

Safe
Slower
Soulful
Secluded
Sustainable

Travel 2021



Foreword

As we approach the end of the most unforgettable year in our lifetime, our desire to travel has never been stronger.

For most, it has made us appreciate a privilege that we took for granted as we dream of where our next adventure may take us once we emerge from this pandemic.

It has certainly been a catastrophic blow for the entire hospitality and tourism ecosystem—an inconceivable moment in history. However, a new year brings renewed hope, purpose, and new ways to travel.

The pandemic has fundamentally changed the way we think and act and has undoubtedly made us consider our travel habits. And, as we contemplate the prospect of journeys ahead, the future of travel will be **safe, slower, soulful, secluded, and sustainable.**

“

One's destination is never a place,
but a new way of seeing things.

— Henry Miller

SAFE



The revival of the travel industry depends solely on safety. How will tourism operators protect travelers moving forward? Our trend report, [What the Tech](#), highlighted several technologies such as **artificial intelligence** and **machine learning, biometrics, robotics, and blockchain** as key tools changing how we will travel. Covid-19 accelerated these trends and today we are seeing them being applied toward ensuring the safety of travelers as they journey the world amid a pandemic.

Aviation companies have possibly been the hardest hit, and the thought of being in a confined space with strangers for long periods of time has severely affected travelers' confidence in flying. The reality is more nuanced, however. While there are still associated risks, health experts have cited that existing commercial air filtration that uses high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters is over 99 percent effective in capturing tiny virus particles, including the coronavirus.

This doesn't mean aircraft manufacturers aren't exploring other ways to improve safety. Boeing is looking at new materials such as **antimicrobial virus-killing coatings** or surfaces for use in spaces such as toilets. The brand is also developing a **portable ultraviolet disinfectant** for airline staff to disinfect an area on the spot.

Utilizing artificial intelligence and machine-learning tools to detect signs of illness, Australian start-up Elenium Automation has developed a portable cloud-based kiosk that is both a health-screening device and self-service check-in machine. Controlled via voice or head movement using biometrics, the kiosk provides a contactless way to assess a passenger's vital signs such as temperature and heart and respiratory rates for possible symptoms of illness. These kiosks can automatically learn and make accurate predictions by looking for patterns while studying large amounts of data. If passengers show signs of illness, the check-in process is suspended. The technology has now been adopted for screening passengers by Etihad Airways and Australia's Avalon Airport.

In the robotics space, LightStrike is the world's first UV robot that is proven to kill SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19. Already used in hospitals and healthcare facilities worldwide, this **germ-zapping robot** recently launched at the San Antonio International Airport in Texas and claims to achieve a 99.99 percent level of disinfection against the coronavirus during a two-minute treatment. Closer to home in Asia, the Hong Kong International Airport has been employing self-driving UV robots called Intelligent Sterilization Robots to sanitize public areas since April, as well as Whiz robots that are self-driving vacuum sweepers that clean floors at the airport's terminals.

Blockchain has oft been hailed as the tool for building trust among various parties as

the technology claims to offer a more secure, cost-effective, and frictionless system to manage data. To restart global travel, the International Air Transport Association has announced plans to develop a **Covid-19 passport** to help travelers demonstrate their coronavirus-free status and will be using blockchain to handle data. Dubbed the Travel Pass, the app will display the traveler's latest test results with proof of vaccination once applicable. The app will also include information on the latest travel regulations for entry to countries, as well as locations of testing centers and labs at their departure location. The Travel Pass will go through a pilot phase at end of 2020 with the goal of being deployed for Android and Apple iOS phones by the first half of 2021.



