PLASTIC FREE TOOLKIT FOR TOUR OPERATORS

PATA®
Pacific Asia Travel Association
SUSTAINABILITY

YOUR GUIDE TO REDUCING SINGLE USE PLASTIC

Pacific Asia Travel Association
28th Fl. Siam Piwat Tower
989 Rama I Road, Pathumwan Bangkok 10330, Thailand
Tel: +66 (0)2 658-2000
Fax: +66 (0)2 658-2010
E-mail: ssr@PATA.org
www.PATA.org

©2020 Pacific Asia Travel Association
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD 3

GOAL OF THIS TOOLKIT 4

PART I: TOURISM INDUSTRY AND THE PLASTIC PROBLEM 4

UNDERSTAND THE PLASTIC PROBLEM IN TOURISM INDUSTRY

IMPACT OF PLASTIC POLLUTION ON TOURISM INDUSTRY

TOURISM AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

BUSINESS CASE FOR GOING PLASTIC FREE

PART II: THE PLASTIC TOOLKIT FOR TOUR OPERATORS

STEP 1: GET SENIOR MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

GET APPROVAL AND COMMITMENT FROM SENIOR MANAGEMENT

SET UP A PLASTIC FREE WORKING GROUP

STEP 2: CONDUCT A BASELINE ASSESSMENT OF PLASTIC USE

UNDERSTAND THE WASTE HIERARCHY

ASSESS YOUR OPERATIONS

ASSESS YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN

MEASURE AND DEVELOP BASELINE ASSESSMENT

KNOW THE ALTERNATIVES TO SINGLE USE PLASTICS

IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGES

STEP 3: ESTABLISH PERFORMANCE TARGETS

STEP 4: DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

WHERE TO TAKE ACTIONS

STEP 5: IMPLEMENTATION

CONSIDER A TRIAL ROLLOUT

CONTENTS

STEP 6: COMMUNICATION, MARKETING AND RAISING AWARENESS

DEVELOP THE MESSAGE

ENGAGE STAFF

ENGAGE SUPPLIERS

ENGAGE CUSTOMERS

ENGAGE THE MEDIA

STEP 7: MONITOR, EVALUATE AND REPORT

CONCLUSION

PART III: RESOURCES

FOREWORD

GRAHAM HARPER

PATA DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABILITY & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

At the time of writing this foreword, the Asia Pacific travel and tourism industry is facing an unprecedented crisis, COVID-19.

Exacerbating a traumatic human cost, COVID-19 is exponentially impacting the travel and tourism sector. In the Asia-Pacific region tourism is expected to be most heavily hit with up to 49 million jobs at risk, representing a loss of nearly US$800 billion[1]. Most distressing, the biggest impacts will be felt in our most vulnerable communities[2].

The crisis, despite the pain and anguish, provides an opportunity to ***Rethink*** and ***Recreate*** our systems and operations in a more sustainable way.

PATA is leading the way as a trusted advisor across the travel and tourism industry to inspire innovation for exponential impacts on the SDGs. PATA's programmes build strategic partnerships to support better and more sustainable destination management to create measurable and impactful triple-bottom line public-private partnership initiatives.

The following toolkit is therefore presented to assist our private sector tour operators to tackle one of our most pervasive externalities: the use and management of single use plastics in tour operations. However, we do not want to stop there. We very much want to document your best practices to link to public sector infrastructure development that support and enhance industry initiatives. We do this as:

1. Local destination capacity to implement national environmental regulations influences private sector initiatives

2. Local destination capacity to support private sector environmental initiatives influences private sector investment

3. Local destination infrastructure capacity exponentially impacts local populations quality-of-life

PATA is pleased to share this toolkit with our partner businesses and to learn from your best practices to rebuild a sustainable travel and tourism industry with the infrastructure and capacity to mitigate environmental impacts.

Graham Harper
PATA Director of Sustainability & Social Responsibility

[1]WTTC. (2020). *Latest research from WTTC shows a 50% increase in jobs at risk in Travel & Tourism*.
[2]International Institute for Environment and Development. (2020). *Coronavirus threat looms large for low-income cities*.

GOAL OF THIS TOOLKIT

This guide is designed to assist tour operators to reduce plastic waste in operations. We recognize there are many opportunities for tourism to solve the plastic problem but challenges are also present; such as plastics are too convenient for most people to eliminate, your business wants to focus on other sustainability priorities; or you are not sure where and how to remove and reduce plastics use within your business.

Through this toolkit, tour operators will be able to assess current consumption of plastics, consider different alternatives and decide how your business can reduce your plastics footprint. It is important to keep in mind that changes from small actions can bring big impacts if being followed and implemented by many individuals towards achieving the same goals. Every action counts!

PART I:
TOURISM INDUSTRY AND THE PLASTIC PROBLEM

UNDERSTAND THE PLASTIC PROBLEM IN TOURISM INDUSTRY

Plastic is everywhere. While it is considered cheap and convenient, we are paying a high price in terms of growing environmental pollution and increasing health problems. According to Plastic Oceans, the world produces over 300 million tons of plastic every year, half of which is for single use purposes. The World Economic Forum warns there could be more plastic than fish in the world's oceans by 2050.

The tourism industry is currently suffering from the consequences of plastic pollution. Plastic waste decreases the visual attractiveness of destinations, contributes to pollution of soil and water, affects wildlife and human health negatively. Overall it leads to biodiversity loss. Tourism is not just a victim. At the same time, it is also a big contributor to the plastic problem due to the large amount of waste created at destinations through tourism activities.

Without taking radical steps to reduce plastic waste, the industry risks its very existence and the livelihoods of the 13 million people employed within it[3]. It is estimated that the future costs of removing all single use plastics accumulating in the environment is higher than the costs of preventing littering today[4].

It is time for tour operators to take leadership to proactively reduce the use of plastic in the travel and tourism industry.

