

10 tips to go green in the tourism sector

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Going green is a key action that can help your business save money and enhance your reputation while saving the planet. Most countries have committed to cutting greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero (or near zero) by 2050. The tourism sector will play a key role in achieving this. European tour operators are keen to work with local operators who share these values. More green approaches are being developed all the time and there are many low-cost actions you can take on your journey to sustainability.

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What does it mean to 'go green'?

'Going green' refers to actions you take to ensure your business practices, products and services do not harm the environment, now or in the future. European consumers and the travel trade are increasingly aware of their carbon footprint and are looking for suppliers with environmentally-friendly practices. To be competitive in today's European market, you must run your business and supply chain in a way that minimises impacts on the environment.

In the tourism sector, to be green means to serve the interests of people and the planet, as well as profit. This is also called sustainable or responsible tourism.

Going green involves many interrelated activities:

- Having a reduce, reuse, recycle policy
- Managing and minimising waste
- Using energy and water responsibly
- Reducing fossil fuel use and using 'green' energy such as solar and wind power
- Using local building materials and insulating buildings
- Sourcing local produce and/or growing your own fruit/vegetables
- Moving towards plant-based menus
- Employing people from local communities

The tips in this report focus on how to make your business environmentally friendly. This will also help you be more competitive and contribute to the economic sustainability of your business.

Going green and [corporate social responsibility](#) (CSR) are closely related. Both centre on sustainable management of the environment and fair practices in the workplace. Consult the CBI studies on both topics as you develop your business to be fully sustainable.

1. What are the biggest opportunities of going green?

Going green provides many opportunities for local tour operators in developing countries to grow and be successful. While protecting the planet, people and places are the main objective of being a green business, differentiating yourself from the competition is a distinct advantage.

Benefits to your business

The main benefits of greening your business are:

- Long-term operational cost savings: although renewable energies can be expensive to implement, in the long term your day-to-day costs will be lower. Identifying, measuring and monitoring the resources your businesses is using and taking steps to be more efficient will all help to lower costs.
- Enhanced reputation: having a green business boosts your reputation with all stakeholders in your supply chain, from buyers and suppliers to travellers.
- Unique selling point (USP): being a proactive green business lets you use your credentials and green activities to set yourself apart from competitors.
- Investment opportunities: green businesses may benefit from specific funding in your country.
- European trade partners: businesses with good environmental credentials are more successful in doing business with European tour operators.
- Positive impact on staff: being consciously aware of and mitigating against harmful impacts on the environment, people and planet is good for staff morale and creates a healthier work environment.

Consumer trend for green practices

There is growing consumer demand to buy from businesses with strong environmental credentials. For example, 84% of UK consumers say that they would stop buying from a company with a poor environmental track record. Nearly half of UK consumers are willing to pay more for a brand that is more socially conscious.

European countries are implementing a wide variety of sustainability actions to aid and encourage more sustainable consumption. Initiatives range from issuing repair vouchers for electronics to discourage people from buying new electronics (Austria), a mobile app that lets food outlets sell leftover food at cost price at the end of the day rather than throw it away (Denmark) and a deposit scheme for recyclable bottles and cans (Norway).

By positioning yourself as a green company, you can tap into this growing market and differentiate yourself from your competitors.

Tips:

Share your knowledge and tell the story about your green actions. Suppliers and customers will both be interested in what you have to say and you may influence their behaviour.

Take inspiration from initiatives in European countries and create your own. For instance, introduce a deposit scheme for recyclable bottles or donate leftover meals to a good cause.

Be bold: talk confidently and more often. Social media is a good place to do this. People love to follow organisations that share their values. You may even attract investors who are looking for worthy projects to support.