SLOWER

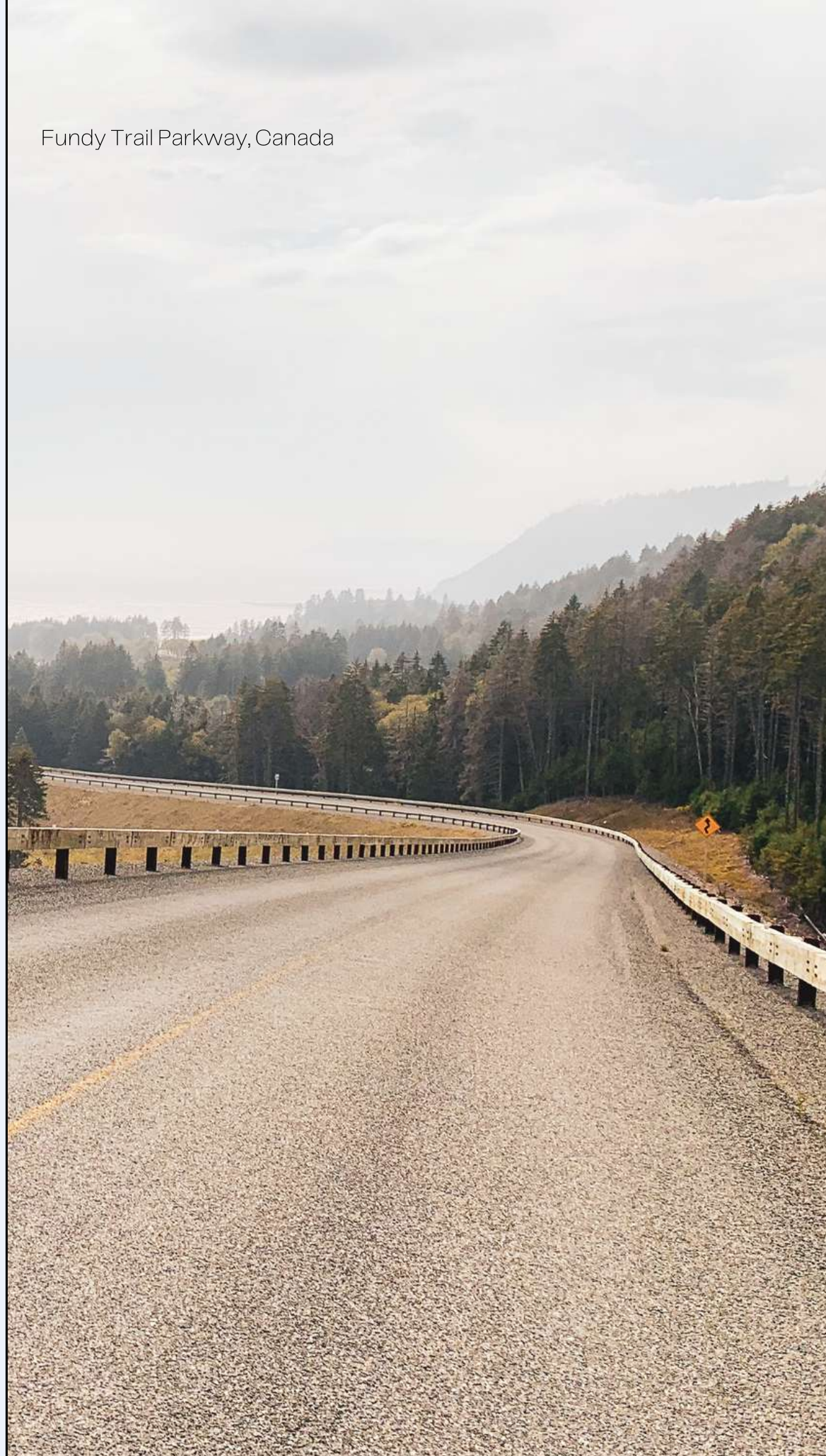
At a time when air travel remains fraught with fast-changing rules and restrictions, the journey is the destination. Where weekend getaways once required flights of less than five hours, today travelers must be prepared for numerous rapid tests and seven- or 14-day quarantines in order to spend a few precious days in one place. So while the notion of slow travel is not new, it takes on a different meaning in 2021.