[3] *Paradise Lost In The Plastic Tide. Water Witch.*

[4] *World Economic Forum. (2016). The New Plastics Economy Rethinking the future of plastics.*

IMPACT OF PLASTIC POLLUTION ON THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

WITH **80%** OF ALL TOURISM TAKING PLACE IN COASTAL AREAS, **PLASTIC POLLUTION FROM TOURISM** CAN EASILY END UP IN OCEANS AND WATERWAYS.[5]

STUDIES SUGGEST THAT **THE TOTAL ECONOMIC DAMAGE TO THE WORLD'S MARINE ECOSYSTEM CAUSED BY PLASTIC IS**

$13 BILLION EVERY YEAR[8]

IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION ALONE, **MARINE LITTER INCREASES BY** UP TO **40%** DURING PEAK TOURIST SEASON.[6]

PLASTIC LITTER IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION ALONE COSTS ITS TOURISM, FISHING AND SHIPPING INDUSTRIES **$1.3 BILLION PER YEAR**[7]

ABOUT **8.3 BILLION TONNES** **OF PLASTIC HAS BEEN PRODUCED SINCE THE 1950S, THE WEIGHT OF ABOUT**

1 BILLION ELEPHANTS OR *47 MILLION BLUE WHALES*

ONLY **9%** OF THIS HAS BEEN **RECYCLED** **12%** HAS BEEN **BURNED**

THE REMAINING **79%** HAS ENDED UP IN **LANDFILLS OR THE ENVIRONMENT.**[10]

PLASTIC POLLUTION IN THE OCEAN CONTRIBUTES TO THE DEVALUATION OF WATERFRONT PROPERTIES AND REDUCTION IN VISITORS AND BEACH-GOERS. **IT IS ESTIMATED THAT MARINE POLLUTION HAS COST THE ASIAN PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION (APEC) REGION**

$622 MILLION[9]

[5] *The Impact Of Tourism On Coastal Areas. (2018).*
[6] *WWF. (2018). The Mediterranean at risk of becoming 'a sea of plastic', WWF warns.*
[7] *UNEP. (2018). Single use Plastics A Roadmap for Sustainability.*
[8] *UNEP. (2014). Plastic Waste Causes Financial Damage of US$13 Billion to Marine Ecosystems Each Year as Concern Grows over Microplastics.*
[9] *Paradise Lost In The Plastic Tide. Water Witch.*
[10] *Geyer, R., Jambeck, J., & Law, K. (2017). Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made. Science Advances, 3(7).*

QUICK FACTS

- **Plastic is forever**. Every bit of plastic that has ever been created still exists, including the plastics that were incinerated and became toxic particulate matter. Plastic is a material that the Earth cannot digest.
- **Plastic poisons our food chain**. Plastic creates toxic pollution at every stage of its existence: manufacture, use, and disposal. In the environment, plastic breaks down into small particles that attract toxic chemicals. These particles are ingested by wildlife on land and in the ocean, contaminating the food chain.
- **Plastic damages human health**. Harmful chemicals leached by plastics are present in the bloodstream and tissues of almost every one of us, including newborns.
- **Disposable plastics are the main source of plastic pollution**. Consumption of disposable plastics bags, bottles, straws, utensils, polystyrene cups, film, food packaging and more has spiraled out of control. These items are used for seconds, hours or days, but their remains last forever.
- On average, **one trillion single use plastic bags** are used every year and more than half a million plastic straws are used every day around the world. In 2016, more than 480 billion plastic bottles were sold worldwide[11].

TOURISM AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Plastic waste management has not been well-established in many developing countries, especially in the Asia Pacific region. Just five countries in Asia are reported to produce as much as 60% of all plastic waste entering the ocean.[12]

In order to solve the plastic problems, we need to shift from a traditional throw-away culture to a circular economy, in which all products are kept in use for as long as possible and designed to be reused and regenerated at the end of each service cycle, so removing waste and litter.[13] As a big contributor to the plastic pollution, the entire tourism sector and supply chain need to make cooperative efforts to support the transition to a circular economy.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF)[14] has identified some of the key circular economy solutions for plastics including:

- using plastic wastes as a resource
- cooperation between businesses and their consumers to encourage recycling and raise the value of plastic products
- rethinking of plastic manufacturing processes and products to enhance longevity, reusability and waste prevention
- developing trustworthy information platforms to scale circular solutions.

[11]*Earth Day. (2018). Fact Sheet: How Much Disposable Plastic We Use.*
[12]*BSR. (2018). What Can Business Do to Prevent Plastic from Becoming Waste in Asia Pacific?.*
[13]*WRAP and the circular economy.*
[14]*Global Environment Facility. (2018). Plastics and the circular economy.*

Although circular economy solutions will help in reducing waste and keeping materials out of landfills, it is important to also minimize demand of plastics and produce only essential plastic products by discouraging unnecessary production and use of plastics, and promoting the use of renewable and recyclable alternatives.

BUSINESS CASE FOR GOING PLASTIC FREE

As part of a sustainability policy, practices of plastic waste reduction can make a direct and positive impact on a business's bottom line. Furthermore, not all benefits can be tangible and easily measurable. Many other benefits can be long-term and go beyond the monetary value to support the business intrinsic values. It is crucial to come up with a solid business case to justify the decision for going plastic free.

The key business benefits for a tour operator to go plastic free include:

- **Save money and reduce unnecessary costs**
  Many of the disposable items you are currently using in office or on tours can be eliminated or replaced with reusable items that will save repurchasing stocks frequently. This results in lower operating costs by reducing resource use and decreasing waste.

- **Increase staff engagement and morale**
  Staff are more likely to feel proud of working for employers that truly care for social responsibilities. Tour operators with coherent sustainability policies have an increased capacity to attract and retain skilled and talented employees.[15]

- **Provide a competitive advantage**
  A reputation for going plastic free and sustainability adds value to a tour operator's brand and strengthens its market position. Recent research has shown a growing trend in the market of sustainably-minded travelers that consider sustainable practices when making purchase decisions.[16] According to a WTTC and Bloomberg Media Group's report, a consumer survey across 60 countries found 66% of consumers said they would be willing to pay more for environmentally-friendly products.[17]

- **Improve environmental outcomes**
  Going plastic free reduces the plastic footprints and contributes to greater performances of the business triple bottom line. For tour operators, the environmental effects can be multiplied by engaging different stakeholders in the supply chain and at destinations.

[15] *UNEP. (2005). Integrating sustainability into business: A management guide for responsible tour operators.*
[16] *Center for Responsible Travel. (2019). The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics 2019.*
[17] *WTTC & Bloomberg Media Group. (2019). World, Transformed. Megatrends and their applications for travel & tourism.*

PART II:
THE PLASTIC FREE TOOLKIT FOR TOUR OPERATORS

THE PLASTIC TOOLKIT FOR TOUR OPERATORS - 7-STEP PROCESS

1.