2. What are the biggest risks for entrepreneurs that aspire to go green?

Becoming a green business can be a complicated process. Local tourism operators in developing countries face a number of challenges on this journey. The biggest risks include:

- Lack of resources: this includes financial resources, knowledge and expertise in implementing green practices. Green technologies such as solar panels and electric vehicles are still quite expensive. However, prices will become more competitive as they become more mainstream.
- Resistance to change: changing business practices and investing in new technologies and infrastructure can be difficult as there may be resistance to new ideas and technologies.
- Market competition: the tourism industry is very competitive and being a green business is a significant competitive advantage. Small, local tour operators may find it difficult to compete with larger companies that have more resources and are more visible in the marketplace.
- Lack of government support: in some countries there may be limited government support for sustainable tourism initiatives, making it more challenging for local tour operators to implement green practices and achieve sustainability goals.
- Lack of environmentally-friendly suppliers: if your suppliers (for services, products) are not sustainable and have no plans to go green, it will be difficult for you to claim that you are a green business.
- Customer perceptions: some customers may not be willing to pay a premium for sustainable tourism options, which could limit demand for green tours and impact your profitability. This is particularly true during the current cost-of-living crisis in much of Europe and pressure on personal finances. In some cases, Europeans may opt for affordable travel over paying more for a sustainable option.

Tips:

Work towards becoming a certified sustainable tourism provider. This is a big undertaking and should be a long-term aim. Read the CBI study [How to be a sustainable tourism business](#) to learn more about [Travelife](#) and other certification programmes.

Talk to your suppliers about sustainability and educate them about how to become more environmentally friendly.

Join forces with other local tourism business and urge relevant authorities to help fund businesses to go green.

Target customers who share your green values and are prepared to pay a bit more. You could offer an incentive such as a free loan of a refillable water bottle or a welcome gift such as a locally produced juice drink.

3. What is the environmental impact of tourism?

The negative environmental impacts of tourism are significant. The sector puts pressure on natural resources through over-consumption, often in areas where resources are limited. It puts stress on local land use, which

leads to soil erosion, increased pollution, natural habitat loss and pressure on endangered species.

As the infographic below shows, this has very serious implications for the tourism industry. Many studies have been done on the industry's role in climate change. Tourism is estimated to account for more than 5% of global greenhouse gas emissions. This is a very large carbon footprint.

Figure 1: Climate Change – Implications for Tourism



Source: Climate Change – Implications for Tourism, University of Cambridge ([Full size infographic here](#))

Transport is by far the largest contributor, accounting for almost half of tourism's carbon footprint (49%). Goods manufacturing and food production are the next largest contributors (12% and 10%, respectively). Agriculture and services come next (8% each), and lodging accounts for 6%. The main sources of emissions from lodging are properties' high energy consumption (for heating, air conditioning, hot water, electricity) and waste generation processes.

Figure 2: Carbon Footprint of Global Tourism



Source: [Sustainable Travel International](#)

Air travel is the most polluting mode of transport and accounts for 4% of global carbon emissions. To put this into perspective, if aviation was a country, it would be [sixth largest emitter](#) in the world. Short-haul air travel has the highest carbon footprint for individuals. This is because an aircraft uses more energy while taking off and landing than it does while in the air.

Figure 3: The Carbon Cost of Transportation



Source: [Visual Capitalist](#); UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy; Our World in Data

Train travel is the most eco-friendly transport option. Compared to planes and cars, trains have between 66% and 75% fewer carbon emissions. Emissions from an average train trip are about three times less per person than the same route by car and four times less than by plane.

Many European travellers are opting not to fly at all, and instead choosing destinations that can be reached by train. Others are planning to reduce the number of flights they take per year and staying in destinations longer.

European tour operators are under pressure to embed sustainability throughout their business, which also means doing business with suppliers who are likewise committed to environmentally-friendly policies. This includes meeting net zero goals by 2050, and many have also signed up to the [Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism](#) and other initiatives such as [Tourism Declares Climate Emergency](#).

Reducing emissions and reporting and setting future goals and targets is a key priority for tourism businesses. Investigate ways that you can reduce the actual carbon emissions of your business. Some ideas include:

- Switch to a renewable energy electricity provider.

- Choose accommodation providers with good sustainable actions and net zero policies.
- Include more vegetarian and vegan options on menus.
- Create trips that are low-carbon and low-impact.
- Choose low-carbon transport such as trains, bicycles and public buses.

It is best to work on reduction strategies first and only after that offset any carbon emissions you are unable to reduce.

There are many carbon offsetting programmes on the market for emissions generated by travel. They include reforestation, building renewable energy, community and/or conservation projects and converting waste to energy. See the examples of carbon offsetting projects that the UK tour operator [Niarra Travel](#) contributes to for every trip its sells, which are described on its website.

