



*Key Findings Report*  
**The State of Climate Action  
in the Adventure Travel  
Industry**

*From the Adventure Travel Trade  
Association and Intrepid Travel*

FEBRUARY 2020

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# Foreword

At the **Adventure Travel Trade Association**, we recognize that 2020 marks the beginning of a new decade, and an important one for our planet. We are now officially within the 10-year window of opportunity to avoid irreversible climate change. Our industry relies on the health of our planet's wilderness areas, oceans, wildlife and of course communities; yet, at the same time, we are a component of tourism, which is responsible for 8% of total global emissions and actively contributes to the global warming that threatens these resources.

We're taking action in the following ways. We are proud to have joined with Intrepid and others to add our signature to the '[Tourism Declares](#)' movement, and also offer an action-based pledge for our members to sign. The [Pledge for Climate Action](#) brings this movement to our community by encouraging leaders working in travel trade organizations to consider their carbon footprint and amplify their impact. We've also established a set of climate action support initiatives to support broader industry engagement:

- Enhanced sustainability and climate action education for businesses
- A [Climate Action Leaders in Travel community](#) on LinkedIn for the exchange of ideas and to share credible climate news and scientific information
- [Neutral Together](#), a carbon offset bulk purchase program for our members
- [Tomorrow's Air](#), a platform to enable collective action for carbon removal

Alongside our programs for industry we are funding a combination of offsetting and removal for all ATTA events, including delegate and staff travel, a goal we have been working toward since 2016 when we convened our first carbon neutral Adventure Travel World Summit.

Research is a powerful tool to help focus strategies that lead to change. With this in mind, we hope you find this report useful so that we may collectively find ways to reduce our impact.

- Casey Hanisko, President of Adventure Travel Trade Association

Climate change disasters are now happening at a rate of one per week. From bushfires ravaging Australia to the floods taking over Venice, these events are an all too real reminder of the urgency of the situation. **Intrepid Travel** has been a carbon neutral business since 2010, but we now recognize that this is no longer enough.

That's why we recently made two important climate commitments. In 2020, we've become "climate positive," meaning we're creating environmental benefits by removing additional carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, as well as decarbonizing our business by reducing emissions from our trips and global operations.

And, Intrepid, along with other businesses, organizations and individuals in the tourism industry, has recently joined forces to declare a climate emergency. We've committed to setting a science-based emission reduction target, and to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions at the pace and scale that science says is necessary to limit global warming to the maximum of 1.5°C set at the Paris Climate Agreement.

If we don't have a healthy planet, we don't have a travel industry. It's up to the tourism community to work collaboratively to advocate for emission reductions and climate policies around the world.

We want everyone reading this report to understand that climate action is good for business, too. Our environmental commitment has contributed to record bookings and solidified our position as a company that environmentally conscious consumers want to travel with. It is our hope that this research will act as a catalyst for the tourism industry to recognize the climate emergency we're facing and inspire companies to make considered changes in the way they operate. The future of travel—and our planet—depends on it.

- James Thornton, CEO of Intrepid Travel



# Research Goals

The purpose of this survey was to gather data on the current state of climate action within the adventure travel industry.

**Specifically, the research was undertaken to capture:**

- Attitudes about climate change
- Examples of how climate change is impacting adventure tour operators and destinations around the world
- Barriers the adventure travel industry faces when implementing climate change mitigation strategies
- Feedback to guide ATTA's educational offerings and opportunities for collective climate action.

# Methodology

The survey was conducted over a three-week period in November & December 2019 by distributing a questionnaire via email to 5,542 recipients within the ATTA database. Organization types included adventure tour operators, activity providers, accommodations, and tourism boards.

- Respondents were asked 26 questions about their organizational profile, climate action strategies currently adopted and planned for the near future, and barriers to implementation.
- The opt-in survey was based on a convenience sample, with the full research report offered as an incentive.



# Respondent Profile

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- Survey responses were collected from 177 unique organizations (149 complete responses, 28 partially completed) from all continents, except Antarctica.
- The dataset mainly reflects the views of North American and European organizations, which constitute almost two-thirds (63%) of all input.
- The majority of respondents (82%) were adventure tour operators, with inbound operators representing almost half (45%).
- The majority of respondents (80%) speak from the perspective of businesses with fewer than 50 employees.

**177**

**UNIQUE  
ORGANIZATIONS**

**149**

**COMPLETED  
SURVEYS**

**28**

**PARTIALLY  
COMPLETED**





# Key Findings

# Among adventure travel businesses, there is broad, global recognition of climate change and its impacts, but they struggle with what to do about it.