GET SENIOR MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

2.

CONDUCT A BASELINE ASSESSMENT OF PLASTIC USE

3.

ESTABLISH PERFORMANCE TARGETS

4.

DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

5.

IMPLEMENTATION

6.

COMMUNICATION, MARKETING AND RAISING AWARENESS

7.

MONITOR, EVALUATE AND REPORT

STEP 1: GET SENIOR MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

GET APPROVAL AND COMMITMENT FROM SENIOR MANAGEMENT

To begin, you first must recognize the need for improvement and commitment to sustainability and plastic waste reduction within your business. Review the current sustainability policy to understand how plastic waste reduction initiatives can meet other sustainability objectives.

In case your business has not yet developed a corporate sustainability policy, you must consider writing one. The reasons to have a formal sustainability policy is to integrate all sustainability efforts and commitments into a single document for unity of purpose and to provide a clear picture of your sustainability direction to your staff and stakeholders.

To get started, the below resources provide guidelines on how to develop a sustainability policy:

- UNEP. (2005). *Integrating Sustainability into Business: An Implementation Guide for Responsible Tourism Coordinators*. (1.2. Write a corporate sustainability policy, pp. 10-11).
- UNWTO & UNEP. (2005). *Making Tourism More Sustainable: a Guide for Policy Makers*. (4.1. Developing a sustainable tourism strategy, pp. 60-63)

Examples: Sustainability Policies of Tour Operators at different scales

- Destination Asia's Sustainability Policy
- EXO Travel's Responsible Travel Policy
- Intrepid Group's Responsible Travel Policy
- Village Ways' Responsible Travel Policy
- Wise Steps Travel's Responsible Travel Policy

Based on the sustainability policy, speak to the responsible departments and your senior manager to identify how plastic waste reduction can be integrated into your business strategies. Approval and commitment from senior management is a prerequisite for effecting any changes.

Next, develop a plastic waste reduction policy for your business, either separate from, or, as a part of the existing sustainability policy. Make sure that your commitment to reduce plastic waste aligns with other sustainability objectives and is included throughout your business strategies. This can be accomplished through a Plastic free Working Group.

SET UP A PLASTIC FREE WORKING GROUP

Work with business leaders of different departments to create a working group on plastic reduction initiatives. Ideally, this working group should include business leaders from all central business units so that you can get insights from various perspectives to ensure your plans are integrated, feasible, yet ambitious.

Some tips to craft an effective working group:

- Define clear goals for group operation
- Assign a group facilitator
- Set terms/guidelines for operations
- Set clear milestones
- Be transparent throughout the process
- Monitor and evaluate progress

Case Study: Khiri Reach - The independent, non-profit arm of Khiri Travel

Vision
"We wish to leverage our business network throughout the regions we operate in to link partners, donors and volunteers with NGOs and community service projects, encompassing matters of concern and finding ways to solve these issues such as **plastic pollution**, accessible clean water, protecting local flora and fauna or helping less fortunate people of all ages and ethnicities."

Plastic-focused Statement
"Khiri Reach wishes to change and find better solutions to the plastic problem through educational campaigns and setting up projects in the countries we operate in across Asia and the Pacific. We wish to encourage the use of products made from bio and eco-friendly sources that do no harm to the environment and that can either be reused or are biodegradable in a truthful way.

From saying NO to single use disposable items, teaching correct recycling and separation techniques, promoting reusable containers and refillable bottle usage, to finding practical solutions that not only clean up plastic from the environment but help local people turn it into a financially beneficial resource that can then become part of circular industry that prevents wastage and maximises profit."

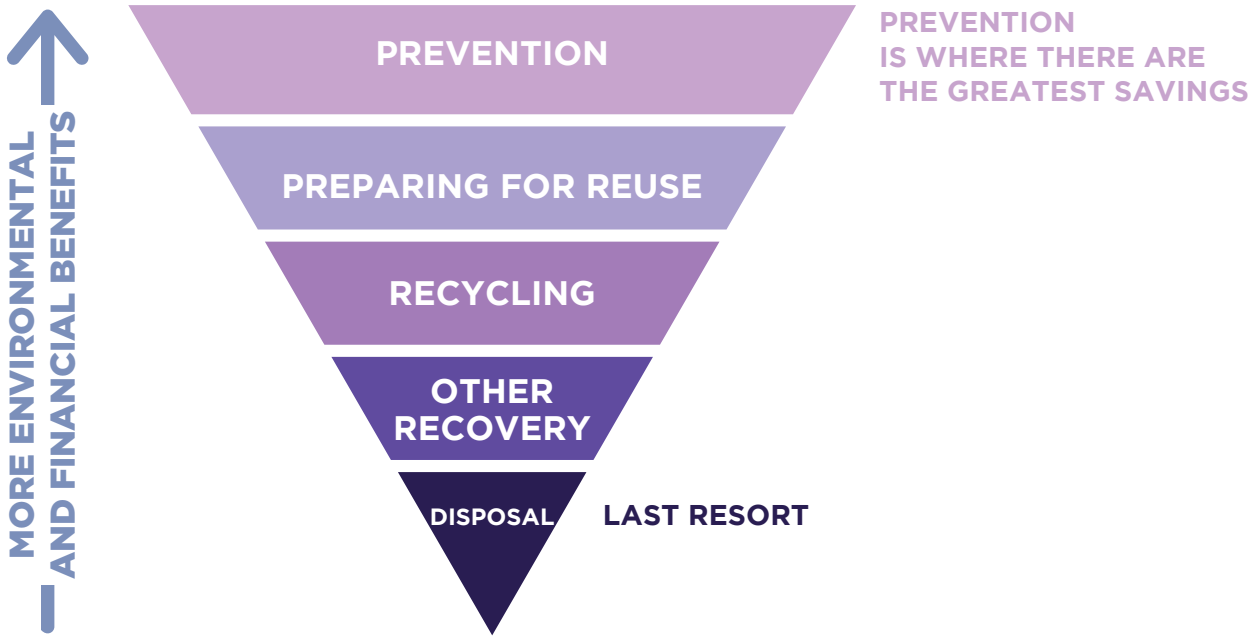
(Source: Khiri Reach)

STEP 2: CONDUCT A BASELINE ASSESSMENT OF PLASTIC USE

You need to assess and understand the current plastic waste management practices within your business and its impacts in order to identify key plastic problems to address as well as opportunities for improvements. To do this, establish a baseline as outlined in this section. The baseline also serves to compare against future achievements (Step 7).

