

Academic Weekly Digest

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management



Last chance for wildlife: making tourism count for conservation

Nature-based tourism offers the opportunity for tourists to see first-hand both wildlife and the conservation efforts of organisations and individuals to protect habitats and species. However, to date, there is little research into *if* and *why* individuals donate more after participating in this type of tourism. The study based on [Dr Christy Hehir's](#) interdisciplinary environmental psychology and tourism PhD research (supervised by [Prof Caroline Scales](#), [Dr Manuel Alector Ribeiro](#), Dr Kayleigh Wyles, Dr Joe Kantanbacher), explores tourists' domestic and international travel patterns and donation histories to assess the role tourism plays in prompting new donations.

Do tourists report donating more after an international tourism experience rather than a domestic tourism experience?

Dr Christy Hehir, Prof Caroline Scarles & Dr Manuel Alector Ribeiro

International travel to far away destinations, like the Polar Regions, has been criticised for harming the very environments tourists wish to see. This study assessed whether such tourism may also provide benefits to conservation funding. Through a collaboration with two leading UK adventure travel companies, 924 participants' travel patterns and donation histories were examined to assess whether new donations were more prevalent during and following international tourism compared to domestic trips. The study also examined the profiles of the tourists who donated during and/or after a trip, as well as the contextual and psychological factors that were the best predictors of this pro-environmental behaviour.



“My trip to Madagascar had the biggest impact on my donating behaviour as I had first-hand experience of the impact slash and burn had on the ecology in the island”

Findings revealed that tourism was associated with greater donations to biodiversity conservation following international trips compared to domestic trips, and that a new donation was more likely if: 1) It was a tourist's first time to that destination, 2) If tourists trusted international charities, 3) If tourists perceived their trip to be associated with last chance tourism, and 4) If tourists had a strong identity with the nature of the environment they visited.

For these findings to have practical applications, Dr Hehir has created a set of tourism philanthropy guidelines titled Making Tourism Count for Wildlife Conservation, #givewhenyougo. Expected to be the UK's first travel philanthropy guidelines, they identify five ways tour operators can encourage tourists to donate and help make tourism count for conservation.

Further Reading:

Christy Hehir, Caroline Scarles, Kayleigh J. Wyles & Joe Kantanbacher (2022) Last chance for wildlife: making tourism count for conservation. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*

Link: bit.ly/3tfUePD