

# Collaboration is the Only **Way**

How the tourism industry in Cabo Verde became more sustainable



Case Study

Following an assessment of the major impacts of tourism on the two most-visited islands in Cabo Verde, Sal and Boa Vista, the Travel Foundation brought together industry stakeholders in a 'Destination Council', empowering them to create a shared vision and actions for sustainable tourism.



We brought together hotels, restaurants, excursion providers, transport operators, utilities companies, community groups and government agencies to help manage tourism in Cabo Verde more sustainably.

After cutting their teeth on some smaller projects, including cleaning up beaches and supporting local artisans to gain more revenue from craft sales, the Destination Council successfully undertook two major projects: to reduce energy and water consumption and waste production by hotels, and to make the excursions sector better for local communities and the environment.

As well as delivering a reduced environmental impact and benefits for local people, the work has demonstrated the importance of bringing the industry together to make overarching decisions on how tourism is managed.

For the first four years, this work was funded by TUI UK & Ireland and the Travel Foundation, and then by TUI Care Foundation for its final two years, until the Destination Council took it over completely in 2018. Many aspects of the programme could be replicated by other destinations keen to manage their tourism industry sustainably.



## Our approach

The speed and ad hoc nature of tourism's growth in Cabo Verde meant that many tourism businesses and planners were working independently with no shared understanding of their combined impact on the country's people and environment

Often the characteristics that make Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Cabo Verde a great place to visit also make them particularly sensitive to the pressures of tourism.

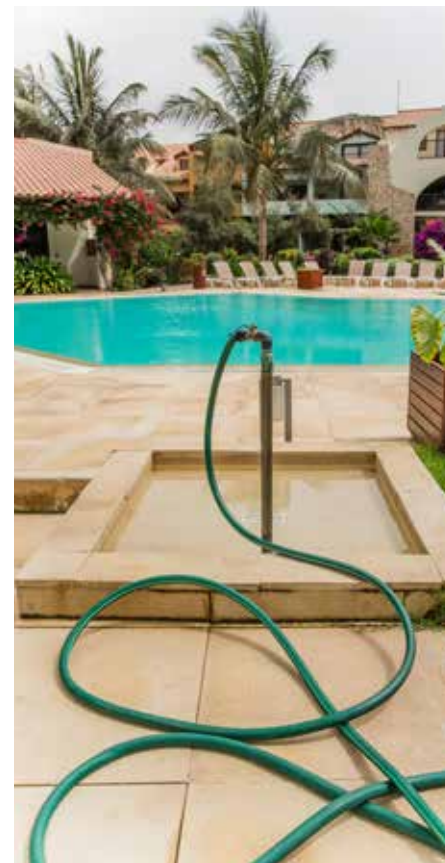
For instance, Sal (the main tourist destination) has very little rainfall, no access to freshwater, no recycling facilities and limited

landfill capacity, and there are frequent power cuts. At the same time its beautiful beaches happen to be the third largest nesting site for loggerhead turtles in the world (7,700 nests recorded on the island of Sal in 2017).

The Travel Foundation undertook initial research to identify the main impact areas of the tourism industry: economic, socio-cultural and environmental. We looked at employment, profits and leakage (money leaving the local economy), supply chain linkages, changes in family structures, consumption of resources, and waste management.

We gathered data from all tourism-related sectors including accommodation, transport, excursions and attractions, and ancillary services, as well as information from government departments including Ministries of Tourism, Culture, Environment and Youth, and social and environmental NGOs.

Following our assessment of the major impacts of tourism on these islands, it became clear that the tourism industry stakeholders in Cabo Verde would need to work together to effect lasting change and make the sector more sustainable.



## Our baseline research found

- Hotels in Sal and Boa Vista created an estimated 42% of the total volume of waste sent to landfill on the islands.
- In Sal, tourists used 5 times more water than locals, and all water must be desalinated which is an energy intensive process. An average tourist used 900 litres of water a day.
- In Sal, tourism accounted for an estimated 51% of total energy use.

## Our excursions impact research found

- 40% of visitors to Sal/Boa Vista took an excursion and 17% took more than one. The estimated economic impact is €50 million a year, employing over 1,700 people.
- However, 70% of customers thought that excursions had negative impacts on the environment.

In short, the most pressing impacts of tourism were the growing demand for energy and water in hotels, and the pressure on natural habitats associated with tourist excursions.

Our studies found that many tour guides recognised the need to implement responsible practices, but often didn't have the relevant knowledge to be able to do so, for example with regard to protecting endangered loggerhead turtles.





## What organisations were involved?



TUI Care Foundation funded this programme of initiatives for two years.