More about the motivation and less about a mode of transport, the future of luxury tourism will be **slower, longer, more personal and purposeful**—ambitious, once-in-a-lifetime trips stretched across at least a week. Yacht charter experiences putting forward fully bespoke itineraries for much smaller groups are gaining ground. Superyacht Dunia Baru, the grande dame of luxury phinisis, grants access to some of Southeast Asia's most far-flung and biodiverse enclaves. Featuring seven en-suite cabins and guided by a highly experienced crew, the superyacht is perfect for extended families eager to explore as a unit. A weeklong voyage, for example, could start from the island of Ambon and span cinematic activities including snorkeling, nature treks across savannahs, and dives in Raja Ampat, with beach barbecues on deserted white sand islands and massages onboard sandwiched in between stops.



Dunia Baru, Indonesia

Fundy Trail Parkway, Canada



Slow travel will also apply to **exploration on land**. The state of New York recently completed work on the 750-mile-long Empire State Trail, the nation's longest continuous **multi-use trail**. Stretching from New York City to Canada and from Albany to Buffalo, the trail calls to bikers, hikers, and even casual strollers looking to explore the great outdoors—one could even hop off the trail for a sip at one of the state's 200 craft breweries, or check out an exhibition en route. In a state often associated with its famously fast-paced city, a trail that enables and encourages a new way of seeing New York is a welcome addition.

Expect **road trips** to make a comeback. A tour of Atlantic Canada can take anywhere from two to

four weeks, with routes such as the Cabot Trail and the Fundy Trail offering intrepid yet accessible driving experiences with incredible scenery to boot.

Another alternative to traveling on foot or by car, **cycling** provides gateways to unexpected adventures, and few countries lend themselves better to exploration on two wheels than Taiwan. Home to an impressive network of cycleways purposely built to provide safe, care-free routes to take you from city to country, Taiwan's Year of Cycling commences in 2021, and one can expect even more incentives to traverse routes from the peach farms in the north to rolling silver coasts in the south, all backdropped by majestic mountains.

SOULFUL

Gone are the days wellness meant spending a day at the spa (although that remains part and parcel of the luxury travel experience). After more than a year of discarded holidays and forgotten destinations, we predict travelers will **search for meaning**. Whether it's in the vein of a life-changing, 'Eat, Pray, Love'-esque journey; an uplifting **religious pilgrimage** that allows them to reconnect and reinforce their spirituality; or a **restorative retreat** with the aim of mental and physical transformation and improved well-being, travel in the pursuit of more than destination tourism will flourish. The Global Wellness Summit cited the wellness "sabbatical" among its 2020 Global Wellness Trends: typically lasting three weeks or even longer, a wellness sabbatical promotes a no-pressure environment in which participants can live, work, and play however they wish. Certain to fuel this trend in 2021 is our heightened regard for health and well-being, as well as many companies growing accustomed and open to remote work.

Mindfulness and contemplation will be on the menu, setting the scene for peaceful and profoundly moving stays. The luxury hotel brand Mandarin Oriental Group places a premium on silence in initiatives such as Silent Night, an evening of total silence at its spas all over the world held every December—among a long list of unique, deeply therapeutic experiences offered at its hotels.



Six Senses Gangtey, Bhutan



Mandarin Oriental Wangfujing, Beijing



Six Senses New York

The wellness- and sustainability-inclined Six Senses bills its new program Reconnect with Six Senses as a journey of discovery, featuring specially curated offerings and rituals that are meant to rekindle connection with people and the natural world. Highlighting the importance of grounding oneself amid turbulent times, experiences include close encounters with wildlife, forest bathing, ancient fire ceremonies, and personalized wellness programs designed to measure and improve upon factors such as inner health, movement, and sleep patterns. Six Senses' first North American property, designed by star architect Bjarke Ingels, is set to open in 2021 on Manhattan's High Line, bringing the brand's signature focus on luxury wellness to a whole new audience.

SECLUDED

Social distancing will continue to be applied in many industries beyond the pandemic—not least of all on hospitality and tourism. Beyond redesigning hotel experiences through efforts like elevating privacy standards and lowering occupancy, the idea of isolation will manifest in a number of ways and places.

Among the latest trends in high-end travel is the takeover. While many things are available to the well-heeled, **hotel buy-outs** have offered further incentive for those who can afford it to take that holiday and support tourism while minimizing chances of infection. And hotels and resorts across the globe—provided they are equipped with the requisite facilities—have shown they are more than willing to accommodate these requests.

