

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a yellow and white plaid shirt and dark pants, is sitting on a train seat. She is looking out a large window at a scenic mountain landscape with green hills and a prominent mountain peak under a blue sky with light clouds. The train interior is visible, including the window frame and a blue seat.

Byway

Impact report
2022/23



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Welcome

From the founder and CEO

In March 2020, the UK went into its first Covid lockdown, and I founded Byway from my home in London - with my homebound two and four year olds along for the ride! I wanted to make sure that when the recovery came, it would be easy (and delightful) for people to choose overland holidays over flights. Three years on, we've a team of thirty mission-motivated superstars helping almost 3,000 customers love their journeys. The team live and breathe our values and are the people responsible for the progress you'll read about in the coming pages.

Welcome to our third annual Impact Report, which highlights the strides we've made towards our mission to bring the joy and magic of slow travel to the mainstream between April 2022 and March 2023. It's a year in which we've booked over a thousand flight-free holidays and in doing so, saved ten times more carbon than we did the previous year - growing our impact from a small wood of trees to a whole forest! We've expanded our network of partners and places, and helped over two thousand people create unforgettable holiday memories while supporting local businesses and infrastructure. With our customers' love for their journeys at the heart of all we do, I'm especially proud of our 98% five-star reviews.

As I write this note, the world is facing enormous social, environmental and economic challenges. Temperatures are rising and extreme events are increasing in frequency. Wars are raging and inequality is growing. Around a tenth of all the world's greenhouse gas emissions come from tourism. We need stronger, more urgent action, especially from businesses and governments, and especially from tourism.

Building Byway helps us demonstrate that businesses can be sustainable and equitable while also profitable, and deliver fantastic customer experiences. We want to be a shining example that inspires the industry to come and partner with us, compete with us, and dive head first into the slow travel movement. We plan to continue to pioneering new sustainability- and equity-led approaches as we grow, share what we learn more widely, and we'll raise the volume of our voices to actively challenge the status quo.

Enormous thanks to our team, partners, experts, customers, advocates and investors. Your belief in and enthusiasm for what we are building is why we're making the waves we're making. Thank you for your energy and support as we step things up!



Cat Jones
Founder and CEO





Who we are

Our mission: **make flight-free travel mainstream.**

Our vision: *A world in which flight-free holidays are the norm, and a vibrant sustainable travel ecosystem flourishes away from the beaten path.*

Our goals

Reduce the climate impact of travel by making flight-free holidays mainstream

Boost local economies and facilitate environmental recovery by drawing tourists away from hubs suffering overtourism to the wonderful places in between

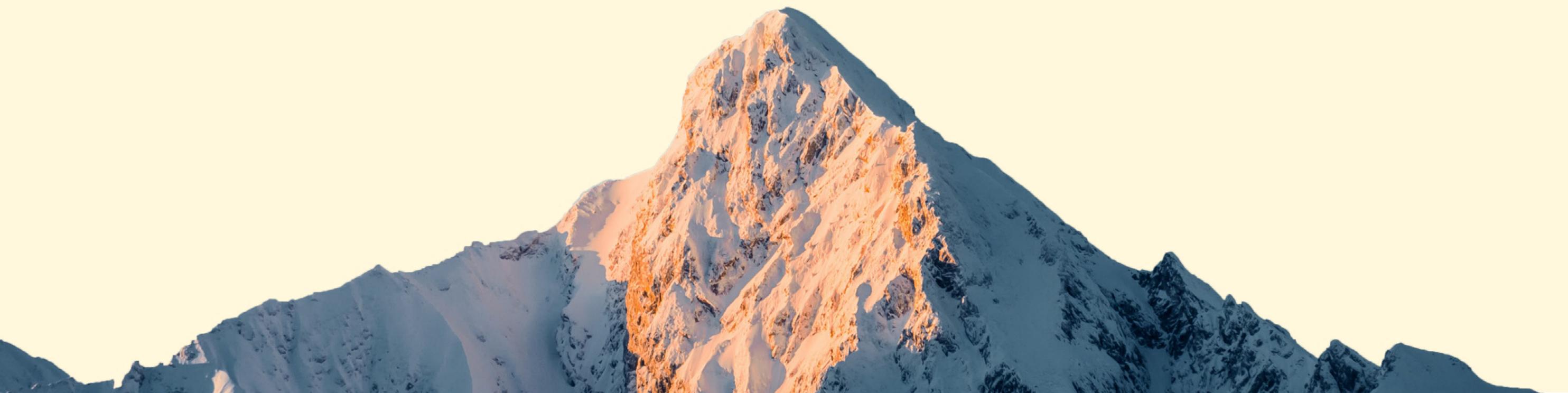
Increase the proportion of tourist spend on sustainable products and services by prioritising partnerships with sustainable businesses

Our values

Love the journey: Making slow travel mainstream is a journey we approach with the optimism and openness needed to learn and grow.

