

YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS WITH US

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PLANET PROTECTORS

Five industry insiders on how they're using travel to make the world a better place. INTERVIEWS BY COSTAS CHRIST



Laura Turner Seydel
Co-owner, Ted Turner Reserves

GROWING UP AS TED TURNER'S daughter, my childhood was filled with learning about nature. My father is a conservation champion who leads by example: We'd go for walks when I was young, and he'd teach me not to be afraid of bugs or the sounds and smells of nature in the forest. "We need to save everything," he frequently said, and he taught me that small actions add up. He would stop to pick up litter on our walks and then explain the importance of protecting the environment.

Although my father is perhaps best known as the founder of CNN, he's especially proud of launching *Captain Planet and the Planeteers*, a cartoon series educating children about the importance of saving the earth, seen by millions of kids worldwide. He also established the Captain Planet Foundation to support youth environmental education and funded numerous wildlife documentaries and Jacques Cousteau films. He bought up large ranches in North America to rewild habitat, restore ecosystems, and save endangered

species, such as the American bison. That led to the creation of Ted Turner Reserves, which now consist of more than 1 million acres of spectacular landscapes, ranging from snowcapped peaks to arid deserts.

I'm most proud of my father's work with a \$1 billion donation to establish the United Nations Foundation, which promotes global health, nuclear disarmament, and conservation of wildlife, including critically endangered species such as the Mexican gray wolf. Visitors can see his conservation work up close at Ted Turner Reserves, which have the largest bison herds on private land in the world. I've just returned from three days at Vermejo, a Ted Turner Reserve located on the New Mexico-Colorado border, where you can just feel stress melt away. It's like having your own private national park. It's healing and rejuvenating being surrounded by such majestic natural beauty, truly a place where the buffalo roam and the deer and the antelope play.



Undraa Buyannemekh
President, Nomadic Expeditions

GROWING UP IN MONGOLIA, I spent my summers herding animals with my grandparents, who lived a nomadic life in the countryside. It's safe to say that the spirit of my family is the reason that travel has always been important to me, and why today I'm proud to help lead a company committed to Mongolia's stunning nature and ancient cultures.

While roughly 500,000 travelers visited Mongolia last year, the government has declared a goal of increasing this to 2 million tourists annually. With that kind of growth, it's crucial to protect our natural ecosystems and nomadic way of life – the very things visitors also come to experience – while creating jobs for local people.

This is one of the reasons I'm excited about the ecolodge we're building in Karakorum, the Mongolian capital during Genghis Khan's time, to complement our flagship Gobi Desert lodge. Nomadic Expeditions strives to help shape Mongolia's tourism industry by example, sharing best practices with other

lodges and tour operators in the country. One of our greatest successes is the Golden Eagle Festival, which we established to preserve ancient Mongolian falconry traditions and have helped support over the past two decades. As one of the few female travel executives in Mongolia, it's important for me to empower other young women to succeed. I'm particularly proud that our support for the festival has opened the door for girls and women to participate in this cultural practice. One such story is told in the award-winning documentary *The Eagle Huntress*, which demonstrates how tourism can be a force for good.

Sustainability is at the heart of our business, but it's also important to me personally. When I travel, I choose hotels that care about the environment, and I only purchase souvenirs made by local artisans. I tend to be a minimalist and like to donate anything I'm not using or don't need. That's the nomadic spirit I was raised with: Travel lightly, and care about the places you visit.



Tim Mapes

Chief marketing and communications officer,
Delta Air Lines

PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND FROM ALL corners of the world want to see the planet we live on. At Delta, we do more than simply get you there or bring you back; we want to protect our planet while connecting all of the people and cultures that make life on it so amazing.

Our many sustainability initiatives include lowering our carbon footprint, reducing waste, and recycling. For example, we've recycled more than 3 million pounds of aluminum from onboard waste and used the proceeds from recycled drink cans to fund Habitat for Humanity homes, built by Delta employees. We even recycled employee uniforms through Looptworks when we introduced the new Zac Posen collection last year. Since 2013, Delta has voluntarily purchased over 12 million carbon offsets, which is equivalent to the annual emissions from 1.7 million cars.

As for my family, my wife, Mary, serves on the board of the Jane Goodall Institute and works with Goodall and her team to advance awareness of what we can all do to protect animals, humanity, and the environment. Our home was designed and constructed to be EarthCraft Gold certified, we drive a hybrid SUV, and we financially support environmental organizations. Every day we're reminded that we all can and should be doing more.

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“Sustainability commitments shouldn’t arise out of fear of a grim future but rather out of love and gratitude for our natural environment.”



Michelle Devlin
General manager, The Egerton House,
and sustainability leader, Red Carnation Hotels

SUSTAINABILITY IS BECOMING the new normal. It’s clearly of increasing importance to our hotel guests. For example, the idea of not changing bed sheets and towels daily is no longer inconsistent with five-star service – it’s something our guests expect. Red Carnation Hotels was one of the earliest hotel groups to offer this option to conserve water and reduce use of detergents. Any financial savings we reap from laundering less, we donate to local charities.

Guest behaviors are changing in other ways too. Increasingly, they arrive with their own reusable water bottles and ask us to fill them, and they’re glad to hear that we’re not only reducing

single-use plastics, but that we’ll remove them entirely from our hotel collection by 2022. We’re now asked questions on issues such as food miles and recycling, and I can only envisage that travelers will challenge the hospitality industry to do even more in the future.

Part of our mission is to make a positive impact in local communities, to protect wildlife and marine life, and to care for the planet we all call home. There needs to be a change in the travel industry’s notion of sustainability as an add-on to it being a standard part of operations. I actually think sustainability and exceptional guest service are inseparable.



Julián Guerrero Orozco
Vice president of tourism,
ProColombia

IT WAS THE COMBINATION OF living in Bogotá but spending most of my free time exploring nature at my family’s farm that instilled in me a connection with nature that’s become my defining character trait.

Colombia is one of only 17 countries considered to be megadiverse. We have 98 different ecosystems across five regions: the Caribbean Sea, the Pacific Ocean, the Andean mountains, the Amazon, and the Orinoco River Basin. For me, sustainability commitments shouldn’t arise out of fear of a grim future but rather out of love and gratitude for our natural environment, based on the understanding that we are one with nature. That’s the reason I make personal choices such as taking public transport, planting trees, and advocating for sustainable tourism practices.

Tourism has played a positive role in the construction of peace in Colombia. It not only offers people the possibility to work

and generate income, but it’s also an opportunity to reframe a tragic past with a reconciliation narrative. ProColombia has played an active role supporting communities around the country with the development of tourism projects, such as a river-rafting company set up by former guerrilla members.

We’ve also launched an innovative campaign that focuses on music as an expression of Colombia’s diversity. With 23 Colombian artists, we produced 13 songs and music videos inspired by destinations from the country’s different regions. We produced the first-ever white paper on music and tourism for the UN World Tourism Organization last year, titled “Music Is the New Gastronomy.” With the organization, we’re now creating a global music tourism network. We also produced *The Birders*, a documentary about bird-watching in Colombia that includes original music by five artists inspired by bird songs.