European Insight: Charlie Cotton, founder of [Ecollective](#)

Typically for European tour operators, over 80% of their carbon footprint comes from the suppliers they work with. Over the coming years there will be a greater need for and pressure on these suppliers to not just report their emissions but also to reduce them year on year.

As more tourism businesses are committing to reducing their footprint by 50% by 2030, the need for action is increasing. This means outbound tour operators are looking to partner not just with the best hotels, DMCs and activity suppliers, but those that operate with the lowest carbon footprint, too. Being a supplier with a smaller footprint will therefore likely result in more business, whilst those that do not address their carbon footprint stand to lose contracts going forward.

In our experience, many suppliers still do not know their footprint nor have a plan to reduce it. We are looking to change that. We measure the carbon footprint of companies and see how we can reduce it in a way that benefits their business.

Tips:

Make a public commitment to go green and sign the [Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism](#). By supporting the global commitment to reach net zero by 2050, you will be part of a network of likeminded organisations.

Find out what your business's carbon emissions are. There are several online carbon calculators you can use, such as Climate Impact Partners' [Small Business Carbon Calculator](#) or [Carbon Fund](#).

Support carbon offsetting programmes. The [Sustainable Travel Network](#) has a range of offsetting programmes to choose from. [Climeworks](#) offers a range of business subscription plans to offset carbon emissions. You should also find out what is available locally.

Think about the impact of your trips and alternatives you could offer. Such as experiences targeting domestic and regional customers who don't need to travel as far, a range of low impact, 'green' walking or cycling tours, travelling by train or public transport, or food experiences that focus on local, sustainably sourced produce, cooked by local communities.

4. Low-cost tips and ideas for going green

No matter what type of tourism provider you are, there are many low-cost, easy-to-implement, practical actions you can take and share with your suppliers and buyers.

Reduce use of single-use plastic: plastic water bottles are some of the most damaging plastic products on the planet. To help reduce their use, provide guests with reusable water bottles or ask them to bring along their own. To facilitate this, you need to provide a filtered drinking water source for refills.

Other plastic items you should stop using include plastic straws, plastic bags and, for accommodation providers, complementary toiletries in small bottles. Install refillable dispensers instead. See how [Footsteps Eco-Lodge](#) in the Gambia has transitioned to being a single-use-plastics-free ecolodge. Take a look at their initiatives to see what you could adopt for your own business.

Set up a carsharing scheme: to travel to and from your workplace, or encourage people to cycle/walk if possible.

Invest in an electric vehicle: if you transport guests by motor vehicle, such as a car or minibus, consider investing in an electric vehicle. The [Chobe Game Lodge](#), which was one of Botswana's first ecolodges, now has four solar-powered tourist boats and four electric vehicles for game drives. If you offer cycling trips, you are likely to see increasing demand for e-bikes. Consult the CBI report [Entering the European market for cycling tourism](#) for details about e-bike trends.

Team up with other local tourism businesses: a group of businesses all working towards the same aim – becoming a sustainable destination – can have a larger positive impact. This will also give you more influence with your suppliers.

Educate your guests: communicate in a transparent and friendly manner about what you are doing and why. Provide tips and prompts to help guests reduce their carbon footprint during their stay. For instance, place signs beside all water taps explaining how you are working to reduce water use and asking guests to support your 'greening journey' by turning off the tap when they are not using it.

Implement staff training and policies: make sure your staff are on board with your greening actions such as switching off lights in empty rooms, not using or limiting the use of air conditioning, only running the washing machine with full loads and so on.

Implement a waste separation system: setting up an internal waste separation policy builds a culture of recycling and spreads awareness about this both internally and throughout your employees' communities. If there is no local recycling, find out if there are local initiatives for specific products such as water bottle caps, batteries or electronic waste, and offer to be a collection point.

Food composting systems: compost your food waste to use in your own garden. Encourage guests to dispose of any food waste in your composting bins.

Support local 'green' programmes or other suitable carbon offsetting projects: look for local projects you can support in the fields of education, health or the environment. For instance, [Carbon Tanzania](#) in Tanzania or [Community Markets for Conservation \(COMACO\)](#) in Zambia. Or join or set up a local programme such as [Trash Hero](#), a volunteer-led movement to tackle waste.

Research what others are doing: finding out what your competitors are doing is a good way to build your knowledge. Take a look at these examples.

