YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS WITH US

SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2020

VIRTUOSO LIFE

Dream trip: A vintage ride from Accidentally Wes Anderson.

THE OPEN ROAD
CLASSIC DRIVES, INSPIRED OUTINGS, AND MORE
FORWARD THINKING

Industry leaders on where sustainable travel is headed. INTERVIEWS BY JOEL CENTANO

Sustainable travel matters now more than ever. That’s our takeaway after interviewing nine industry experts, who all emphasized its role in preserving the environment, protecting cultures, and, perhaps most pressing in the wake of the coronavirus, supporting local economies. Last year, tourism accounted for one in ten (330 million) jobs around the globe. But as the pandemic forced the world to take a collective time-out, it also paused many of the economic opportunities that travel – when done well – creates in the communities we visit. Here, our panelists’ thoughts on the benefits of responsible tourism – and their hopes for the future.

WE HAVE MUCH REBUILDING TO DO. Once the pandemic took away our ability to travel, we saw tens of thousands of people become impoverished and an alarming rise in poaching. Sustainable travel represents the single biggest resistance to these issues.

Employment opportunities created by tourism give locals a vital seat at the table. This is still the best way for travel dollars to directly reach Indigenous communities. Our company is built on this belief, from the hotels we visit – where at least 85 percent of staff come from the local area – to providing entrepreneurship education to women weavers in Peru. With travel on hold, we shifted our focus to raising funds for those in need.

One silver lining of the pandemic: It’s made the need to get off the beaten track all the more important. The essence of a country is in the spaces between the large attractions and crowds, where life remains much the way it was 300 years ago. If we can maintain the need to travel with purpose and remain humble in seeing travel as a privilege, a bright future will be waiting.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL REPORT

FORWARD THINKING

INTERVIEWS BY JOEL CENTANO

Kirsten Dixon
Owner and chef, Within the Wild Adventure Company

OVER THE PAST FEW DECADES, travel has become the third-most-important industry in Alaska, behind oil and seafood. Oil is in decline here, and the seafood industry is in peril. Travel will save our state by providing a sustainable revenue source.

Overtourism, we’ve known, is detrimental to nature – and now we know that crowding is detrimental to our health. In Alaska, there’s been a trend toward bigger, bigger, and more – more cruise ships with more people on board, more buses heading to Denali. Can we all take a beat and step back and value quality over quantity? My family owns two wilderness lodges that accommodate only 12 people each. The ROI is not a business-school model, but we have a tremendous quality of life. We have to protect and preserve those places we wish to survive for future generations.

Preserving Alaska’s wild spaces.

Ashish Sanghrajka
President, Big Five Tours & Expeditions

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THE WORLD’S PAUSE brought awareness to the impacts of overtourism. Travelers are reevaluating their priorities. Moving forward, they’ll be seeking out companies that go beyond comfort and luxury to provide meaningful experiences and show how their journeys support local economies.

From the beginning, we’ve been committed to contributing to communities and protecting the environment. But the pandemic allowed us time to rethink our approach. One example is our support for the paiche project in the Peruvian Amazon, where we partner with local fishers working to nurse populations of this endangered species of native fish back to health. In addition to serving their sustainably caught fish on board Aria Amazon, we provide the tools needed to expand their business and sell to new markets throughout the country.

Francesco Galli Zugaro
CEO and founder, Aqua Expeditions

Preserving Alaska’s wild spaces.

Big Five has focused on supporting women weavers in Peru.