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Tourism Cares Focuses Meaningful Travel Summit in Norway on Climate Action

The non-profit brings its community to Europe for the first time in partnership with Innovation Norway and the United States Tour Operators Association

Tromsø, Norway – April 18, 2023 - Tourism Cares, the non-profit convening the travel and tourism industry to generate positive social, environmental, and economic benefits for communities around the world, will kick off its Meaningful Travel Summit for the first time in Europe in the Norwegian communities of Tromsø and Svalbard.

The *Tourism Cares with Norway* Meaningful Travel Summit will bring more than 50 travel and tourism executives and decision-makers, including top tour operators, travel media, cruise lines, industry associations, and others to the Norwegian Arctic, a fragile environment threatened by climate change. Like so many destinations worldwide, tourism in the region is balancing how to profit from its pristine wilderness and incredible natural wonders while being challenged with the negative impacts tourism inherently brings.

Norway is experiencing the impacts of climate change at an alarming rate, and tourism experiences are therefore similarly at risk. Polar bear populations are plummeting, dogs cannot pull sleds in high temperatures, and climate change upends traditional economic pursuits of the Indigenous Sami people, such as reindeer herding. As vital ecosystems continue to deteriorate, there is a critical need for tourism businesses, and entire industries, to become part of the solution.

“Climate change is dramatically changing the landscape of Norway and the impact on daily ways of life, Indigenous traditions and livelihoods, wildlife, and of course, the tourism product, is clearly evident,” said Greg Takehara, CEO, Tourism Cares. “Travel and tourism can be a force

for good in solving these massive global challenges. As a signatory of the Glasgow Declaration, Tourism Cares is committed to accelerating climate action in tourism. Our Meaningful Travel Summit creates a collaborative space for industry leaders to come together and create action plans around using travel as a means to protect, conserve, and make substantial changes for the future.”

In partnership with Innovation Norway, *Tourism Cares with Norway* will showcase best practices for travel companies and destination managers in the role they play in balancing environmental protection and conservation with the needs of the community.

Over five days of educational seminars, in-community experiences, and workshops, the Summit will immerse participants in ways to progress their sustainability journeys - through multi-sector collaborations showcasing climate action strategies, learnings from Norway’s Indigenous Sami people, and practical tools for sustainable destination management. Through the lens of Norway’s “Nordic” model, conversation and education will focus on how more progress can be made on sustainable product development, investments in stakeholder engagement, and adaptation in a changing environment.

“Tourism Cares’ mission is very much aligned with our own, as we continue to develop Norway as a sustainable destination building upon the criteria and ambitions of our national sustainability strategy. We want to contribute to driving positive change, and we believe that by coming together, by learning from each other and sharing thoughts and concerns, we can make real impact that matters,” said Hege V. Barnes, Managing Director of Innovation Norway North America. “Our goal is to inspire action and infuse more sustainability into the business models of the tourism industry actors to help create businesses that are more purpose-driven and that have sustainability at the core of their operation, and not as a separate division or project.”

Hosting the Summit for the first time in Norway came as a direct result of the United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA) Sustainability is Responsibility (SIR) event, held in Bodø in 2022. There, 24 tour operators met to set the important groundwork for **why** travel leaders must create livable and thriving communities in order to deliver high-quality, authentic experiences for visitors. Tourism Cares for Norway is a partnership with USTOA that acts as a “SIR 2.0”, moving to **how** travel companies can begin to enact meaningful change.

“A sustainable community was built in Bodo, Norway a year ago at USTOA’s SIR 1.0” said Terry Dale, President, USTOA. “That community recognized the journey to sustainability is a collective effort and one we can all learn and grow from through our shared experiences. This collaborative initiative with Tourism Cares and Innovation Norway takes us another significant step forward in this journey.”

To drive long-term impact for communities in Summit host destinations, Tourism Cares has developed its Meaningful Travel Map; a product development tool linking global tour operators and travel advisors to community partners introduced in Summit destinations. Launched during the inaugural Meaningful Travel Summit in Jordan in 2018, and expanded after the 2021 Summit in Colombia, the Map features social enterprises, community organizations, and

non-profits benefiting their local community and environments. Creating market connections for historically excluded individuals and organizations to work with the travel and tourism industry is a huge economic driver for these small, purpose-driven businesses. The Meaningful Travel Map is currently in development and will be available to the travel trade on a new platform in June 2023. Destinations interested in building a map with Tourism Cares can learn more at www.tourismcares.org/meaningful-map

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For more information on Tourism Cares and its Meaningful Travel Summit, visit www.tourismcares.org/meaningful-travel-summit

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About Tourism Cares

Tourism Cares, Inc., a US 501(c)(3) nonprofit that advances the travel industry's positive impact to help people and places thrive. We believe it's in all our best interest to support the destinations our industry depends on so that communities, travelers, and businesses can prosper. We mobilize the entire industry to use its business as a force for good by uniting, activating, and inspiring all sectors to make a positive impact through travel. Learn more at TourismCares.org and [@TourismCares](https://www.instagram.com/TourismCares).