

PRESS RELEASE

Green destination leaders present solutions to mass tourism chaos

Cascais, Sept 24, 2017 – New approaches to tourism are urgently required to stop the trend of mass tourism becoming increasingly intrusive and disruptive to local communities. On the occasion of World Tourism Day and the launch of the 2017 Sustainable Destinations Top 100, Green Destinations experts from six continents insist that tourism can be truly GREEN - Genuine, Respectful, Economically and Environmentally sustainable, and Nature friendly. In this way, tourism really can reward visitors and local people with life-enhancing experiences.

They will give many examples of this GREEN tourism at one of the world's largest gatherings of experts and green destinations, in Cascais, Lisbon, Portugal. The UN-declared Year of Sustainable Tourism 2017 now provides a timely opportunity to reflect the legacy of fifty years of mass tourism.

Since 1947 tourism has taken advantage of tax-free fuel, and has managed to remain exempted from paying for their major contribution to climate change. This partly explains the continuous 4% annual growth, from just 150 million in 1967 to an amazing 1.3 billion international arrivals this year. “As long as carriers escape from carbon emission compensation, mass tourism will remain unsustainable” says Albert Salman, President of Green Destinations: “But this is the responsibility of our politicians”. “At the very least the sector must become responsible and respectful, and very quickly”. In his view, the cruise industry, cheap carriers and social media hypes generated massive shareholder value and brought crisis to the sector.

The industry pushed off-limit city breaks, obsessive bucket-listing “*Top 10 places to see*” and now suggest that visitors can “*live like locals*”- without the responsibilities that locals bear, while booking platforms like Airbnb and Booking.com increasingly take whole apartments off the local market for tourist’s use. In this way, the industry has channelled 99% of international tourists to less than 1% of the world’s destinations – wreaking the local chaos that has hit today’s world headlines. Real estate investors advertising on Airbnb helped house prices to surge, pushing local families out of city centres.

Said Salman: “Tourists are told to *live like a local* in many cities, but in fact many rich expats are illegally staying there *instead of a local*”. Adding insult to injury, locals are increasingly exposed to English-inspired drunken ‘Stag and Hen parties’, hooliganism and other intrusive behaviour. Consequently, local community resistance against intrusive tourism is now soaring in tourist cities, including Venice, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Dubrovnik and many other top examples of unsustainable tourism. “This trend became very clear this year, and it is very dangerous, even in traditionally tourism-friendly cities like Lisbon”, Salman adds.

The sadness is that not only can tourism be an enormous force for good, but also there is actually room for all. Moreover, in the current scenario few destinations or visitors get the quality of experience and the enormous economic, cultural social and environmental benefits available from growing international tourism.

Event information

The Global Green Destinations Event (GGDE17) in Portugal convenes global experts and destination leaders planning for tourism that is beneficial to local communities and their environment and local culture. These include the newly chosen Top 100 Sustainable Destinations, that all provide showcases of responsible tourism. Among the visionary participants are not only the well-known green destination leaders from Azores, Botswana, Canada, Slovenia and Gozo (Malta), but this time also from Australia, Los Angeles, Iceland, and Taiwan, and many more. Local host is the city of Cascais that also offers study trips close to Lisbon, together with Torres Vedras.

Contact information

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More info: <http://greendestinations.org/greenfest-global-green-destinations-event-2017/>

Contribution to the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development

The Global Green Destinations Event is one of the global initiatives of the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. It has also joined the celebrations for the World Tourism Day, celebrated annually on 27 September as an important occasion to showcase the role of tourism as a tool for sustainable development.

About Green Destinations

Green Destinations is a non-profit organization supporting tourism destinations to become more sustainable. The Green Destinations Certification & Awards program has been developed on the basis of the Green Destinations Standard. This standard is the leading international set of criteria to measure, monitor and improve the sustainable management of entire destinations, islands and regions. It makes sustainable development concrete, objective and demonstrable; covering all important themes: Destination Management, Animals, Nature & Scenery, Environment & Climate, Culture & Tradition, Social Wellbeing, Business & Hospitality. In 2016 the Green Destinations Standard was officially recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).

<http://greendestinations.org/>