



USTOA SUSTAINABILITY IS RESPONSIBILITY SUMMIT BRINGS INSIGHTS AND ACTION STEPS FOR THE TOUR AND TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Inaugural Event Featured Panels with Industry Thought Leaders, Opportunities to Share Best Practices, And Sustainability Activities in the Arctic City of Bodø, Norway



The group under the midnight sun in Bodø, Norway

NEW YORK – June 14, 2022 – [The United States Tour Operators Association \(USTOA\)](#) held the *Sustainability is Responsibility (SIR)* Summit from May 24 through May 26 in Bodø, Norway. Representatives from member tour operators, destination marketing organizations, airlines, hotel companies, and other travel providers gathered to learn and share valuable insights and best practices to encourage sustainable tourism.

USTOA President and CEO Terry Dale said the *Sustainability is Responsibility Summit* exceeded expectations in its first year. He commented, “USTOA has reached its milestone 50th anniversary this year, and instead of looking back, we’re looking forward to the next 50 years and how we can work together to preserve and protect our planet’s natural heritage. This Summit was an extraordinary opportunity and example of how all of us can learn, grow, and make positive change towards a more sustainable and equitable future.”

Hege Barnes, Regional Director Americas at Visit Norway, said, “We are so grateful for USTOA’s acceptance of our vision and their commitment to taking on this challenge of creating a platform and community that can raise the bar on internal competence as well as commitment to sustainability implemented into the member organizations’ core business models.”

With facilitation from Malcolm Preston, former PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Global Head of Sustainability Services, and Greg Takehara, CEO of Tourism Cares, USTOA brought nine industry leader panelists and twenty-two member delegates to the Thon Hotel Nordlys to promote discussion on navigating the internal challenges of a sustainability journey and driving sustainability through the supply chain.

Guest speaker Wawa Gatheru spoke to the group about her background as an environmental justice advocate and founder of [Black Girl Environmentalist](#). Gatheru is a writer and current graduate student at the University of Oxford as well as the first Black person in history to receive the Rhodes, Truman, and Udall Scholarships.

As a first generation American of Kenyan descent, she recognized that travel is a necessary part of life noting, “Nothing is perfect in the world of sustainability.” She added that it is possible to align travel with environmental demands and that organizations have the power to educate and inform consumers on sustainability efforts to lead an environmentally friendly path. She ended her discussion by inspiring delegates to reframe the climate crisis, “...as an opportunity to create a future to be proud of,” she said.



Wawa Gatheru (left), with Hege Barnes (right) leads a discussion on environmental justice

The *Driving Sustainability Through the Supply Chain* panel emphasized the cost savings and growth opportunities sustainability can have on businesses. Malcolm Preston led the discussion with Leigh Barnes, Chief Customer Officer of Intrepid Group; Adrienne Howard, Chief Impact & Program Management Officer of WorldStrides, Shannon Guihan, Chief Sustainability Officer & Head of TreadRight for The Travel Corporation USA; and Patrick Preiano, Sustainability Project Manager for the Globus Family of Brands. Preston advocated that moving from a profit-maximized to a stakeholder-maximized system will drive sustainability through the supply chain and beyond.

Along with panel discussions, attendees participated in breakout sessions and had the opportunity to visit several local sites that practice and promote sustainable acts. Activities on the itinerary included a visit to the KRAFT Sustainability Centre to learn about sustainability projects in and around Bodø and the Salmon Centre for a look at aquaculture in small Norwegian communities. The group also set sail aboard The Brim Explorer, a hybrid electric ship, to explore The Arctic Hideaway, where attendees learned about energy positive communities, and to visit one of the most sustainable fish farms in the world.



Attendees explore Fleinvær in the Norwegian Arctic

Barnes added, “We value the commitment of the USTOA members who attended, for sharing their insights, their challenges and contributing to interactive discussion and dialogue that can help build a global tourism industry that cares. The feedback from the participants proved that SIR is a valuable platform for members with various degrees of experience, and at various stages of their own sustainability journey. The only way to a greener future is together, and the journey has just begun for most of us.”

“Thank you to Hege Barnes and the Visit Norway team, Wawa Gatheru, Malcom Preston, and each of the attendees who contributed to making the Summit a success,” said Dale. “I think I can speak for all of us that we left feeling energized and more fully committed to working together to ensure a truly sustainable tourism model for the next 50 years and beyond.”

For more information, visit www.ustoa.com and follow USTOA [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#) accounts for highlights from the event.

About USTOA:

Representing nearly \$19 billion in revenue, the member companies of U.S. Tour Operators Association provide tours, packages and custom arrangements that allow 9.8 million travelers annually unparalleled access, insider knowledge, peace-of-mind, value, and freedom to enjoy destinations and experiences across the entire globe. Each member company has met the travel industry’s highest standards, including participation in the USTOA’s Travelers Assistance Program, which protects consumer payments

up to \$1 million if the company goes out of business. As a voice for the tour operator industry for 50 years, USTOA also provides education and assistance for consumers and travel agents.

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