Trust and be trusted: Trust in each other is the foundation of our team. We share insights widely and are grounded in openness.

Mainstream means everyone: We listen to, respect, amplify and support all stakeholders.





Our product

We offer flight free holidays, and A to B journeys, that optimise for enjoyment rather than speed or cost.

We believe that flight-free travel will become mainstream when people choose to do it because they want to - because it's better, richer and more enjoyable than the flight-based alternative - not because they 'ought' to. When they can lean into the unexpectedness and discovery that comes with travelling overland - stopping and staying in different places, soaking up journeys where landscapes morph through the window, settling down for the night in the mountains after a meal in the dining car and waking hundreds of miles away by the sea.

All of our customers' holidays are financially protected by our ABTA bond (number Y6723).





Our industry

Our industry, tourism, is an essential part of the global economy, creating jobs, boosting local businesses and facilitating cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. It helps us explore new cultures, make lifelong memories, and develop a better understanding of the world and its people. However, the travel industry also faces significant sustainability challenges, particularly when it comes to the environment. Responsible and regenerative tourism practices are more important than ever and according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism is responsible for 8-11% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The industry is taking collective action to address its environmental challenges, and our model, which prioritises local businesses, non hotspot destinations and of course, low carbon transport, has an opportunity to help accelerate that action. We can do this by partnering to help other brands offer flight-free options, and by sharing data and telling stories that give other travel brands confidence that people are ready for a more local, sustainable,

overland way of travelling - and that when they try it, they love it.

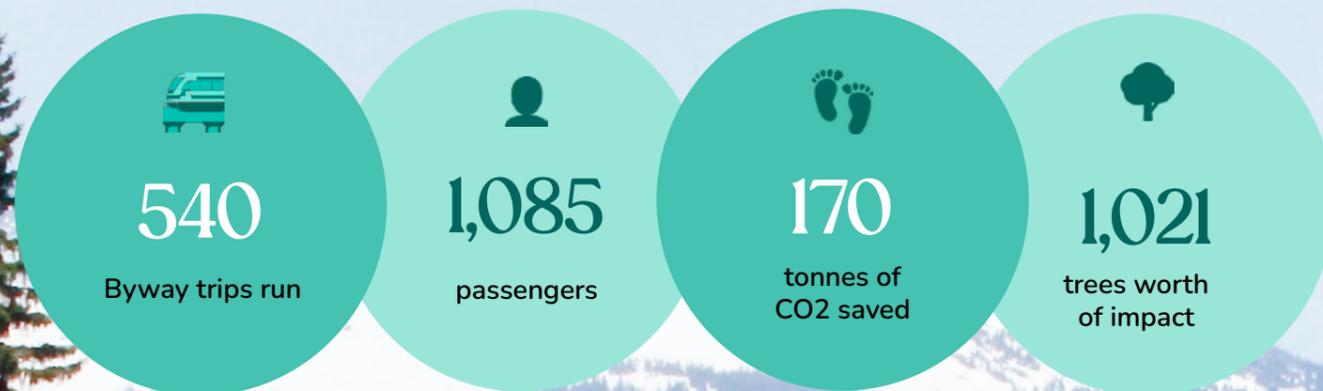
This year we've helped move the industry conversation forward by joining panels and giving presentations at various industry conferences, from Phocuswright in Amsterdam to Travolution in London, and by becoming a paying member of Travel by B Corp, where we share learnings and best practices with other travel B Corps. We are a founding signatory of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, which commits signatories to halving their emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050, and has now been signed by 780 organisations.

This year has been a year of inbound partnership requests, as mainstream travel brands increasingly turn their attention to offering their customers slower, flight-free options - and look to us to power that for them. This has led to partnerships with mainstream travel brands like Intrepid Travel, Exodus Travels, Explore and Kuoni, with many more to come.



Goals progress

Key results



Goal 1: Reduce the climate impact of travel by making flight-free travel mainstream

We are changing behaviours for the long term. Encouraging people to try slower travel and ensuring their first experience is wonderful and memorable has the knock-on effect of more flight free trips and carbon savings in the future. This creates a ripple effect within their social circles, influencing frequent fliers to consider sustainable travel options.

