What is the Meaningful Travel Summit?

The Meaningful Travel Summit is Tourism Cares’ signature program held annually in the spring or fall, that connects industry professionals with local changemakers in places around the world. What started with volunteer efforts largely in the United States, the Summit has grown into global investment in social and environmental impact organizations that create lasting change for communities worldwide.

The goal of the Meaningful Travel Summit is to create immersive exchanges that lead to product development, new opportunities for local businesses, and professional development for industry professionals through in-person connection and hands-on education.

The Summit provides:

- Connections to experiences (including tours, hands-on activities) with vetted non-profits and social enterprises in the local host community
- Education sessions around universal topics in sustainability and meaningful travel
- Networking opportunities with other travel and tourism professionals
- Actionable best practices in destination stewardship
- An opportunity for the host destination to share their unique story - including sustainability practices, future plans, challenges, and opportunities

Why is the Summit relevant?

There is extensive evidence that global travelers want more sustainable travel options, want tourism revenue to boost the local economy, and that they are yearning for authentic, unique experiences that help them connect with a destination on a deeper level. Community-owned tourism opportunities that exist through cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, and social enterprises are found all over the world and can be a win for all stakeholders when integrated into the tourism economy. Through partnerships with local destination management organizations, Tourism Cares introduces diverse and locally-led social enterprises, non-profits, and small businesses to the trade with the greater goal of spreading the wealth of tourism. By inviting more changemakers to participate in the tourism supply chain, we can strengthen our destination communities and our tourism product overall – making the best places to visit the best places to live (and sell!).

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How is it different?

The Meaningful Travel Summit is a vehicle to create more inclusion and representation in travel – highlighting destinations in a unique way by inviting community members and changemakers to sit center stage and tell their stories. The goals of the Summit include:

- To introduce the travel industry at large to a pressing need or challenge that tourism can use to solve – and call them to act.
- To introduce local experiences for the purpose of product development and introduction to changemakers actioning social, and environmental impact during in-person Summit and day of volunteering/tours
- To increase economic impact for the local host community by supporting capacity-building through grant funding, product development, and marketing support

Who attends?

The Meaningful Travel Summit is a B2B event for travel and tourism professionals from all segments of the industry, with 50% of attendees representing international tour operator brands. Generating an estimated 50 attendees, the event is designed to be intimate and emphasizes impact over size. Attendees represent Executives and decision-makers at major travel brands, trade and consumer media, industry associations, and more.

Who benefits?

Local Communities | By driving economic investment into local communities, they benefit from additional infrastructure and a means to utilize tourism as a form of cultural and/or environmental preservation.

The Destination | The host destination is seen as a leader in sustainability and can drive more tourism dollars to the local communities, reinvesting in the social and environmental impact of the destination. In many cases the Summit introduces the destination to partners they’ve not yet worked with, providing a new narrative to highlight the impact travel can bring beyond “primary” attractions.

The Industry | Attendees (and those visiting the Tourism Cares Meaningful Map) experience firsthand impact travel, introducing them to new opportunities in sustainable product development, insight and information on emerging trends and best practices, and new connections with like-minded industry professionals.

The Traveler | The Summit generates connections that in the end, benefit the traveler. Their next travel experience to a host destination can be rooted in supporting local environmental and social issues, creating greater local connections and authentic experiences.

Sample Schedule

1. Arrivals
2. Optional Tours
3. Registration + Check-in
4. Education Sessions
5. Welcome Reception
6. Dine-Around (free evening)
7. Community Visits
8. Closing Breakfast
9. Departures for post-tour (optional)
Summit Spotlight: Tourism Cares with Jordan

Tourism Cares with Jordan represented a turning point for Tourism Cares. This extraordinary event in the world of travel and social impact brought together an accomplished group of industry leaders to explore the power of tourism to drive positive social change.

Our goal for the program was to introduce delegates to a Jordan beyond Petra, connecting them with authentic market-ready experiences through 4 days of exploration through the country. Those experiences were added to the Meaningful Map of Jordan, an interactive tool for travel providers to connect directly with changemakers on the ground.