In October 2020, global business aviation company VistaJet launched another initiative to make private travel ever more convenient. Through VistaJet Private World, members are presented with a smooth door-to-door journey that whisks passengers from the plane straight to their hotels, resorts, estates, islands, or even yachts of choice without unnecessary interactions. Partner brands such as The Peninsula Hotels, Dorchester Collection, Four Seasons, and more offer an array of options in world capitals, but sea and mountain resorts in the likes of Maldives, the Bahamas, and Aspen are also available.

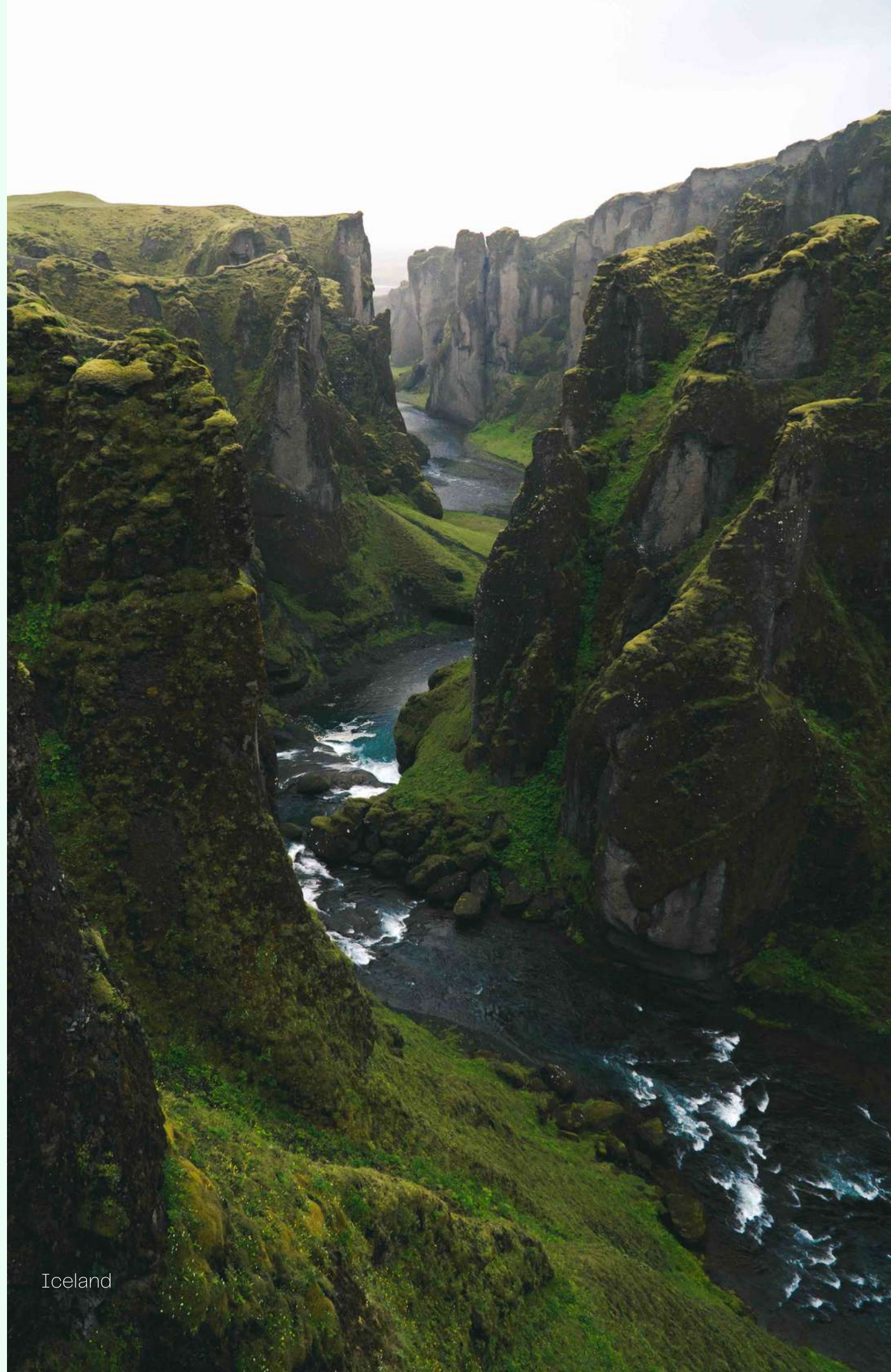




But seclusion isn't only for the privileged. Destinations that may have been overlooked in previous years in favor of more popular tourist attractions are bound to draw the cautious and the travel-starved alike. The world's most visited cities will no doubt still receive their share of foot traffic, but so will lesser-known gems in less accessible ports of call. These places may be difficult to get to, but the allure lies in the fact that one may not encounter another soul for miles.

Belize, population 380,000, offers an array of lush locations that showcase a variety of activities, from hiking the well-kept secrets of the Maya ruins to remote jungle lodge stays and diving in crystal-clear waters. Similarly, faraway countries like New Zealand—where leadership amid the pandemic was widely praised and where sheep outnumber human beings—could see heightened interest in its phenomenal natural beauty as well as its history and vibrant Maori culture.