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- Adventure businesses from all regions of the world (n=97) shared how climate change is affecting their organization. Common themes include less predictable weather patterns, more extreme weather events, wildfires, drought and rising temperatures.
- Almost three-quarters (73%) of the organizations rate their knowledge of the issue of climate change to be above average (49%) or very high (24%).
- Half of the responding organizations (52%) state that they have a partial or full climate action strategy in place, however, only 29% of the organizations partially or fully measure their carbon footprint momentarily.
- Responding organizations are largely at the early stages of climate stages of climate action.
- Organizations report struggling with their business' role in taking climate action.



**Q6:** If applicable, please share any examples of how climate change is directly affecting your organization.

**Base:** All respondents (n=105); missing (n=72); total (n=177)

# For responding organizations with a partial or full climate action strategy currently in place, restructuring itineraries to rely less on fossil fuels is a top priority.

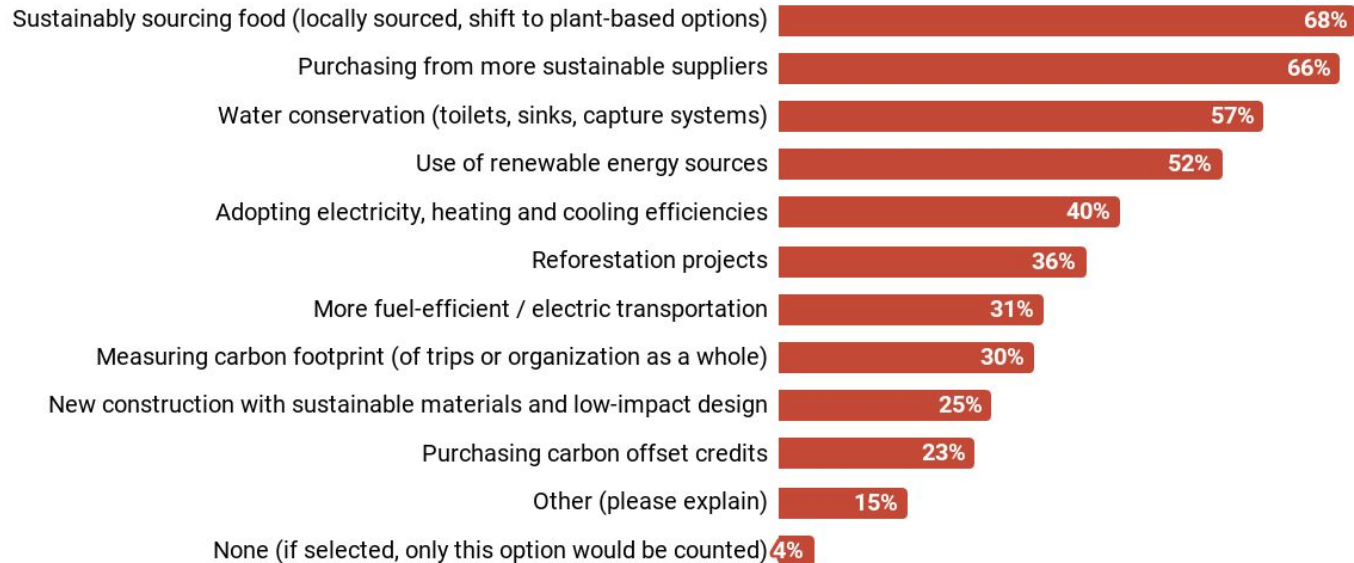
- Almost half (49%) plan to restructure itineraries to rely less on fossil fuels.
- 42% of the organizations plan to offset their carbon emissions.
- 35% plan to adapt tour meals to emphasize foods with a lower carbon footprint.
- Others are also:
  - revisiting business and trip operations to find areas to eliminate or mitigate carbon emissions, e.g., transportation, accommodation, activities, waste, energy efficiency, water conservation, and more.
  - carefully selecting business partners to work with: local/more sustainable suppliers.
  - providing education, advice (longer, less-frequent trips), and carbon offsetting opportunities to consumers.



**Q10:** From the list below, please identify the top priority climate action strategies that you intend to implement next. If you don't see your next priority on the list, kindly write it in the textbox below.

**Base:** All responding organizations that (partially and fully) have a climate action strategy (n=74); missing (n=14); total base (n=88)

# Overall, the most commonly implemented climate action strategies are sustainably sourcing food (68%) and purchasing from more sustainable suppliers (66%).