65%

of our customers who fly 'more than rarely' booked a flight free holiday instead.



84%

of which said they'd book with us again (≥8/10)



89%

of which said they'd refer us to friends (≥8/10)

27%

of our customers who 'rarely or never' travel by train were introduced to train holidays.



95%

of which said they'd book with us again (≥8/10)



98%

of which said they'd refer us to friends (≥8/10)

Methodology

In our booking form, we have three questions we ask each booker to help us track our impact:

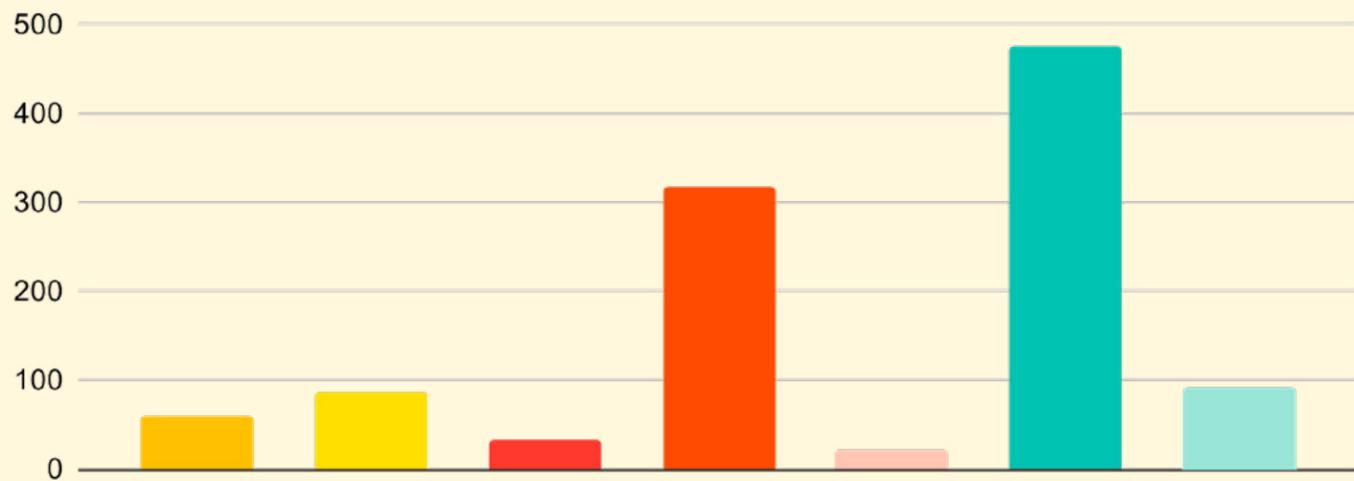
- What mode of transport would you have used instead?
- Where would you most likely have gone?
- How often do you tend to use the listed modes of transport for holidays?

We used CO2 per passenger mile from the UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy to estimate the impact of their alternative trip.

Results

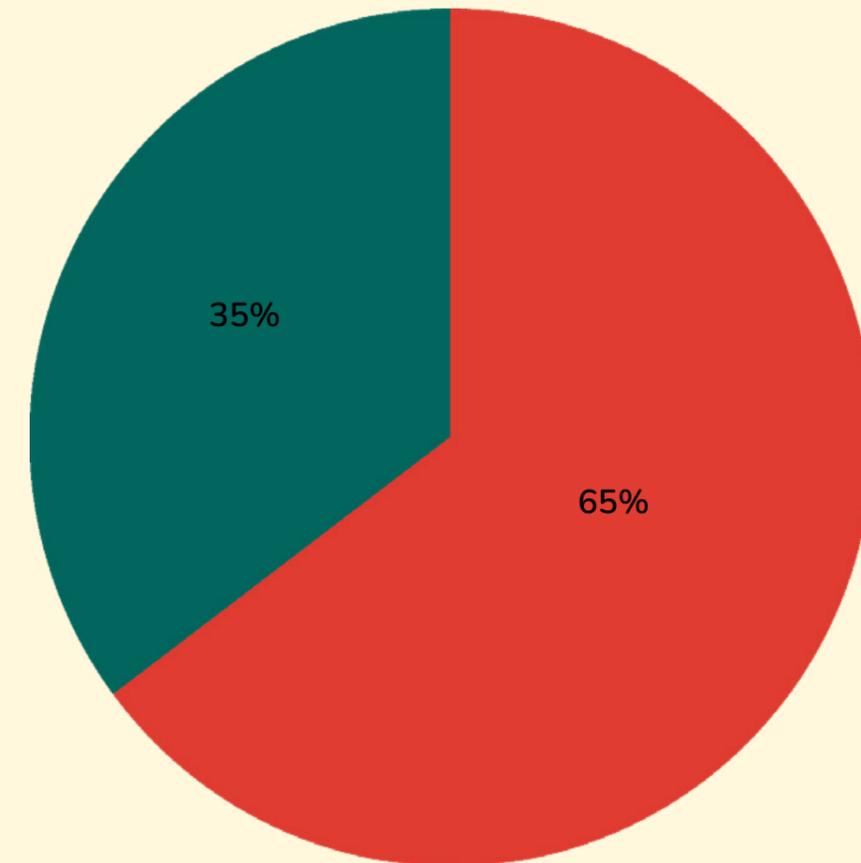
1. What would you have done if you hadn't taken this holiday?