UNDERSTAND THE WASTE HIERARCHY

The key aim of your plastic reduction plan should be to avoid, reduce and reuse plastic waste. Recycling should only be used after reduce and reuse options have been considered. Keep in mind that recycled plastic is actually downcycled and has little economic value; thus, recycling alone is not the right answer to the plastic problem. Disposing plastic waste to landfill is the very last resort when all other options do not work.



ASSESS YOUR OPERATIONS

Start by looking into the main uses of plastic within your business operations. Target the single use plastics and the highest volume of plastic first. Be clear on the quantity of plastics items your business purchases and how much they cost. Then determine alternatives to these items by working with responsible departments.

What to assess

- The amount of plastics used in everyday office operations
- The amount of plastics used in your internal/external events
- The amount of plastics used on tours (FITs vs GITs)
- How much of this plastic is recyclable?
    - 7 things you didn't know about plastic and the complicated recycling process
    - 5 risks to cnsider when starting a new recycling programme
    - 7 different types of plastics, are they recyclable?, and their alternatives

The main source of single use plastic in office:

- Single use cups and plastic lids
- Single use cutlery
- Straws and stirrers
- Plastic shopping bags
- Plastic wraps
- Styrofoam and plastic take-out containers
- Toiletries and hygiene products
- Cleaning materials

The main source of single use plastic on tours:

- Water and other beverages bottles
- Wet tissues
- Food wrappers
- Plastic shopping bags
- Single use coffee cups and plastic lids
- Straws and stirrers

ASSESS YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN

You also need to map your supply chain to understand where the plastics often come from and which suppliers tend to produce and use the largest number of plastic items. Tourism supply chain often includes:

- Transportation sector: transport to and from destinations and ground transports
- Accommodation sector
- Food & beverages and catering sector
- Attractions and excursion providers
- Other associated sectors such as handicrafts, gift shops, etc.

Once you can identify where the impact of plastic is the most adverse, assess your suppliers' current performance on plastic waste reduction to generate data for providing a baseline to measure future progress. Keep in mind that you can always speak to your suppliers about the opportunities to reduce unnecessary packaging and ask them to help with sourcing alternatives.

Since you may not have enough time and resources to assess all suppliers, select a sample of suppliers to involve in the assessment. Consider prioritizing certain suppliers based on your ability to influence them and the ease of addressing plastic waste impacts in their operations. Use questionnaires or have meetings with these selected suppliers to assess their current plastic use and plastic waste management practices. Try to understand their levels of awareness about plastic problems as well as their capacity and willingness to engage in plastic waste reduction initiatives. It is also important to know their motives and values as well as any potential barriers to reducing plastics waste in their operations.

10 Questions to ask your suppliers:

- Does your business have an official sustainability policy?
- What are the main environmental challenges and opportunities for your business?
- Do you prefer suppliers that implement responsible practices during the selection process?
- Do you have any policies or initiatives regarding plastic use reduction?
- Do you have any reduction targets on plastic use?
- How do you manage plastic waste?
- Do you measure and record the use of plastic within your business?
- Do you use any alternatives to single use plastic products?
- Do you have any recycling schemes within your business?
- Are you interested in cooperating in a joint project to reduce plastic use?

Case Study: Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas
Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas have set bold targets to be plastic free by 2022. Elimination of single use and disposable plastic has been identified as top priority. The group ultimately aims to "carefully reduce exposure to plastics for guests and communities".

They have also taken strong action in requesting suppliers to reduce plastic packaging or use biodegradable paper instead of plastic. Six Senses prioritize working locally and with nearby communities to reduce the impact on the environment, especially for products that must otherwise travel long distances to their locations.

Sources: Six Senses Sustainability, International Luxury Travel Market

MEASURE AND DEVELOP A BASELINE ASSESSMENT

After assessing single use plastics used in your operations and supply chain, compile the corresponding quantities and costs of each item on a monthly or annual basis. Where is not readily available data, estimate from historic data and request suppliers to provide more information.

Business Area	Single-use Plastic Items	Recyclable or Non-recyclable	Can it be avoided or removed	Quantities Purchased per month	Price per unit	Purchase Cost per month

Download our Table for Baseline Assessment from Plastic free spreadsheet.

KNOW THE ALTERNATIVES TO SINGLE USE PLASTICS

Do research to review alternatives based on the level of impact of different plastic items. Prioritize viable alternatives that can be locally sourced.

Single-use Plastic Items	Proposed Alternative(s)	Purchase Cost of Alternative(s) per unit	Purchase Cost of Alternative(s) per month or per year	How long alternative(s) can last	End-of-life disposal of alternative(s)	Any direct or indirect environmental impacts from alternatives

Download our Table for Assessment of Alternatives to single use plastic from Plastic free spreadsheet.

At first glance, you can:

Replace **plastic bags** with:
- cloth bags
- paper bags
- cardboard boxes

Replace **straws** with:
- paper, bamboo or metal straws

Replace **plastic bottles** with:
- refill stations or water fountains
- fountain machines
- pitchers (for bulk liquids)
- reusable water bottles

Replace **plastic plates, bowls & to-go containers** with:
- compostable boxes
- beeswax paper for wrapping food
- glass jars

- reusable dishware made out of ceramic, harder plastics, or stainless steel

Replace **single use plastic** cutlery with:

- compostable forks, spoons, knives
- reusable spoons, forks, knives, chopsticks
- reusable containers with lids for catering type events

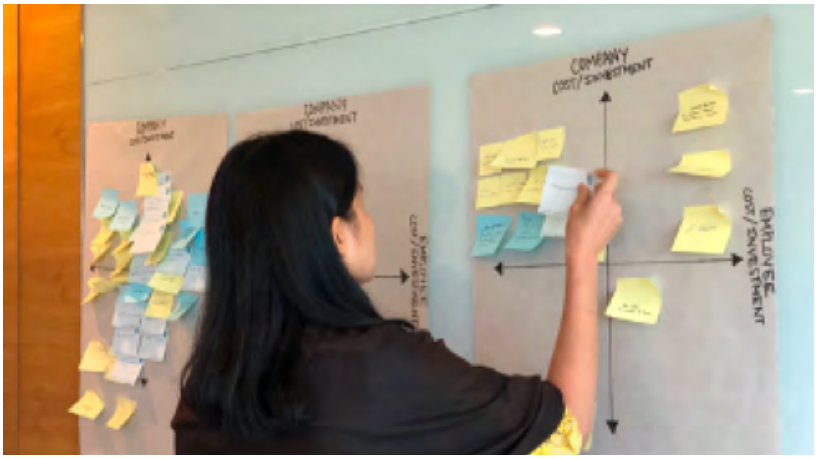
Note: PATA has compiled a list of alternatives as an available resource in Plastic free Spreadsheet.