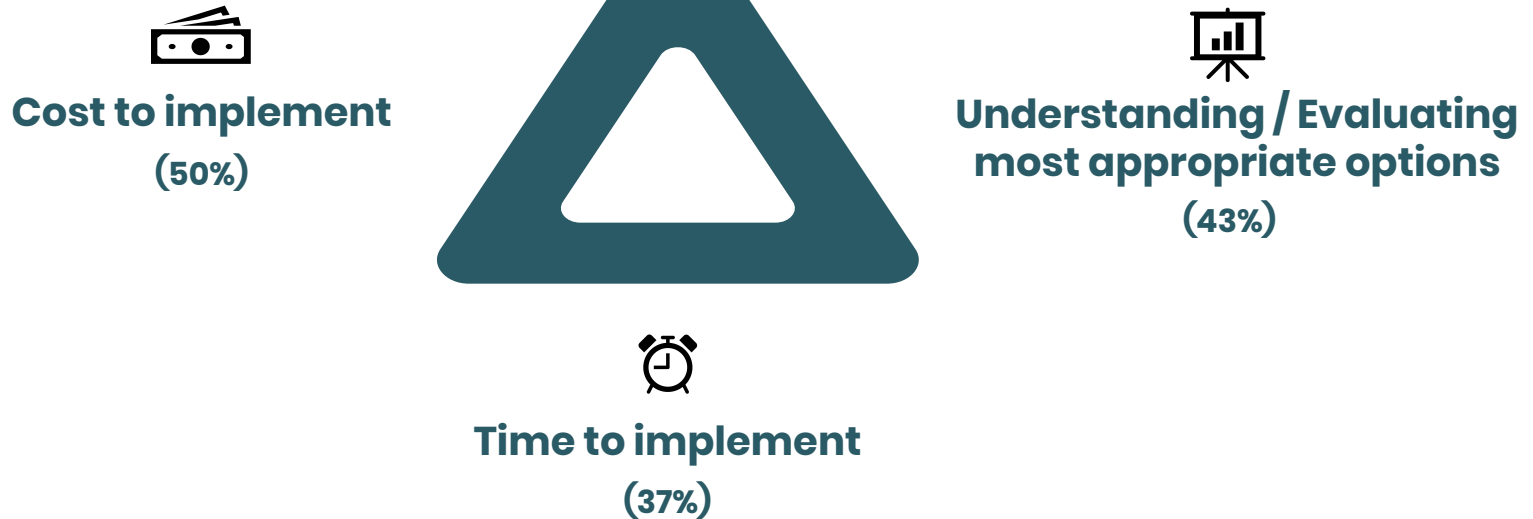


**Q12:** Please select all of the climate action strategies that your organization has already implemented.

**Base:** All respondents (n=161); missing (n=16); total (n=177)



# Cost, understanding and evaluating options, and time are the top three barriers to implementing climate action strategies.

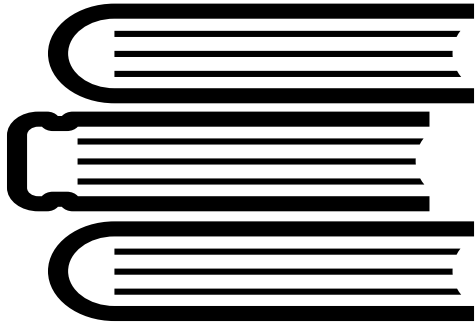


**Q16:** What are the top three barriers for your organization in implementing climate change action strategies?

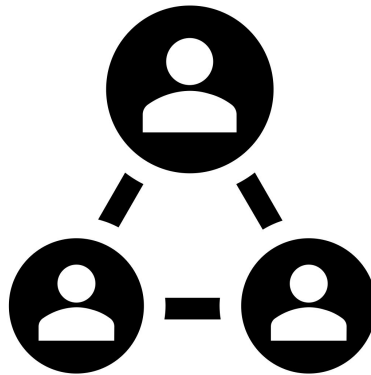
**Base:** All respondents (n=150); missing (n=27); total (n=177)



# The adventure travel community says the best types of support ATTA could provide would be education, best practices and the facilitation of affordable climate action.



**Provide examples of best practices**  
(55%)



**Facilitate affordable climate action strategies**  
(52%)



**Educate on new technologies**  
(45%)



**Q17:** Please select the top three types of support that the ATTA could provide to help reduce/overcome these barriers.  
**Base:** All respondents (n=150); missing (n=27); total (n=177)



**For complete survey results, please download [the full climate action report](#), free for ATTA members and offered at \$99 USD for the broader community.**

# Case Study: Intrepid Travel

Since 2010, Intrepid Travel has been the world's largest carbon neutral travel company. We have 42+ carbon neutral offices around the world and more than 2,000 carbon offset multi-day trips. To date, we've offset more than 310,000 tonnes of carbon emissions worldwide. **How do we do it?**

## 1. Measure

First, we need to measure the main sources of emissions on our trips from transport to accommodation and waste. We also need to measure emissions from our offices, including electricity, bottled gas, natural gas, water, flights, vehicles, waste and paper.