A wide range of expert international consultancies were involved in gathering data and making recommendations. These included RHP Ltd, GLSS, EcoVisao and WRAP (The Waste and Resources Action Programme). In-destination, we partnered with local NGOs, in particular Project Biodiversity, to deliver the work.

A huge number of Cabo Verdean public and private sector organisations were involved with the programme. At project-end, the Sal Destination Council had over 20 members, with a steering committee consisting of:

### Hotels

- Melia Hotel Group

### Tour Operators/Ground handlers

- On Travel Solutions
- TUI Group (TUI DX)

### NGOs

- Project Biodiversity
- C.O.D.E (cooperativa desenvolvimento)

### Local and national government/agencies

- Sal Townhall
- Ministry of Tourism
- Ministry of Environment





## Our approach

“Travel Foundation projects have promoted social and cultural activities in all sectors and have awakened the entrepreneurial spirit of artisans on Sal.”

- Damià Pujol  
Alibés, APP

Our approach was to bring together representatives of different organisations with a stake in tourism operations and impacts - a combination of public and private sector groups, plus community organisations.

Once the Destination Council was formed, we cemented the partnerships with training and support, followed by a handful of small, achievable initiatives.

The Destination Council was then able to tackle two major projects, with support from the Travel Foundation and funding

from TUI Care Foundation, aiming to improve resource efficiency in hotels, and to create a more sustainable excursions sector.

With our support and training, the Destination Council was strengthened to continue developing the tourism industry on these islands to bring greater benefits for local people and the environment.



## What we did

### Greener Hotels

This project aimed to improve resource efficiency by reducing waste, water and energy use, in hotels on the islands of Sal and Boa Vista.

We provided hotels with tools to regularly monitor their water, energy and waste, plus a tailored action plan to help them make reductions across their operations: kitchens, restaurants, gardens, laundry services, guest facilities and bedrooms.

A combination of group workshops and one-to-one mentoring of technical staff (eg maintenance teams) made employees more knowledgeable about - and motivated in - conserving water and electricity.

Recommendations for changes included using low-energy lightbulbs, installing "low-flow" tap and shower heads, planting

indigenous plants that do not need watering, and providing an alternative to bottled water.

Hotels received expert training from WRAP on how to minimise the waste that they send to landfill. Food waste was the main focus for this work, our research having identified it as a 'hotspot'. For each business we developed a tailored action plan and tool kit with practical recommendations - such as using smaller plates on buffets to reduce portion sizes.

The Destination Council and the Travel Foundation worked with hotels to ensure that sustainable practice was embedded into their operations, for instance by linking it to cost savings to encourage regular management reporting. Our Greener Hotels coordinator also made follow-up visits to hotels, and set up a Greener Hotels Forum for businesses to support each other by sharing good practice.

"There is a lot of value in the Greener Hotels forum. It raises awareness towards the importance of dialogue between public and private sector to ensure the sustainability of the destination. It was great to see a big public sector turnout as it is important that everyone is aware of good practice examples in the tourism sector."

- Suzanna Murschenhofer,  
TUI Quality Manager for  
Sal and Boa Vista



## Better Excursions

The aim of this project was to reduce the negative impacts of excursions on wildlife, and enable local communities to gain more benefits from the tourism on their doorsteps.

A large proportion of guiding in Cabo Verde was informal: many guides were not licensed, and those who were had not received sustainability training. Poor practice threatened the island's delicate ecosystems - for example the use of quad bikes on dune systems, or walking tours coming too close to nesting turtles.

We developed sustainability modules to add to the official training course, and worked with the private sector to help it self-regulate, encouraging

the extensive adoption of a voluntary 'Responsible Excursions Code of Conduct', developed in consultation with the guides themselves. We also advised the public sector on licensing of guides, using new research into international best practice.

We began by training guides on responsible practices, providing related learning materials, and working with excursion providers to encourage adoption of the Code of Conduct. Local NGO Project Biodiversity then began checking that guides were adopting sustainable practices.

Members of the Destination Council collaborated with Project Biodiversity to create the first ever best practice manual for nature-based tours across Cabo Verde. The guide included good practice

for watching sea turtles, sharks, whales, and birds, as well as ways to protect the sand dunes. Using this manual, we trained 108 tour guides (58% of all registered guides on the islands).

We also worked with public sector organisations to embed nature tourism modules from our training into the national curriculum for guide training. This will now be delivered through the School for Hospitality.

Our report on guide licensing, developed through research into best-practice worldwide, was commissioned for the Cabo Verdean government at a national level, to help with policy development towards a national guiding scheme.



"I have worked in this business for more than 5 years and it is the first time that a workshop about turtle watching did not generate hostile debates among us. It was a very interesting approach from the environmental NGO that did not point fingers but, instead, showed us what we can do to improve our behavior/performance."