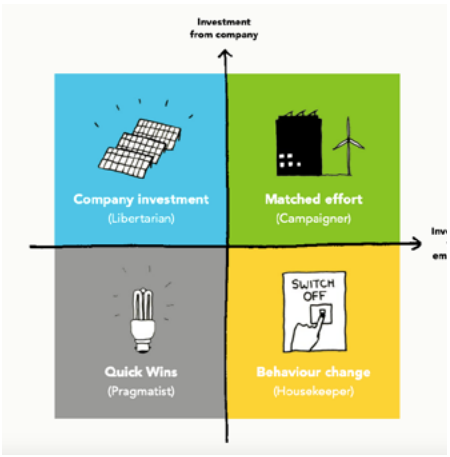
IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGES

Now that you have been able to identify the major plastic problems within your business and learn about different alternatives, sit down with your working group to:

- Identify the 'quick wins' – items that can be easily and quickly eliminated and replaced
- Identify which items are more difficult or require more resources
- Work with selected suppliers to discuss and negotiate a timeline for change
- Search for new technology and alternative suppliers where current suppliers may not be able to meet the commitment.

To assist you may want to adapt sections 1.2 and 1.3 of Sustainable Cultures Engagement Toolkit to identify the opportunities for change.





These activities can help evaluate current initiatives and policies to better understand current and future opportunities through the grid with 4 quadrants where an initiative would fit: i) easy win, ii) company investment, iii) employee investment, iv) matched effort. We strongly suggest looking at both "successful" and "unsuccessful" plastic free initiatives.

STEP 3: ESTABLISH PERFORMANCE TARGETS

In order to reduce plastic use, specific targets must be set based on the findings of the earlier baseline review. Targets specify how far you want to go by quantifying the level of improvement to be achieved.

Targets should be set for both short and long term and consistent with the business's sustainability policy. It is important to make your targets S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound).

- Specific - What do you want to achieve? State clearly and precisely what is required
- Measurable - How do you know if you have reached your target? Identify the indicator of your progress
- Achievable - Are the objectives and targets attainable with the time and resources you have?
- Realistic - Are your objectives and targets achievable and not too ambitious? Focus on outcomes.
- Time-bound: Do you break down your objectives and targets into timely steps? Include a date by which the outcome must be achieved.

Guidelines on how to set performance targets:

- Business Gateway: Setting targets and key performance indicators
- UNCTAD: Targets and Indicators
- Impact Sustainability: Guide to setting a sustainability performance target

Example:

Objective 1: Eliminate all single use plastics in office and on group tours by 2022

Target 1: Eliminate 100% single use plastics in office operations by end of June 2020.
Target 2: Replace 100% plastic water bottles on group tours with refillable options by 30 December 2020.
Target 3: Stop distributing wet tissues on group tours after 1 May 2020.

Objective 2: Increase awareness of staff about plastic reduction

Target 1: Provide plastic reduction training for 100% full-time tour leaders and tour guides by 30 August 2020.
Target 2: Provide plastic reduction training for 100% full-time sales staff by 30 September 2020.
Target 3: Organize an office challenge on reducing plastic use by 30 October 2020.

Targets should be established with inputs from all departments and approved by top management. They should also be communicated to all internal and external stakeholders that will be affected by them. Set concrete and ambitious targets for the plastic waste reduction, especially the single use plastics.

One tip for setting targets is to identify some of the best practices of industry leaders and benchmarking against these practices. Based on this and considering available resources, you can set ambitious but still achievable targets to bring your operations in line with successful practices.

Where to find the best plastic reduction practices in tourism industry:

- One Planet Network: The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative - Case Studies
- World Wide Fund: Plastic Smart Cities Initiative - Best Practices
- Earth Day: End Plastic Pollution - Global Efforts to Curb Single use Plastics
- Travel Without Plastic: Insight and advice on minimising single use plastics in the travel and tourism sector

When establishing targets, tour operators should consider:

- Requirements under existing environmental legislation
- Level of environmental impacts
- Technological availability
- Budget availability
- Operational requirements
- Views of interested parties

STEP 4: DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

Once you have established S.M.A.R.T. targets they need to be elaborated into an action plan. The action plan addresses a wide range of short-term and long-term measures to prevent and reduce plastic use. Consider which actions to take that align with the set targets:

- Avoid and reduce the use of unnecessary and single use plastics
- Use essential plastic products with the longest possible life cycle
- Consider alternatives to plastics (refer to **Step 2**)
- Recycle as much plastics as possible. Make sure the recycling plastics have high values.
- Improve plastic waste management practices
- Clean up local destinations that have been severely polluted by plastics
- Knowledge and information sharing and collaboration

Once the targets and actions have been synchronized, they can be summarized in a table that will guide the implementation process.

Download our Template for Action Plan from Plastic free spreadsheet.

While developing your action plan, take into consideration the following questions to help you decide if it is realistically achievable or not:

- Consider the scope of your action. Can this be scaled up? Can this be scaled down?
- Who is your target audience? Who needs to change their behavior or mindset in order for change to happen?
- Who are the key stakeholders to be involved?
- How should you break down action and assign to staff accordingly?
- Is the allocated budget sufficient to implement?
- What are the resources (time, funds, potential collaborations, alternatives, people, materials, equipment) available to this project?
- Are there any risks related to the project? Be prepared for any doubts, concerns or disapprovals.

