

COVID-19 AND THE TOURISM CRISIS:

What is the silver lining and how are municipalities supporting recovery?



Jennifer Bartlett
International Tourism Development Advisor

25th November 2020

COVID-19 IMPACTS ON TOURISM: THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

DECIMATING THE TOURISM ECONOMY

- Global international visitor arrivals down ~70% in 2020 to date.
- Loss of US\$ 730 billion in export revenues in first 8 months of year (8 x GFC).
- As of Sept, 47% of destinations (113 countries) still had restrictive travel measures in place.
- Millions of tourism businesses closed, hibernating or operating under a limited/different capacity.
- Est. 100 million jobs affected to date.
- Nature based & wildlife tourism cited as most at-risk segments due to flow on effects of financial losses.
- Ongoing uncertainty about recovery timelines compounding the economic crisis.

Sources: UNWTO; UNDP

CATALYSING A DIFFERENT TOURISM FUTURE

- The need to 'restart' / build back better seeing stakeholders tackle the 'big' issues.
- The trade offs in achieving triple bottom line sustainable tourism under the spotlight.
- 'Overtourism' put on pause, allowing local communities, the industry, and governments to reflect on shared visions.
- Consumer sentiment changing with more importance placed on well-being, family time, life experiences and travel.
- Expected post-crisis growth in market demand for nature-based & wellness travel.
- Growth in domestic/intra-regional tourism (some destinations only).
- Growing resistance to mass tourism experiences vs. growing demand for 'undertourism', generating opportunities for visitor dispersal.
- Growth of the 'conscious' travel and 'regenerative' tourism movements amongst travellers and destination planners.

MUNICIPAL RESPONSES TO THE TOURISM CRISIS

HOW ARE MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES SUPPORTING TOURISM SECTOR RECOVERY?

1. Establishing COVID recovery task forces to inform local and higher-level policy responses.
2. Implementing new health & safety protocols – awareness, mobilisation, monitoring.
3. Introducing financial incentives to stimulate local spending (e.g. vouchers/credits for restaurants, tours, accommodation).
4. Offering financial relief for affected tourism businesses (e.g. local taxes, rates).
5. Strengthening public, private, community coordination mechanisms, and facilitating community consultations for ‘resetting’ destination planning for destination stewardship.
6. Supporting tourism businesses with adapting to current conditions and improving the tourism offer to meet changing demand. (Partnering with advice and/or grant programs).
7. Initiating new or improved public attractions/experiences to meet changing market demand.
8. Exploring digital technology solutions for smart, safe, sustainable, competitive tourism.
9. Addressing barriers in the tourism business enabling environment.
10. Addressing local-level tourism infrastructure and service barriers (e.g. local transport, sanitation).
11. Partnering on destination marketing recovery campaigns.
12. Addressing the social and aesthetic problem of empty commercial properties.