- International flight
- European flight
- Domestic UK flight
- Car holiday (Europe)
- Car holiday (UK)
- Train/bus/boat
- Not gone



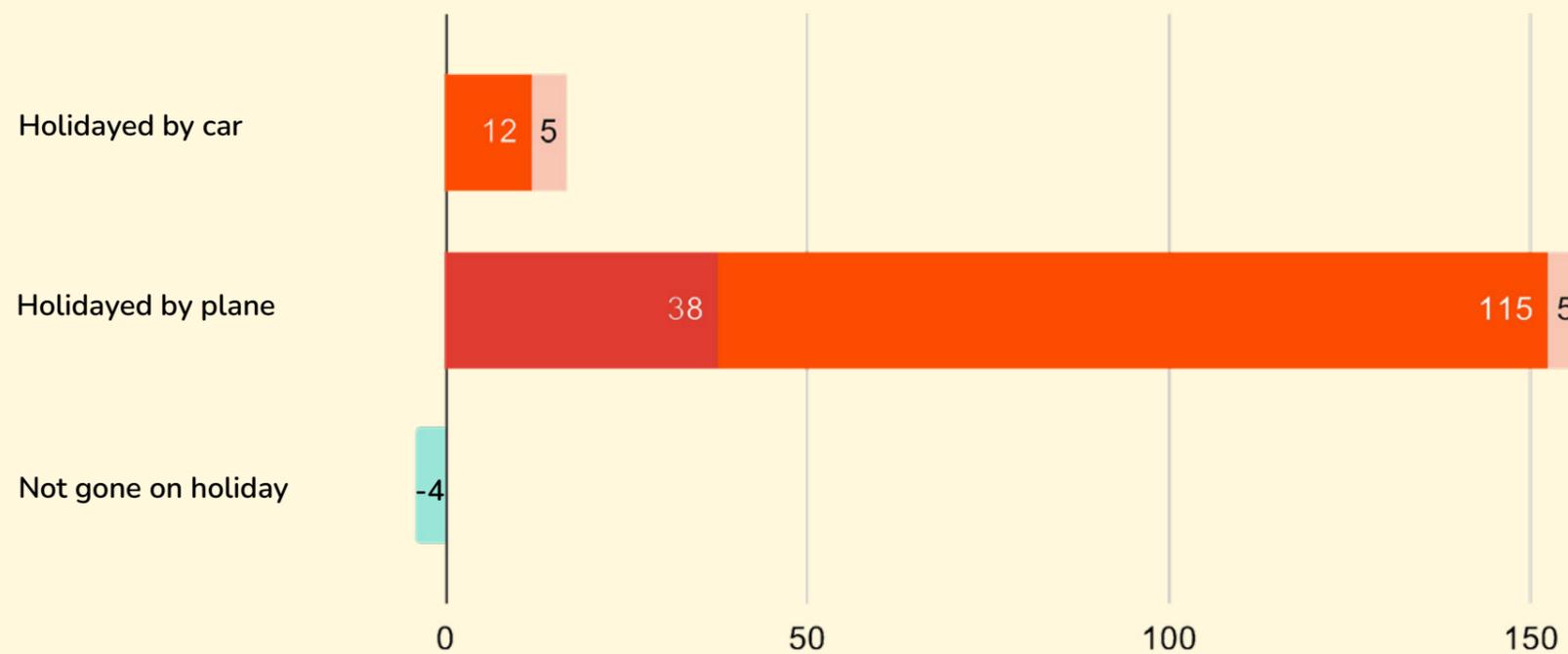
2. How often do you travel by plane?

