

Designing Incentive Travel That's Both Sustainable and Irresistible

A follow-up guide for attendees

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3 Core Goals

- Purpose-Driven Design – Align your event with values that matter to your organization and participants.
- Responsible Practices – Reduce negative impacts while creating meaningful experiences.
- Engaging Storytelling – Inspire and connect through authentic narratives.

Where to Start

- Control what you can – focus on achievable wins over perfection.
- Partner intentionally – involve your supply chain, vendors, and sustainability team early.
- Build internal champions – get executive and stakeholder buy-in.
- Think progress, not checklist – sustainability is a long-term journey.

Menu, Food & Beverage

Your menu is one of the most visible — and memorable — ways to demonstrate sustainability.

From the talk:

- Add sustainability notes to RFPs and contracts.
- Include clauses for: Seasonality, Plant-forward (60%+ vegetarian/vegan), Sustainable seafood, Zero waste, No single-use plastics, Menu storytelling.
- Reduce food waste and ensure leftovers are donated or composted.
- Feature plant-forward dishes and sustainable seafood.

Examples of irresistible, sustainable dishes:

- Heirloom tomato carpaccio with basil oil & almond ricotta
- “Waste-not” risotto using seasonal vegetable stems and trimmings
- Charred cauliflower steak with smoked paprika aioli
- Line-caught albacore tuna with citrus gremolata (small portions)
- Vegan “world’s best” chocolate cake with seasonal fruit coulis

Bonus tips from industry best practices:

- Beverage programs – feature biodynamic wines, local craft beer, and zero-proof cocktails.
- Water service – use filtered tap in glass or refill stations instead of bottled.
- Leftovers – partner with local food rescue groups like Copia, Rescuing Leftover Cuisine, or Food Rescue US.
- Carbon footprint transparency – show a small icon on menus for lowest-footprint dishes.

Purpose-Driven Incentives

- Destination Selection – Choose locations with sustainability certifications, prioritize direct flights, avoid regions under water stress unless making net-positive impact.
- Gifting – Prioritize locally made, women-owned, or social enterprise products; avoid 'fast fashion'.
- Experiential Elements – Create Instagrammable moments that educate; include CSR opportunities with local impact.

CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Integration

- Clarify Objectives – Focus on people, planet, or both.
- Understand Local Context – Partner with trusted local organizations.
- Choose an Approach – Environmental restoration, community empowerment, sustainable infrastructure, or purposeful procurement.
- Evaluate for Impact – Ensure projects are locally relevant, sustainable, and measurable.
- Plan for Lasting Impact – Educate participants, share results, and leave a legacy.

Examples:

- Costa Rica – Tree planting with a permaculture farm
- New Orleans – Build urban garden beds in underserved neighborhoods
- Hawaii – Beach debris removal with Indigenous marine educators

Storytelling & Engagement

- Use plain language over jargon.
- Show how sustainability ties to business goals like brand reputation, recruitment, and retention.
- Share real examples from your team or supply chain.
- Frame your event's sustainable features as part of the experience, not a side note.

Key Takeaways

- Move thoughtfully – act with intention.
- Start small – build credibility with achievable wins.
- Collaborate – leverage partners and networks.
- Tell the story – amplify your impact through authentic communication.
- Keep improving – treat sustainability as an evolving journey.