SUSTAINABLE



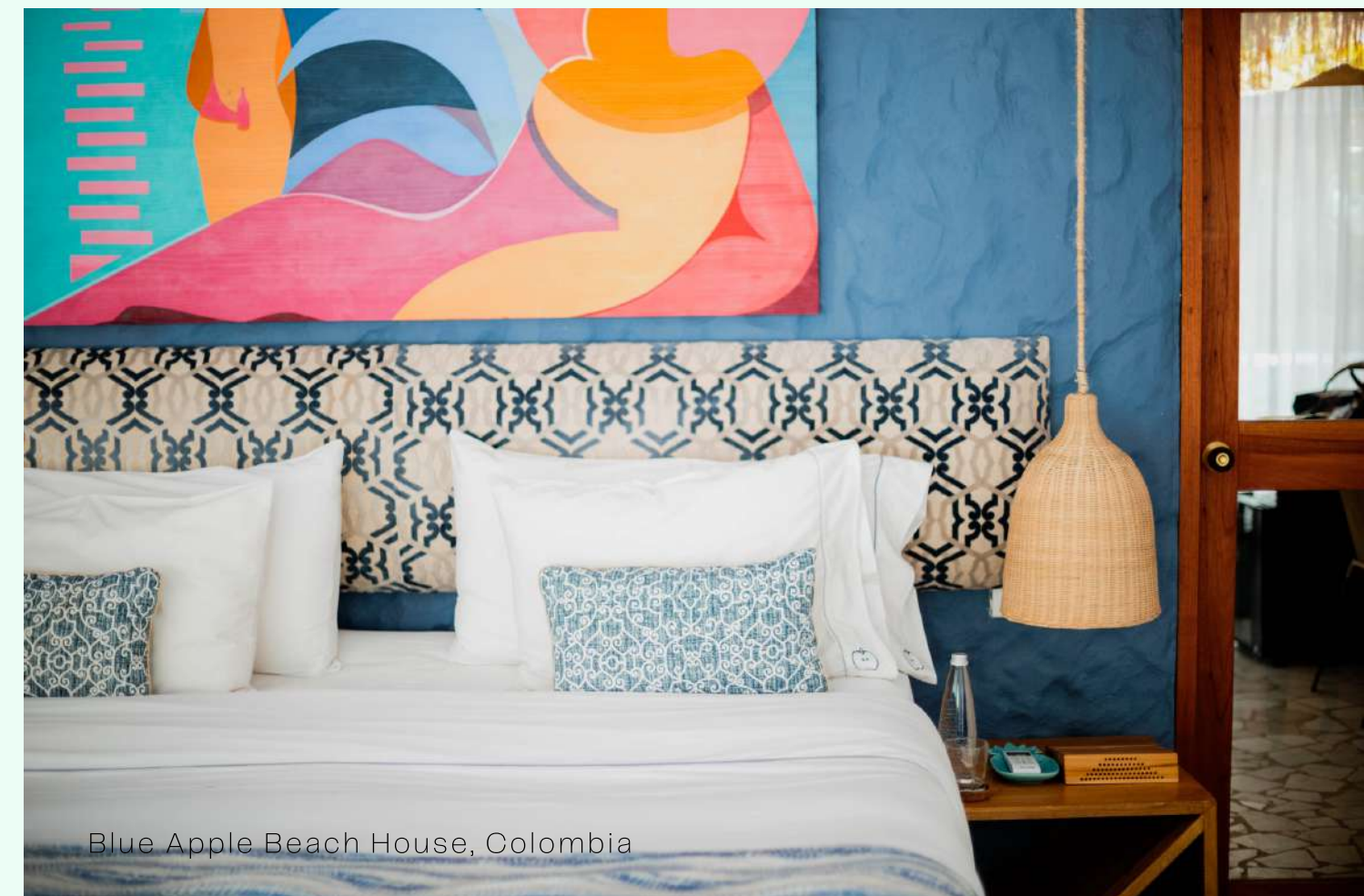
Iceland

A yearlong battle to stay afloat has kept brands on their toes. Amid the lull, many are taking the opportunity to identify ways in which they can operate more ethically and ecologically. Though not a new concept, sustainable travel has surfaced among the movements to watch, birthing buzzwords including **eco-tourism** and **social impact travel**. More recently, the concept has matured and advanced through **regenerative travel**.

Countries such as Iceland lead on sustainability by reducing its carbon emissions through utilizing hydropower and geothermal production. Aiming to be carbon neutral by 2040, Iceland has successfully reduced emissions in fisheries and aquaculture industries. More destinations are taking pride in being branded sustainable. The twin island nations of Antigua and Barbuda, named Emerging Sustainable Destination of the Year at the 2021 Lonely Planet Best in Travel Awards, have established a “Green Corridor” of environmentally friendly businesses, encouraging confidence both within and from outside the Caribbean.

Taking the idea of sustainability a step further is **regenerative travel**, which like its predecessor will cater to growing niche of the conscious consumer. While many are waking up to a sense of responsibility to the planet as well as to the local communities of their chosen destinations, booking platforms such as Regenerative Travel are creating the framework for a deeper understanding of the concept and building a network that makes it convenient and cool for travelers to actively pursue this brand of tourism, which strives to take into account the fate of all future generations.