- [Mdumbi Backpackers hostel](#) in South Africa is a good example of a green tourism business. It is a community-led backpacker hostel in Transkei that promotes community involvement and sustainable

ecotourism. All accommodations are solar-powered and the waste management system is sustainable. The hostel supported the development of TransCape, a local NGO tackling education, health and socio-economic challenges in the community. The hostel won a silver medal for 'best for poverty reduction' programme in the World Responsible Tourism Awards.

- [Bom Bom Resort](#) in Sao Tome & Principe has a recycling scheme that replaces used plastic water bottles with refillable stainless steel bottles, known as a 'biosphere bottles'. This scheme has resulted in the use of 300,000 fewer plastic bottles. In addition, the resort has established 13 water stations on different parts of the island where tourists can refill their biosphere bottles. Tourists are also encouraged to take part in other sustainable programmes on the island.
- Travel Sustainable-certified businesses on Booking.com commit to a range of actions listed in the infographic below. See which ones you can adapt for your business.

Figure 4: Booking.com's Travel Sustainable Level 3



Source: Booking.com

Tips:

Assess the 'greenness' of your current trips across the whole supply chain, from supplier to buyer. What 'green' changes could you make? Maybe you can find a local artisan food producer to add to your supply chain? Or create a new 'foot-powered' or 'pedal-powered' tour?

Work with your staff and suppliers to implement other green actions and develop a realistic timetable for this. Remember, the more quickly you can go green, the sooner you will gain a competitive advantage.

5. Incorporate green principles in your code of conduct

A code of conduct outlines the values and principles by which you operate your business. This includes a wide range of topics, including environmental factors. Managing a green business is also about creating a fair and respectful environment for your workforce and suppliers. Sustainability through providing a supportive environment and ensuring ethical practices is also a standard and important part of a code of conduct.

The [ABTA Code of Conduct](#) (Association of British Travel Agents) is designed to ensure ABTA members (UK tour operators and travel agents) maintain high standards for their travellers. The [TUI Code of Conduct](#) for suppliers is another useful reference for local tour operators to study.

Most codes of conduct are internal documents. You should also consider creating a sustainability policy or a responsible tourism policy for your buyers - whether European tour operators or independent travellers - and publishing it on your website. This policy should incorporate elements from your code of conduct and specify the green, sustainable actions you are taking in detail, with examples.

Tips:

If you don't have a code of conduct, consider creating one. See [Something Big's](#) code of conduct for an example of a simple, well-written code of conduct, with lots of tips to help you create your own.

Refer to UNWTO's [Global Code of Ethics for Tourism](#). It has 10 articles covering environmental, social

and cultural components of tourism.

6. Measure, monitor, reduce, repeat

Measuring and monitoring the results of your green activities is important. This way, you can further reduce your impacts as a continual process. It also means working with your suppliers to help them measure, monitor and reduce their own negative impacts. Your buyers will undertake the same process with your business.

Steps for measuring and monitoring your green activities are outlined in the table below. Remember that a sustainable tourism business also has a 'people' component, so you also have to measure your environmental, cultural and community-oriented activities.

Figure 5: The monitor, measure, reduce, repeat process



Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

Many tour operators publish impact reports every year outlining their sustainability progress. This is all part of being transparent about your actions towards your buyers. Take a look at these examples of impact reports:

- [Steppes Travel Positive Impact Travel Report 2022](#)
- [Intrepid Travel Integrated Annual Report 2021](#). Intrepid also released a [Climate Update](#) about their progress on climate action in late 2022.
- [GOOD Travel Annual Impact Reports](#)

Tips:

Use [Travelife](#)'s criteria to help you set up your monitoring process. They give you a clear picture of exactly which elements of your business should be monitored and measured.

Sign up for a free 21-day trial of [Weeva](#)'s digital systems for managing sustainability in tourism.

7. Marketing your green credentials

Getting your message out to buyers is a key part of greening your business. Your marketing messages and information you provide must be clear, factual and honest. This will help you connect with people who are environmentally and socially conscious. European tour operators usually have a page or section on their websites describing their sustainability actions. For examples, see [Much Better Adventures](#) and [FairAway](#).

You must be aware of and avoid greenwashing. [Greenwashing](#) is when a business makes false or misleading claims about their green credentials. See below for some examples.

