health, vitality, resilience, agility, adaptability	Collective learning that supports community empowerment, confidence, shared vision and collaboration
	Higher net spend by visitors	Better service, more & richer diverse experiences, cross selling, high levels of engagement and involvement
	Length of stay	Better service, more & richer diverse experiences, cross selling; slow down visitor experience
	Length of season	Experiences, events, festivals weather-independent activities
	Local procurement	Engagement of local community – farmers, artisans, artists,
	Customer Satisfaction, positive referrals and return visits, reduced marketing costs	Employee engagement – year-round employment Local innovation
	Balance between domestic and international sources	Encourage more domestic tourism as this will be less vulnerable to external shocks ; less carbon intensive
	Economic multipliers and linkages	Procurement, engagement of suppliers and community
	Resilience	Collaboration, diversity, planning
DECREASE	Food Waste	Local procurement, recycling, circular economy
	Emissions	Alternative energy supplies, divest from fossil fuels
	Volatility (booms and busts)	Diversity of experience and market appeal, agility, customer loyalty; saving income surpluses to reinvest when demand ebbs
	Leakage	Diversity of ownership and social architectures (social enterprise, not-for-profits, cooperatives, social impact travel and investing)
	Loss of traditional cultural values and practices	Engagement of greater community
	Pressure on overused resources	Distribution of visitation seasonally and geographically
	Marketing Costs	Empower residents and guests to do much of the marketing

4. Committing to create enterprises and places that care – a stance that, in practical terms, means addressing:

a. *Context:* have a strong grasp of the issues affecting and being affected by tourism in both a global and macro sense. Conscious hosts work together to take local initiatives that address global issues.
b. *Mindset:* have become aware of their unexamined assumptions and beliefs underpinning their decision-making behavior and taken steps to learn how systems work
c. *Values:* have taken time to think, reflect upon and evaluate their own personal values and those of the enterprise or agency they lead or work for;
d. *Purpose:* know and can articulate a higher purpose for their business and their implications for their own operations;
e. *Leadership style*: are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses as a leader and are committed to developing leadership skills appropriate for networked communities not rigid hierarchies.
f. *Use of Power:* know how to harness "new power" as a current that flows when a vision is shared, and where there is trust as each knows their role and responsibility. They do not shirk responsibility for making a contribution in service of the greater good.

THE OUTCOME

Conscious Hosts show that they care for all stakeholders affected by their business by

- Living in harmony with nature and have taken specific actions to minimize waste, and to conserve and, where possible, regenerate local natural environments and cultures.

- Reflecting, expressing, and celebrating the unique attributes of the place they inhabit, making every effort to preserve its distinct character and personality by engaging as many residents as possible in using their gifts to enrich the visitor's welcome.

- Providing a positive, flourishing work environment in which employees are appropriately recognized and regarded, enjoy a fair wage and have the opportunity to grow and develop.

- Running companies that everyone wants to work for; turnover is low, wages are fair and levels of engagement and passion are high. The creation of sustainable livelihoods takes precedence over labour cost reduction.

- Using as many local suppliers as possible, and in a way that helps those suppliers in the value network flourish

- Returning above average and sustainable financial returns to their investors

- Being committed to working collaboratively with a range of other businesses in the community to co-create and realize a shared vision for the future shape, scope and scale of tourism that benefits and engages the entire community

- Being recognized as a positive force for good in their community

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RESOURCES
Conscious Travel is designed to be a social movement comprising a global network of place-based and pace-oriented host communities committed to the emergence of a more robust, benign operating model

for tourism and hospitality as described in the Manifesto. To that end, the following resources have or will be developed:

1. A Blog – *Conscious.Travel.*
   Since Feb 2011, over 80 in-depth articles have been published addressing various aspects the need/vision/model for an alternative model better suited for an evolving new economy.
2. A research handbook: *Social Entrepreneurship in Tourism- The Conscious Travel Approach*; that outlines the approach and rationale with supporting information is available from here.
3. *Under construction: a half- one and a half day workshop introducing Conscious Travel to hosts (enterprises, NGOs, associations, policy makers, marketers, residential groups)*
4. *An e-book for workshop participants: How to Flourish When Business as Usual Unravels*
5. A six month Conscious Host Development program developed for communities involving webinars, collaborative action learning and coaching.

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Background research document: http://bit.ly/1NHuh1b
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