Duke Alumni Travels: Spearheading Sustainability

Prepared by

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Objective

According to the UNWTO, sustainable tourism is defined as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future environmental, economic, and social impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities." Many institutions, in the interest of their educational mission and commitments to sustainability, are eager to inform travelers about their practices.

In line with Duke University’s overarching sustainability goals, Duke Alumni Travels (DAT) is leading a sustainability movement by transforming how the travel industry approaches and measures its environmental impact.

DAT has partnered with a graduate team from the Duke University Nicholas School of the Environment to develop a framework for benchmarking sustainability practices of its Operators.

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OUR TEAM

Samantha Burch  
Master of Environmental Management Candidate

Courtney McCorstin  
Master of Environmental Management Candidate

Annabelle Mercer  
Master of Environmental Management Candidate
Project Description

This framework for benchmarking sustainability practices will highlight the current environmental, economic, and socio-cultural achievements of each of DAT’s Operators.

The Graduate Team’s first step will be to collaborate with each of DAT’s Operators to collect data around these achievements. The Team will investigate how Operators have been successful across key performance indicators. This data will inform the Team’s final report, where the reviewed results will be published on the DAT website and ultimately presented at the Educational Travel Consortium conference in January 2020. Operators will have a chance to review results and reports before any publication. As participants in this project, Operators have an opportunity to guide future sustainability metrics in the travel industry.

Duke Alumni Travels is an active member of the Educational Travel Consortium. The conference in January 2020 will serve as a platform for both DAT and its Operators to present the project’s results and lead the discussion around the future of sustainable travel. This is an opportunity for Operators to serve as leaders in helping the industry establish best practices.

Partners
Timeline

2019

APR.

Initial Outreach
Graduate student team will reach out to Operators to schedule initial meetings to review our project process and progress, as well as to address any initial questions.

MAY.

Face-to-Face / Video Meetings
Students and Operators will meet to discuss and determine the data needed from each Operator to complete the benchmarking process for sustainable travel.

JUN.

Data Gathering
Operators will gather requested data and information on current sustainability accomplishments. Students will be available to provide guidance and answer any questions during this data collection period.

JUL.

AUG.

Initial Analysis and Data Review
Students will review data provided by Operators and begin to analyze key performance indicators.

SEP.

Development of Reports
Students will develop reports for each Operator, highlighting each of their environmental, economic, and socio-cultural achievements.

OCT.

NOV.

Operators Receive Draft Reports
The Student Team will send the draft reports to each Operator for review. Students will be available to receive feedback and answer any questions.

DEC.

Operators Receive Reports
The Student Team will send the final reports to each Operator.

2020

JAN.

Presentation at ETC
Students and Operator representatives will present their findings and sustainability achievements at the Educational Travel Consortium (ETC) Conference.
To learn more, please contact Beth Ray-Schroeder. We look forward to hearing from you!

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