WHERE TO TAKE ACTIONS

There are many opportunities for Tour Operators to reduce their plastic footprint. Make sure that you are looking through all different action areas of your business to bring changes. Here are some suggestions based on the 5 key areas of tour operators' business:

- **Internal office operations**
    - Eliminate single use plastic and replace with compostable or reusable options
    - Provide refill water station
    - Request for plastic free internal and external events
    - Facilitate and build a culture for reducing the use of plastic and disposable products among staff. Communicate frequently to engage and get staff's feedback.
    - Include requirements for avoidance of single use plastic products in new procurement
    - Encourage purchase of more sustainable plastic products that can be reused, recycled, repaired or repurposed
    - Place recycle bins in office
    - Put visual signs around the office on reducing plastics use
- **Product development:** integrating plastic reduction initiatives in the development and operations of tours and itineraries
    - Create plastic free itineraries and tour options
    - Provide reusable water bottles option on tours
    - Set up refill water station instead of single use plastic water bottles on selected tours
    - Stop distributing wet tissues on tours or replace wet tissues with compostable ones
    - Provide reusable lunch/dinner boxes or take advantage of natural materials to wrap food on tours
- **Supply chain management:** supporting and motivating existing suppliers and business partners to reduce plastic use
    - Have conversations with key selected suppliers to phase out the use of unnecessary, single use plastic
    - Share case studies and best practices
    - Encourage partnering hotels and restaurants to offer filtered water in glass bottles
    - Encourage partnering hotels to eliminating single use toiletries and offer bar soap or liquid soap and shampoo in dispensers
    - Support industry standardization on plastic reduction

    - Source locally, shorter supply chain results in less resources required, so less plastic packaging and waste

- **Customer engagement:** creating awareness and responsible choices for customers regarding plastic use (further details in **Step 6**)
    - Communicate proactively with customers about your commitment with reducing plastic use
    - Promote plastic free travel style through different communication channels
    - Increase efforts to change the behaviour of customers
    - Offer reusable cloth bags to travelers for shopping
- **Cooperation with destinations:** supporting stakeholders at destinations to address the plastic problems
    - Organize or join in clean-up activities at the beach, river, etc.
    - Support or cooperate with plastic solution platforms to reduce plastic waste in destinations that you operate in
    - Fund for research or plastic reduction projects (infrastructure projects, educational projects, raising awareness campaign etc.) at local destinations

Case Study: Discova Travel's initiatives on fighting against single use plastics
Discova Travel is committed to reducing their plastic footprint whilst maintaining the highest level of well-being for travelers. They have developed and implemented many initiatives of replacing single use plastics with environmentally friendly alternatives.

Reusable Water Bottles
Discova Travel offers the option of refilling reusable bottles instead of providing disposable water bottles in many destinations. They are also working with suppliers to expand this initiative to all group tours.

More information about this initiative can be found at One Planet Network.

Pure Napkins
Instead of traditional plastic wrapped wet wipes, Discova offers a 100% biodegradable alternative with the Pure Napkin initiative. These bamboo-based non-toxic napkins are extremely compressed and expand upon contact with water. They will be moistened with hypoallergenic natural essences instead of alcohol-based solutions.

More information can be found at: https://www.discova.com/actions-speak-louder-than-words

Case Study: Khiri Travel Myanmar - Partnership with Bagan Plastic Campaign
Plastic problem is one of the key focuses of Khiri Travel. They aim to find better solutions to the plastic problem through educational campaigns and setting up plastic reduction projects on operating countries across Asia Pacific.

Khiri Travel Myanmar is partnering with the Bagan Plastic Campaign to clean up plastics in Myanmar by cleaning, collecting and implementing community awareness campaigns and engaging locals to participate in the activities. The project also aims to educate the locals on how to reduce consumption and dispose of plastics in a way that does not harm the environment.

Khiri Travel Myanmar identified the needs for more frequent clean-ups and started a new initiative of calling for USD 1 donation from each client that participates in the "This is Bagan Excursion" and setting up a fund that is used to hire 4 locals as full-time garbage collectors. These full-time staff are responsible for cleaning on weekdays; on every Saturday, foreigners and local volunteers also join the clean-ups.

More information can be found at:
https://www.khirireach.org/projects/bagan-plastic-campaign

Case Study: EXO Foundation - Supporting "Refill My Bottle" Initiative
EXO Foundation is supporting the "Refill My Bottle" initiative, which aims at tackling plastic pollution by reducing the consumption of plastic water bottles and preventing waste from being generated in the first place. Tourism businesses, hotels, restaurants, cafes etc. can sign up to provide refill water stations for travelers and locals.

"Refill My Bottle" is partnering with BookGreener and other local networks in countries where EXO Travel operates to create a mobile app that allows people to find where they can refill their water bottles and also count how many bottles and money they have saved.

More information can be found at:
https://exofoundation.org/project/refill-my-bottle/

STEP 5: IMPLEMENTATION

SIDE NOTE

As you put your plan into action, it is vital to remember that the overall goal is to reduce waste! Don't fall into the trap of removing plastic and increasing other waste.

To implement, responsibilities should be allocated at operational level. All relevant departments that are involved need to plan carefully different tasks and allocate adequate resources. With senior management support and clear communication in advance, you should get full cooperation of department managers and staff. Keep in mind that a clear timeline is crucial as some of the tasks may need to be finished before others can happen.

Implementing an action plan will include the following steps:

- Decide people-in-charge and get their 'buy-in' to the process, as well as their suggestions on how best to complete the tasks
- Communicate the plan to others who will be involved in or affected, and make changes based on their feedback
- Allocate necessary budget and resources to each task
- Decide on a timeframe for the tasks.

CONSIDER A TRIAL ROLLOUT

You might want to roll out a trial of plastic waste reduction initiatives, especially with those that involve customer participation. While pursuing the goal of becoming environmentally-friendly, you do not want to complicate your operations and get negative feedback from customers due to the changes in favor of less plastic.

Choose agencies and suppliers that you have good partnership with, who are also keen on taking sustainable initiatives to cooperate on running a plastic waste reduction project together. The trial allows you to get feedback from participants and troubleshoot unforeseen problems for further improvements before launching on a larger scale.

STEP 6: COMMUNICATION, MARKETING AND RAISING AWARENESS

DEVELOP THE MESSAGE

For effective awareness creation and behavior change, it is crucial to tailor your message to different targeted audiences. Keep the message simple, concise and focused on why the change is relevant and important. Work with the Marketing Department for detailed internal and external communication plans. Keep in mind that it is important to communicate in a way that people will listen. So, work on an elevator pitch, develop strong call to action, craft your message well and integrate awesome visual content into your message.

ENGAGE STAFF

Obtaining and maintaining staff buy-in is essential for reducing plastic waste in your office. Make sure that all staff is involved, this makes the implementation of plastic waste reduction much easier.