Where sustainability might promote reaching carbon neutral, regeneration will advocate for carbon positive; it also moves beyond a commitment to the environment to encompass whole ecosystems that include human and wildlife. Part of Regenerative Travel's network are resorts which honor **a sense of place** and actively pursue inclusion and partnership with their local communities. In Sri Lanka, Gal Oya Lodge includes its local indigenous community as valued stakeholders in its operations; travelers are introduced to intimate experiences which offer a rare glimpse of a rapidly disappearing culture. Blue Apple Beach House also provides educational as well as employment opportunities to its community in Colombia; in our Regenerative Travel white paper, its founder, Portia Hart, stresses the idea is “about making the whole city better rather than just my business.”



Blue Apple Beach House, Colombia

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE BESPOKE
ROAD TRIPS REMOTE COMMUNITY
TOURISM **WELLNESS** LAND EXPLORATION
BLOCKCHAIN **SOCIAL IMPACT TRAVEL**
LUXURY **SUSTAINABILITY** CONTACTLESS
FUTURE REGENERATIVE **SENSE OF SPACE**
CARBON POSITIVE **PURPOSEFUL**
SABBATICAL **ISOLATION** HOTEL BUY-OUTS



About CatchOn, A Finn Partners Company

CatchOn, a Finn Partners Company, is a brand communications consultancy with offices in Hong Kong and Shanghai. It is part of Finn Partners, a global integrated PR and marketing agency with a travel practice that consists of top PR pros in Destination Marketing, Lodging, Aviation and Cruise, F&B, Health and Wellness, Responsible Tourism, Economic Development, MICE and Trade Representation, Crisis and Image Management, Promotions and Experiential Marketing. Our 100+ person travel group spans the globe with offices in the United States, the United Kingdom/Europe and Asia.