Figure 6: Seven sins of greenwashing



Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

'Greenhushing' must also be avoided. This is when businesses underreport or hide their green credentials from public view. The best policy for marketing your green actions is honesty and transparency.

Tips:

Create a page on your website about your sustainability and green actions. Updated it regularly.

If you don't have a website, consider building one. Read the CBI study [How to be a successful tourism company online?](#) to learn more.

Be very clear about your green activities to avoid greenwashing. Do not overstate what you are doing, because it will harm your business and reputation when discovered.

8. Make use of green innovation and new technologies

What are green technologies?

Green technologies enable businesses to make their business processes greener. For example, by switching from using fossil fuel energy sources (coal, gas, oil) to renewable sources. Renewable energy comes from sources that will not run out, such as:

- Wind power – electricity generated by wind turbines, ranging from small turbines for individual home use to large wind farms that supply many customers.
- Solar power – electricity generated from the sun by solar panels, ranging from a few solar panels on the roof of an individual property to large solar parks supplying whole cities.
- Hydroelectricity – electricity generated by the power of water, often at large plants in water-rich areas, supplying whole communities/villages/towns/cities.
- Bioenergy – burning organic matter as fuel for biomass boilers and vehicles.

Globally, [renewables accounted for 28.1% of electricity generation in 2021](#).

Green technologies have also been developed to tackle other environmental issues such as waste management and water conservation. Composting toilets are one example.

Green innovation in the wider marketplace

Some interesting developments are taking place that will impact the tourism industry in the future. Keep an eye on green innovations as they emerge, so you can take advantage of these developments.

Net zero aviation: development of sustainable jet fuel and electric/hybrid aircraft to reduce air travel's carbon footprint. The US recently invested US\$4.3 billion to support sustainable aviation fuel projects. The UK has a Jet Zero Strategy aiming for net zero aviation by 2050. Electrical vertical take-off and landing aircraft (eVTOL) are also in development. The challenge is being able to carry large numbers of passengers.

Carbon capture and storage (CCS): this involves capturing carbon from the air and storing it deep underground permanently. A further development is carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS), enabling carbon to be re-used in manufacturing processes by converting it into plastic, concrete or biofuel. CCS is widely regarded as essential if the world is to achieve climate change targets and net zero emissions. Heavy industries such as power, steel, cement, oil and gas are investing in this expensive technology, supported by governments including the UK and the EU.

Support for CCS solutions is growing. [Tomorrow's Air](#) is building a global travellers' collective to push for this and other carbon removal initiatives in partnership with the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA).

Digital technologies for managing sustainability: achieving sustainability goals requires robust management, which in turn requires measuring and monitoring. See the tip below on how to [Measure, Monitor and Reduce](#). There are a range of digital solutions on the marketplace to measure sustainability.

For tourism, [Weeva](#) is a new digital platform to help accommodation providers manage their sustainability actions. It has an online tool with which businesses can measure their performance on the '4C' parameters – conservation, community, commerce and culture – and 18 interconnected areas, shown in the infographic below. The tool is designed to help businesses on their journey towards sustainability in an integrated way.

Figure 7: Weeva's 3600 Sustainability Framework



Source: Weeva

Weeva's platform is suitable for tourism business of all sizes. It is reasonably priced, with different fees for small, medium and large businesses. It also offers a free [21-day trial](#). It is worth watching their videos to get an idea of how monitoring sustainability actions works in practice.

New technologies to promote sustainable properties on OTA platforms: [Travelyst](#) is a coalition of several major travel and travel-related companies dedicated to promoting sustainability to consumers. Partners include Booking.com, Expedia Group, TripAdvisor and Trip.com. Among the coalition's first developments are frameworks to showcase sustainable accommodation, aviation and experience providers.

In 2021, Booking.com introduced its own sustainable certification programme called [Travel Sustainable](#). The programme is based on the GSTC criteria. All properties that meet these criteria can display the Travel Sustainable label on their listing, at Level 1, 2 or 3. Accommodations that are certified by another programme are also listed as sustainable, subject to independent certification. A sustainability filter lets users select only properties that are sustainable.