Staff training is a key factor to the success of running any sustainability initiatives. This includes presentations, meetings and workshops with Q&A sessions on the initiative for members from multiple relevant departments. Include and emphasize the importance of plastic reduction in all your sustainability materials for staff training.

Frontline staff including tour guides, tour leaders, drivers, airport representatives, salespeople etc. who have direct communication with customers should be given hands-on training from the beginning. Make sure they understand the message and are able to communicate the right message to customers.

Some tips for effective internal communication:

- Create and communicate positive, action-focused messages. The messages should focus on the positive impact of every small action. You can propose a list of possible plastic reduction actions that the staff can choose to implement, this gives them a sense of ownership over their decisions. But do not just tell people what to do. Make sure to include encouraging messages and have a reward scheme for achievement.
- Be clear, make it simple and fun. Most staff are happy to do the right thing as long as they know what is expected from them.
- Be interactive and provide channels for feedback. Organize an office challenge to engage all staff. A little competition will help boost participation.
- Use signage, posters and other visual aids that provide clear, interesting and consistent messages on plastic waste reduction in the office.
- Use communication platforms that most staff will favor. Send updates and interesting facts through selective and occasional emails, reminders, newsletters, intranet etc. but make sure you are not flooding your staff with too many emails and messages.

ENGAGE SUPPLIERS

The goal of engaging with suppliers is to develop a shared mindset about plastic waste reduction and potentially cut down on plastic waste that enters your business. Convincing your supplier or business partners to join in might be challenging as it depends on their capacities and resources, expertise and especially financial availability.

Craft a clear and concise message to communicate your expectations to your targeted suppliers. If your business already has a code of conduct for your suppliers, it should be updated to include your commitment to reducing plastic use and be communicated with relevant suppliers. Have open talk with your suppliers about plastic waste issues to get their opinions/feedback and you can come up with solutions together.

Example Letter to Suppliers and Business Partners
"At (name of your business), we believe that protecting the environment we are living in is important. Therefore, we take priority in making our tourism products and services more environmentally sustainable. We can only do that with your help.

We notice a growing concern around single use plastic pollution and its impacts upon destinations. Bans on single use plastic are increasing around the world and the tourism industry will need to address this. Recently, many players in the sector have been taking initiatives to reduce plastic use within their business and across the tourism supply chain. We have also joined forces and started taking actions on reducing our plastic footprint on the environment.

Considering our long-term and close partnership, your contribution is critical to make our businesses and co-operations more sustainable. To help you get inspired, we would like to share information about some solutions for common single use plastics [as separate attachment].

We hope you can join us in this battle against plastics. We look forward to discussing further on seeking solutions together.

Best Regards,"

[insert your signature]

Sharing best practices and case studies from successful suppliers (refer to **Step 3** for where to find the best practices) can be an effective way to transfer knowledge across the supply chain and inspire others. By sharing the success stories of selected suppliers, you do not only recognize their efforts but also showcase the practical benefits of plastic waste reduction initiatives to others in the supply chain.

You should also consider an incentive scheme to motivate suppliers to take action on plastic waste reduction. Suppliers may be more likely to join the initiative if they know that they will be recognized and rewarded by tour operators.

Some suggestions for incentivizing suppliers:

- Preferential contracting for suppliers commiting to reducing plastic use
- Promotional opportunities in marketing materials and on websites
- Communication about the achievements of successful suppliers with others in the supply chain
- Promotion of suppliers for good practices at destination level

ENGAGE CUSTOMERS

Craft a message that is positive, action-driven and emphasizes on making customers feel unique and special from participating in such an environmental campaign. Consider to include the following themes:

- How they can contribute to plastic reduction actions that in-destination tour operators and suppliers are already taking

- How their actions as individuals can contribute to solve the plastic problem at destinations

- Provide general tips on behavior changes to prevent and reduce the use of plastic products. Many travelers are unaware of responsible options when they are in another country, so it is up to the tour operators and destinations to show them how they can be a part of the solution.

Some tips for effective communication with customers:

- Communicate clearly the goals and objectives you're trying to achieve.

- Frontline staff who have direct contact with customers should be able to communicate the right message and be sensitive about when to communicate and which kind of customers would resonate with such a message.

- Explicitly explain their role (and how important they are) in achieving success

- Make it simple and fun

- Include the message in booking documents to customers
(eg: booking confirmation, vouchers, feedback etc.)

- Get personal with an emotional touch. Create a plastic reduction story and how important it is for you, for your business and for customers.
(eg: this work is to protect the planet for our grandchildren / future generations)

- Provide motivation for customers to join you
(eg: saving money in the long term)

- Think of ways to make participating as pain-free and convenient as possible
(eg: provide refillable bottles in destinations so that clients do not need to bring their own)

- Take maximum advantage of social media platforms
(eg: positive-framing messages, memorable and viral videos, photo contests, easily shareable infographics etc.)

- Be transparent about progress and keep the customers informed

It's also important that tour operators assess customers' level of satisfaction with the change and provide customers opportunities to give feedback on environmental aspects of their holidays. The voices of customers can be powerful to encourage in-destination stakeholders to take stronger measures on plastic waste reduction.

ENGAGE THE MEDIA

The media is a very effective way to get your plastic reduction initiatives out there to a much wider audience. The massive coverage can leverage your business reputation and image in the market, help reach out to more customers and increase public awareness on plastic reduction.

You should focus on both business-to-business and business-to-customer approaches to target different audiences. Send out press releases, offer interview opportunities with top managers and get featured on well-known tourism media platforms to spread your good practices across the industry and to potential customers.

Keep in mind that local-based media is easier to reach and often more interested in the issue if there is a local touch to your story. Therefore, consider how your initiative can fit in the local context and offer the media stories that are interesting for their target audience.

Some tips to increase your visibility with the media:

- Be part of a larger, global movement
  (eg: Global Tourism Plastics Initiative, Break Free From Plastics)
- Collaborate with influencers for high quality user-generated content
- Participate in a local event and/or be part of public events at destination to increase the visibility of your business's initiative
  (eg: Beach cleaning event, etc.)
- Support the work of NGOs or researchers on plastic waste reduction to reaffirm your commitment with tackling the plastic problem

As you communicate please remember to update PATA on your progress. PATA has an extensive media network and happily publishes member's sustainability initiatives to add voice to your efforts.

