



# **Sustainable Travel: Treading Lightly at Our National Forests**

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# Sustainable Travel and the Forest Service



## Who is STI?

**Non-profit mission to help travelers and tourism providers protect the places they visit, and the planet.**

***Leave the World a Better Place®***

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## Defining Sustainable Tourism

"Sustainable tourism in its purest sense, is an industry which attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment, and the conservation of local ecosystems. It is responsible tourism which is both ecologically and culturally sensitive." (UNWTO)



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## Defining Triple Bottom Line

An expanded baseline for measuring performance, adding socio-cultural and environmental dimensions to the traditional economic benchmark.

A positive triple bottom line means a net:

- Improvement in conservation of the natural environment
- Social benefit for local communities
- Profit for business owners and shareholders
- Gain for national and regional economies



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## Why Sustainable Tourism?

- **61% of Americans** believe their experience is better when their destination preserves its unique natural, historic, and cultural sites (*TIA and National Geographic Traveler 2003*).
- **55.1 million adult Americans** have ceaseless expectations for unique and culturally authentic travel experiences that protect and preserve the ecological and cultural environment (*TIA and National Geographic Traveler 2002*).
- **More than half** of all U.S. adults say they would be more likely to select a travel provider that uses more environmentally friendly products and processes (*Travel Industry Association 2007*).
- LOHAS market represents more than **\$226 billion** in annual sales in the U.S. and more than **\$540 billion** worldwide (*LOHAS 2001*).

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## Why Sustainable Tourism?

- Environmental Impacts
- Socio-cultural Impacts
- Economic Impacts



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## Sustainable Tourism – A Force for Positive Change

### Company Benefits

- Attracts new customers
- Reduces costs and enhances profitability
- Builds company, community and investor confidence

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## Sustainable Tourism – A Force for Positive Change

### Traveler Benefits

- Gain an appreciation / understanding of other cultures
- Feel good from supporting communities / environments
- Enhances global perspective
- Helps protect special sense of place locally/regionally

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## Sustainable Tourism – A Force for Positive Change

### Host Community Benefits

- Improved local employment opportunities / wages
- Increase opportunities for local enterprise
- Increase local access to infrastructure and services
- Increase participation of local stakeholders in decision-making

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## Sustainable Tourism – A Force for Positive Change

### Local Agency Benefits

- Increased support for agency initiatives and participation in stewardship programs
- Decreased environmental impacts
- Enhanced economic impacts in gateway communities
- Increased support of cultural-heritage preservation
- More engaged communities and visitors

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## Best Practices

- Carbon Neutral Travel
- Travel Philanthropy & Voluntourism
- Eco-Certification
- Supply Chain Management
- Zero waste

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## Defining Carbon Offsets

Mechanisms by which the impact of emitting a ton of GHG or CO<sub>2</sub> can be negated or diminished by avoiding the release of a ton elsewhere, or absorbing a ton of GHG or CO<sub>2</sub> from the air that otherwise would have remained in the atmosphere.



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## Why Carbon Offsetting?

- **Travel is a main culprit of climate change**, accounting for up to **1/3** of world-wide climate damaging greenhouse gas emissions (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development study)
- The average American emits over **10 tons** of CO<sub>2</sub> per year
- If everyone in the world **emitted this much CO<sub>2</sub>**, we'd need more than **2 ½ planets** to support us all.



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## Carbon Offsetting

Quality offset projects:

- Diversify our power supply
- Reduce dependency on imported fuels
- Help preserve biodiversity and support environmental conservation
- Help local communities reduce air and water pollution
- Support the development of resources and technology that does not pollute

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## Success Stories & Opportunities

- USDA Forest Service can utilize carbon offsets as a conservation tool by:
  - Working with organizations like the National Forest Foundation and STI to support the development of carbon offset programs on FS lands
  - Offering visitors the option to offset CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through investments in forestry related projects on public lands
  - Encouraging concessionaires and special use permittees to offset their emissions
  - Setting an example and offsetting agency-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

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## Defining Travel Philanthropy

Travel Philanthropy is a voluntary movement of conscientious consumers and responsible travel companies who are donating financial resources, time, talent and economic patronage to protect and positively impact the cultures and environments they visit.



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## Defining VolunTourism

Volunteer Tourism or VolunTourism is a field of tourism in which travelers visit a destination and take part in projects in the local community. Projects are commonly nature-based, people-based or involve such things as restoration or construction of buildings, assisting archeologists in digging up artifacts, etc.



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## Why Travel Philanthropy & VolunTourism?

- Traveler gains a sense of purpose and connection
- Movement towards participatory philanthropy
- Highly effective and influential use of resources and time
- Generates community benefits



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## Success Stories and Opportunities

- USDA FS can continue to capitalize on travel philanthropy by:
  - Continuing to design, promote, and manage voluntourism projects
  - Educating visitors on the benefits of participatory philanthropy
  - Working with gateway communities to raise awareness and participation in established projects

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## Sustainable Tourism Eco-Certification Program™

### STEP Characteristics

- Global Focus
- Multi-Stakeholder Involvement
- Educational Orientation
- Systematic Approach



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## Success Stories and Opportunities

- The Sandals Hotel Group
  - Saved \$1.375 million
  - Significantly reduced solid waste and freshwater consumption
- USDA FS can capitalize on STEP by:
  - Providing incentives for concessionaires and special use permittees to get STEP certified
  - Promoting STEP to service providers in gateway communities

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## STI and the USDA Forest Service

STI is working with the Forest Service to:

- Develop and distribute information on sustainable tourism practices on FS lands and in gateway communities
- Develop educational training programs and sharing best practice opportunities and strategies
- Identify and implement tourism-related sustainability projects
- Promote sustainable management practices
- Develop and assist in delivering stewardship messaging

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## USDA FS and BLM Stewardship Messaging

- Research Alternatives
- Consider Your Mode of Transportation
- Respect Local Cultures
- Spend Locally
- Conserve Natural Resources
- Honor Protected Areas
- Keep Wildlife Wild
- Give Back
- Explore



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**Questions?**

**Thank You!**

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