Figure 8: Booking.com's Travel Sustainable scheme



Source: Booking.com

With more OTA platforms incorporating sustainability into their systems, this is a good opportunity to showcase your green credentials if you get certified. Download Booking.com's [Travel Sustainable Handbook](#) to see if you meet the criteria. If not, find out what you need to do to become certified.

Best practices in green tourism

New technologies are developing all the time in this sector. Though they can be expensive to implement, they should save you money in the long term. Examples of green technologies being widely adopted by tourism businesses are solar panels and wind turbines to generate electricity for accommodation providers, and electric vehicles (EVs) including bikes, buses and boats.

The table below offers some good examples of green technologies implemented by tourism businesses. Study them and think about which ones you could implement in your business.

Table 1: Best practice examples of green tourism

Continent	Example
Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campi Ya Kanzi Ecolodge, Kenya. The camp is owned and operated by local Masai. It is the first zero-emissions and carbon-negative lodge in Africa, thanks to its reforestation programme which guests are encouraged to join. It is also fully solar-powered and its vehicles are electric. A water catchment system covers all its water needs, using PVC tanks and bladders for storage. Grey and black water is recycled for use in ponds. The lodge also uses low-energy dishwashers and washing machines. • Travessia Beach Lodge, Mozambique. The lodge is family-owned and managed. Hot water is supplied by wood-fired boilers. There is a solar hybrid system for electricity. The lodge is involved in many community development initiatives including maintaining the wells that supply water. • Ila Lodge, Zambia. The lodge is solar-powered and has electric vehicles. It implements a reduce, reuse and recycle strategy. It hosts 'eco walks' taking visitors around the property to learn more about the lodge and its sustainability actions.
Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Camel Lodge, Mongolia. Instead of bottled water, guests are provided with reusable metal bottles that can be refilled at purified water stations. There is a comprehensive waste management programme using solar power that diverts waste from landfill. More than 50% of supplies are sourced within 50 miles, supplemented by own organic produce. • Topas Ecolodge, Vietnam. Located in the Sapa region of northern Vietnam. The lodge constructed a wetland to treat wastewater from the kitchen and laundry. There is a glass crusher to recycle bottles. An infinity pool is heated by an eco-friendly system that uses 85% less energy than regular swimming pools. • Cardamom Tented Camp, Cambodia. The camp is solar-powered. There is a wastewater system with several septic tanks and a filtration system that drains into a wetland area. The camp recycles all metal, glass, cardboard and plastic and composts food. • Fenyan Ecolodge, Jordan. An award-winning solar-powered ecolodge in the Dana Biosphere Reserve that was developed in partnership between Ecohotels and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, a Jordanian NGO. It is fully solar-powered and a substantial portion of revenue funds conservation efforts in Dana.

Latin America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Sheep Inn, Ecuador. Green initiatives include a solar-powered water system, hybrid solar/wind electricity, composting toilets, zero waste (defined as less than one ounce per person per day), a reuse/recycling system and the of supply ozone-purified water for guests' own refillable water bottles. • EcoCamp Patagonia, Chile. An award-winning sustainable dome hotel in Torres del Paine National Park. Recognised as carbon neutral since 2007. Renewable energy sources include micro-hydro turbines, solar panels, wood stores and a certified environmental management system. • Corcovado Wilderness Lodge, Costa Rica. The lodge is certified by two sustainable tourism platforms (CST 5-Leaf Rating and GSTC). It is solar-powered and has a hybrid solar convection for heating hot water. There is a hydro-electric turbine for water conservation and a wastewater management system with nine septic tank systems.
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Source: Acorn Tourism Consulting

Tip:

Write your own Climate Action Plan. Use the toolkit [How to Write a Climate Action Plan](#) by the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) to help you.

9. Keep informed on green legislation and requirements

The [EU Green Deal](#) was launched in 2019 with a package of actions to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. It directly affects SMEs in developing countries that want to sell their products on the European market as they have to meet higher sustainability standards to satisfy the criteria.

Ideally, local operators and suppliers should be certified as sustainable through a programme such as [Travelife](#). However, European tour operators understand that certification is a long and complicated process and can be expensive for small businesses. Nevertheless, embedding sustainability is essential, even without certification. Being transparent and clear about your green activities and plans to improve sustainability is also essential.