## 2. Reduce

We take a sustainable approach to our consumption and production. In our offices, we recycle waste and have introduced efficiency measures including energy efficient light bulbs, digital conferencing and moving towards using renewable energy. On our trips, we use public transport where possible, stay in locally owned and simpler styles of accommodation, and eat where the food has been locally sourced.

## 3. Offset

We offset our carbon emissions by purchasing carbon credits associated with a range of renewable energy projects, all of which are high quality carbon offset projects that bring additional economic, social, and environmental benefits, including habitat and biodiversity protection.

## What's next? Going **Climate Positive**.

Intrepid has committed to becoming a climate positive company in 2020, publicly declaring a climate emergency and sharing our seven-point plan with other travel companies. The best way to act on climate change is for individuals, businesses and government to work together to reduce our collective carbon emissions.

*We acknowledge that on its own, carbon offsetting won't end climate change, but it is part of the solution.*





# ATTA Climate Action Initiatives

## EDUCATION FOR TRANSFORMATION

Find climate education through events, research, webinars, AdventureEDU

## CLIMATE ACTION LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY

Find us on LinkedIn: "Climate Action Leaders Community"

## ATTA Climate Action Initiatives

## TOMORROW'S AIR / CARBON REMOVAL

[tomorrowsair.com](http://tomorrowsair.com)

## NEUTRAL TOGETHER / CARBON OFFSETTING BULK PURCHASE

[adventuretravel.biz/climate](http://adventuretravel.biz/climate)



# Next Steps

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Thank you to all of the adventure travel organizations who took the time to share their perspectives on climate action in travel.

To stay informed on the latest climate action developments and resources from the ATTA, we recommend that you sign up for *Adventure Travel News*.

Do you have questions around ATTA's climate action initiatives? A best practice to share? Contact [climate@adventuretravel.biz](mailto:climate@adventuretravel.biz)

To learn more about Intrepid Travel's carbon management program, visit: [www.intrepidtravel.com/carbon-offsetting](http://www.intrepidtravel.com/carbon-offsetting)

Access the full climate action report [at this link](#).



# About Intrepid Travel

For more than 30 years, [Intrepid Travel](#) has been taking small groups to travel the local way, on real life experiences that give back to the places and people we visit. As this style of travel has caught on, Intrepid has grown to now offer more than 2,700 trips to more than 120 countries and on all seven continents, through its collection of three tour operator brands and 25 destination management companies, all united by the vision of Changing the Way People See the World. We cater for all ages, budgets, and appetites for adventure through Intrepid Travel, Peregrine Adventures and Urban Adventures.

Globally renowned as a leader in responsible travel, in 2018 Intrepid became the world's largest travel business to be certified B-Corp, joining a growing community of businesses looking beyond the bottom line. Our not-for-profit, [The Intrepid Foundation](#) has raised over AUD \$9M for more than 130 charities around the world by matching traveler donations dollar-for-dollar.

For further information on Intrepid or to download the company's latest Integrated Annual Report, visit [www.intrepidgroup.travel](http://www.intrepidgroup.travel).

## Connect with Intrepid Travel



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# About the ATTA

Established in 1990, the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) serves over 1,300 members in 100 countries worldwide. Members predominantly include tour operators, tourism boards, specialty agents and accommodations with a vested interest in the sustainable development of adventure tourism. The ATTA delivers solutions and connections that propel members towards their business goals and the industry toward a responsible and profitable future. Through its regional AdventureConnect and AdventureNEXT events and annual Adventure Travel World Summit and AdventureELEVATE trade conference, the ATTA excels in professional learning, networking and partnering services. With expertise in research, education, adventure travel industry news and promotion, members of the ATTA receive competitive opportunities that help establish them as leaders in adventure tourism.

## About our Research

The ATTA strives to produce regular reports that take the pulse of the industry through our membership as well as the global travel industry. In addition, consumer research studies lend insight into the fast paced and changing world of travel and travelers' perceptions of it. At [adventuretravel.biz](http://adventuretravel.biz), our Research Reports can be located that dive deeply into the motivations of adventure travelers, the size of the industry, the landscape and health of the industry at large, as well as other targeted reports on subjects ranging from Travel Agents to adventure travel in specific destinations.

## The ATTA's Web Properties



**ADVENTURE TRAVEL**  
TRADE ASSOCIATION

The ATTA's homepage online  
at [www.adventuretravel.biz](http://www.adventuretravel.biz)



**ADVENTURE**  
Travel News

The adventure travel industry's  
source of trade news online at  
[www.adventuretravelnews.com](http://www.adventuretravelnews.com)



**ADVENTURE**  
.TRAVEL

The traveler's guide to finding  
adventure at  
[www.adventure.travel](http://www.adventure.travel)



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