For more information please visit: https://www.pata.org/pata-sustainability-matters-news-feature/

STEP 7: MONITOR, EVALUATE AND REPORT

It is important to keep monitoring throughout the process to make adjustments as required. Based on the set timeline, the working group should meet and evaluate whether you actually achieved the targets you set out to accomplish. Evaluation allows you to reflect and assess the most successful aspects, lessons learnt and think about future improvements.

Be open-minded and be prepared that the evaluation may tell a very different story from what you anticipate. If applicable, you should always consider using a mix of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to assess the impacts of your initiatives.

- **Quantitative Approach:** Measuring the amount of single use plastic that has been eliminated, reduced and replaced with alternatives. Have a look back at the baseline assessment, calculate and compare the single use plastic purchase cost and the amount of plastic consumed per month before and after the implementation.

- **Qualitative Approach:** Assessing the level of awareness on single use plastic issues of your staff, suppliers and customers. It is always challenging to “measure” how human mindset and behaviors have changed. Asking the target audience for feedback via feedback form, surveys or opinion polls can help you measure knowledge and the change in their awareness and attitude towards plastic problems.

Based on your evaluation, prepare a report on your plastic reduction initiatives either separate from or as a part of the overall sustainability report. The report is an important tool to communicate with the public as well as with relevant stakeholders about the results of your actions. External reporting also increases transparency and credibility, improves reputation and adds value to your business.

CONCLUSION

Reducing plastic is a tough challenge for all individuals, businesses and organizations. There are no immediate solutions to the plastic problem but as tour operators, you have the power to influence changes on a large and diversified group including your staff, suppliers and travellers.

We appreciate you using this toolkit and hope you get inspired while obtaining useful information for your operations to be plastic free.

We invite you to share your success stories by contacting us at ssr@pata.org.

PART III:
RESOURCES

RESOURCES

DOWNLOAD & MAKE A COPY OF OUR PLASTIC FREE SPREADSHEETS.

PLASTIC WASTE FACT SHEETS

- By Earth Day
- By European Commission
- By UN Environment

GLOBAL PLASTIC INITIATIVES

- Global Tourism Plastics Initiative unites the tourism sector to address the plastic problem and encourages tourism stakeholders to take actions.
- Break Free From Plastic, a global movement that pushes for massive reductions in single use plastics and lasting solutions to plastic problems.
- Clean Seas, a UN Environment Programme's initiative to fight against marine plastic pollution, targeting single use plastics.
- Plastic Free July works as a global challenge to reduce plastic waste for all.
- Plastic Pollution Coalition works towards a world free of plastic pollution as a global alliance of individuals, organizations, businesses, and policymakers.
- Plastic Smart Cities shares knowledge and best practices on tackling plastic problems for cities and tourist destinations.
- Travel Without Plastic provides practical and cost-effective solutions to reducing single use plastics in tourism accommodations.
- Travelers Against Plastic educates global travelers about the harmful impacts of using disposable plastics and therefore encourage them to travel responsibly.

PLASTIC SOLUTION PLATFORMS

- Clean Up the World support with planning and organizing various activities to clean up and conserve the environment
- My Little Plastic Footprint, an app that helps you reduce your plastic consumption by going on a plastic diet.
- Refill My Bottle, an online map that shows nearby locations where you can refill your water bottles to reduce the use of single use plastic bottles.

- **rePurpose** provides a plastic credit platform for businesses to turn plastic neutral.
- **PlasticTwist**, an EU funded project that serves as an open platform for plastic lifecycle awareness and to revalue recycled plastic using blockchain technology.
- **Zero Waste Living Lab** works on business models that eliminate single use plastics to reduce plastic pollution in Indonesia and beyond.

FURTHER READINGS

- Business for Social Responsibility (BSR). What Can Business Do to Prevent Plastic from Becoming Waste in Asia Pacific?
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation. The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the future of plastics & catalysing actions.
- European Commission. Best Environmental Management Practices in the Tourism Sector.
- National Geographic. A running list of action on plastic pollution.
- Surfers Against Sewage. Plastic Toolkit for Businesses.
- UNEP. Integrating sustainability into business: A management guide for responsible Tour Operations.
- UNEP. Single use plastic: A roadmap for sustainability.
- UN Global Compact & BSR. Supply Chain Sustainability: A practical guide for continuous improvement.

VIDEOS

- UNEP "Plastic Break-Up" (4 minutes)
- UNEP "Plastic Ocean" (7 minutes)
- TED-Ed "What really happens to the plastic you throw away" (4 minutes)
- TEDxGreatPacificGarbagePatch "The economic injustice of plastic" (12 minutes)
- PATA Spotlight Webinar "5 Key Ingredients to Reducing Plastic" with Plastic Free Southeast Asia (1 hour)

PATA®
Pacific Asia Travel Association

www.PATA.org

HEAD OFFICE

28th Floor, Siam Piwat Tower
989 Rama I Road, Pathumwan
Bangkok 10330, Thailand
Tel: +66 (0)2 658-2000
Fax: +66 (0)2 658-2010
Email: membership@PATA.org

PATA CHINA

Beijing, China
Tel: +86 (0)10 6500-1397
Fax: +86 (0)10 6500-1497
Email: china@PATAchina.org

PATA EUROPE, WEST ASIA, AFRICA

London, UK
Tel: +44 (0)7932 074-978
Email: europe@PATA.org

PATA.HQ

PATA_HQ

PATA_HQ

PATA PREMIER PARTNER

VISA

PATA PREMIER MEDIA PARTNER

BBC WORLD NEWS BBC.com
LIVE THE STORY

PATA STRATEGIC PARTNERS

ADARA mastercard
tripadvisor tripadvisor Experiences wex Payments Unbound.

PATA PREFERRED PARTNERS

EarthCheck EUROMONITOR INTERNATIONAL OXFORD ECONOMICS
str Hotel News Now TCI Research Travel Competitive Intelligence TravelIndex

CONTENT PARTNER

binumi

MEDIA PARTNERS

National Geographic TRAVELLER TTG ASIA

PATA ALLIANCE PARTNER

GSTC Global Sustainable Tourism Council

PATA GOLD AWARDS SPONSOR

macau
澳門特別行政區政府旅遊局
DIRECÇÃO DOS SERVIÇOS DE TURISMO
MACAO GOVERNMENT TOURISM OFFICE

PATA BUILDS YOUR BUSINESS | NETWORK | PEOPLE | BRAND | INSIGHTS
Engaging since 1951