If you already have good relationships with European tour operators, they will be keen to support you to do more. If you are trying to build relationships, you will need to prove that your business is green and sustainable. Many European tour operators state what they expect from their suppliers on their websites, such as [Better Places' Responsible Tourism Policy](#).

In response to customer demand for sustainable travel products, online tour operators (OTA) are also seeking to embed sustainability across their systems and partners. The aviation data provider OAG has written a series of articles about how OTAs are embedding sustainability. You can read the first one, [OTAs and Sustainability](#), and click on the links in the article to the next two articles.

Tips:

Read the CBI study [The EU Green Deal – How will it impact my business?](#) to fully understand the impact of the EU Green Deal on your business.

Keep up with European laws and regulations related to environmental sustainability. The EU website is a good place to start. Bookmark this [web page](#).

Find out if the European tour operator you want to do business with has a sustainability manager. Contact them to find out what green processes they expect from suppliers. They will be interested in talking with you as a potential supplier.

10. Finding funding, investors and partners to help become more green

Going green can be an expensive process. Thankfully, many governments offer financial support. There may also be investors looking to support SMEs in your destination to improve sustainability in their business processes. Building partnerships and networking with organisations and associations that can offer resources, training, support and advice are also important actions.

Government/multilateral funding

- Government sustainability funding programmes at national, regional or local level. Visit your government's website to find out if there is funding available to help SMEs become green or sustainable. The national tourist board or your local trade association may also have information.
- To secure funding from international funding bodies such as the World Bank, the EU, international development funding organisations and international development departments of European governments, you need to find a partner. The best place to start looking is a local tourism development organisation specialising in a particular area such as 'ecotourism', 'empowering women and youth' or 'community-based tourism'.

Funding from NGOs/charities

- The WWF is a campaigning charity with a significant focus on sustainability. Learn more about its [sustainable development](#) work in countries as diverse as Colombia, Brazil and the DRC. In 2022 it introduced an [Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Grant](#). Contact them to see if a similar grant is planned at some point in the future.
- [Funds for NGOs](#): offers grants and resources for sustainability. Keep an eye on the [Latest Funds](#) to see if any of the projects listed are worth exploring.
- [Travel4Impact Network](#): is a network of companies that are working together to support SMEs in building a more sustainable and resilient tourism industry. It fully subsidises SMEs, including local tour operators and accommodation providers, to develop sustainability, positive social impact and digital strategies. Carefully study the programme's phases to understand the selection criteria and procedure. Contact them directly for support.

Other funding partners

- Local businesses may be interested in supporting your project in return for publicity. For instance, by donating bicycles, providing solar panels or investing in reed beds for wastewater.
- Research trade partners in source markets looking to support 'green' suppliers. For instance, the [Association of International Tour Operators \(AITO\)](#), a UK-based association whose members (tour operators) support sustainable projects in the UK and overseas.
- Set up your own tree-planting project. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and emit oxygen and many millions of

trees are needed to help restore healthy levels of carbon dioxide. This is also called 'carbon sequestration'. You can then encourage your customers to support your own tree-planting/carbon offsetting programme.

Build your knowledge

- **The Travel Foundation:** an independent charity that works with tourism businesses to ensure tourism has a positive impact on destinations. It has worked on numerous projects all over the world to help embed sustainability. As well as a good resource for sustainability information, it also offers [free online training courses](#). Explore its range of sustainable tourism initiatives in 27 countries around the world.
- **Green Climate Fund:** the largest global fund dedicating to help fight climate change. It funds projects at country level (large, medium, small and micro) across a range of topics to help countries develop resilience, knowledge and best practices. For instance, [a Peruvian Amazon Eco Bio Business Facility](#) to provide technical assistance and grant financing for small community-based eco initiatives. Explore the website to see what they are funding in your country.

Be proactive

Being proactive and pushing for sustainability action in your destination or region can help you find or create funding or investment opportunities.

- Take part in and support studies and research around sustainability. Being visible in the sector can open doors to future partnerships and investment opportunities.
- Join associations that are focused on sustainability. They can provide resources, share ideas and showcase best practice examples. [Sustainable Travel International](#) offers different membership levels providing access to tools to help you demonstrate your commitment to sustainability, reach your climate goals and educate and empower your staff.

This study was carried out on behalf of CBI by [Acorn Tourism Consulting Limited](#).

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