- Marceo, local tour guide



# Code of Conduct for excursion providers

## Protecting the environment, by:



1

Educating customers about the fragility of natural ecosystems and the role they can play to protect them



2

Reducing noise and air pollution from vehicles, and driving slowly through residential areas



3

Respecting animal welfare (see nature-based tourism good practice manual download)

## Supporting local livelihoods, by:



4

Supporting local arts and crafts vendors, suppliers and producers to develop their business



5

Creating opportunities for customers to spend more with local businesses



6

Using local businesses where possible, and in a fair and non-exploitative way

## Respecting local cultural norms, by:



7

Respecting and actively promoting local culture at every stage of the excursion



8

Creating opportunities for customers and host communities to interact positively



9

Communicating 'responsible giving' principles with customers



10

Protecting vulnerable members of the community (eg children and elderly)

# The Benefits

Working together, the Destination Council has achieved tangible results: hotels have saved resources (saving money), and the excursions sector is better able to conserve the natural environments on which it relies. The Destination Council itself is now better able to respond to the challenges posed by tourism.

## An improved environmental footprint

Following training and action planning with hotels, a 12% reduction of energy use (per guest night) was achieved on average, enough to power 997 average households in Cabo Verde for a year.

Direct and indirect water consumption was reduced by 12% across the hotels (per guest night), saving enough water per year to meet the daily water consumption needs of 3,187 residents (around 20% of the population of Boa Vista).

The volume of waste sent to landfill by participating hotels was expected to decrease by an estimated 15% (456 tons) by the end of 2019, so long as plans are implemented.

Feedback from one of the participating hotels demonstrated that food waste was reduced by 20% within 3 months of hotel staff receiving training, by implementing recommended actions.

The Greener Hotels project won the National Energy Globe Award in 2019.

“Resource efficiency is important for any business, anywhere, but on islands like Cabo Verde, it becomes essential. Our project with the Travel Foundation has taken an evidence-based approach to focus on the issues that really count both for tourism, and the people of Cabo Verde, to thrive.”

- Thomas Ellerbeck,  
Chairman of the Board of Trustees,  
TUI Care Foundation







## Responsible guiding and greener excursions

Following the training, 70% of guides met good practice requirements, and training modules from the manual were incorporated into the national guide training curriculum, ensuring that all future guides across Cabo Verde will have the required knowledge to deliver more sustainable excursions.

The 'Responsible Excursions' Code of Conduct was produced and 18 excursion operators (representing 41% of the market) signed up to it.

This Code of Conduct requires that tour guides follow practices that support the protection of internationally important species and habitats, as well as enabling local communities to benefit more from excursions.

*"I think this training is really valuable and should be available to everyone working as a guide, especially locals as well. Really good idea!"*

- Marinde Mae,  
Ecotourism Guide

## A lasting approach

After three years of working closely with key players to embed a collaborative approach to destination management, the Travel Foundation is confident that Destination Council members have developed enough of a sense of ownership and responsibility to continue having a positive impact on the destination.

# In numbers



# 12%

Reduction of energy use (average)



Enough to power **997** average households



# 12%

Reduction of water use (average)



Enough to meet consumption needs of **3,187** residents (around **20%** of population of Boa Vista).

**We trained 108 tour guides (58% of all registered guides on the islands)**

# 70%

GUIDES MET BEST PRACTICE



# 18

EXCURSION OPERATORS SIGNED UP TO RESPONSIBLE EXCURSIONS CODE OF CONDUCT



# 41%

OF THE MARKET





## Looking ahead

Following the end of the Travel Foundation's involvement, the Destination Council has developed its own strategic plan, as well as action plans for each project they want to implement.

At the time of writing, the committee has identified four new projects to address key issues within the tourism sector, including tackling plastic waste and encouraging tourists to act responsibly.

The Agency for Tourism Development and Investment for Boa Vista and Maio islands (SDTIBM) has taken on the responsibility of leading the creation of a Destination Council in Boa Vista, in collaboration with other core public sector stakeholder agencies.

The creation of the Destination Council features as a priority in their 2019 workplan and it will be tailored to Boa Vista's specific issues and needs.

## Wider impacts

It is hoped that other destinations, particularly island nations with a fast-growing tourism sector and limited resources, will use Cabo Verde as a good-practice model and work towards setting up their own cross-sector committees to manage the growth of tourism more sustainably. In this way the industry will deliver more benefits to local people and help to conserve, rather than damage, the natural environment.

If you want to know more about the advice, support and training the Travel Foundation can offer then please contact us.

[partnerships@thetravelfoundation.org.uk](mailto:partnerships@thetravelfoundation.org.uk)

[www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk)