- Rarely or never
- More than rarely



3. CO2 saved across all departures (compared to what they would have done otherwise)

- International
- Europe
- UK
- Not gone



Total CO2 saved (tonnes)

Byway

Reviews 255 • Excellent



✓ VERIFIED COMPANY

“Before I found Byway, planning and booking flight-free holidays was unwieldy and intimidating. Now, I don’t think I’d consider anything else! It’s such a beautiful, varied experience I’ve now been on two Byway holidays and booked a third (yes, that’s more than one a year!)”

– Tom Murray, April 2023

Other highlights

- **Our customers love their journeys:** we reached **250 five star reviews** (98% of our reviews, the rest are four star) and a Net Promoter Score of 76 while we grew departures 3X versus the previous year.
- **We welcomed back repeat customers:** **41%** of our customers from 2021/22 have booked another trip (sometimes several) or referred a friend who has.
- **We’ve made progress towards carbon labelling all of our trips:** We’ve introduced data to our systems to allow us to report on the distances travelled and the operators used for each leg and created a prototype Excel calculator to estimate the **carbon cost per trip** including legs and accommodation, and how that compares to a similar holiday by plane.
- **We partnered with mainstream brands to replace flights at scale:**
 - Travel: **Intrepid, Exodus, Explore.**
 - Publishing: **seat61.com, Green Traveller, Guardian Travel, Times Travel Offers.**
 - Events: **Run for Love, Impact Shakers Summit.**
- **Climate charities became our advocates:** **Flight Free UK** and **Climate Perks** are our first mission-aligned charity partners under a new model where we make donations to their charities for every trip booked by their audiences.
- **We’ve reduced the carbon impact of our tech:** We’ve implemented new ‘pre-built trips’ functionality that **reduces computation** by reusing trip shapes and only looking up availability for new dates on customer request.

Condé Nast
Traveller

Embrace slow travel in 2023 with the ultimate bi-continental adventure – a journey from vibrant Morocco by train, boat, and bus



Marie Claire Sustainability
"Best for eco-travel" 2022

The New York Times

The No-Jet Set: They've Given Up Flying to Save the Planet



Travolution - "Champion of Sustainability" 2022

The Guardian

We took the kids to Corsica without flying - by adding three days of adventure



Impact Fifty - "Most impactful places to work" 2023



GUILT-FREE TRIPS

Eco-travel? It doesn't have to be a contradiction. Here, sustainable expert Juliet Kinsman explains how to shrink your holiday footprint



Climate Coalition "Small Business Green Hero" 2023

BBC

Why sleeper trains are being revived



Inspire Global Media
"Podcast Programme of the Year" 2023

INDEPENDENT

10 of the best last-minute Easter holidays to book now, from Cornwall to Turkey

Other highlights

- We invested in evangelising flight-free travel to a large global audience: we've grown bookings 450% since our last impact report.
- Our adverts gained 5M impressions.
- We've had 140 clippings in mainstream press this year (133% YoY growth) including international press from the US (New York Times) to Australia (WAToday) as well as BBC News and Radio, The Independent, Guardian Times, Telegraph and Daily Mail plus travel press like NatGeo and Conde Nast Traveller.



Next steps

- Roll out carbon labelling on our trips including 'what if I flew?' comparisons.
- Begin measuring the carbon impact of our technology stack to ensure we are building and developing it as efficiently as possible as we grow.
- Expand our audiences including reaching more frequent fliers: we'll increase our UK visibility with partnerships and owned, earned and paid marketing, especially targeting frequent-flyer audiences.
- Launch a Luxe product and begin selling into EU and American markets (with the US/Canada, targeting people already flying to Europe, not persuading them to fly).
- Participate more fully in policy and activism including adding our voice to consultations and increasing activism messages in our marketing.

Key results

87%

of nights (excluding the first night) of the trip were not in hotspots from August 14th 2022 to March 31st 2023.

22

new regions launched, including Czech Republic, Morocco and Iceland, prioritising lesser-known locations and local partners as we developed our product.

79%

of the money we paid to our accommodation partners was spent in non-hotspot places between August 14th 2022 to March 31st 2023.

Goal 2: Boost local economies and facilitate environmental recovery

When our dynamic trip building technology designs trips, it is programmed to minimise time spent in hotspot locations, and prefer lesser-known locations. This helps us divert travellers to local places and economies that welcome and benefit from them, rather than those already oversaturated and suffering the consequences.

We don't avoid hotspot stays completely for two reasons. Firstly, when customers are very keen to visit particular hotspots (like Barcelona or Venice in the summer), we would rather facilitate that for

them with a wonderful flight-free journey (ideally meandering through less 'hotspot' locations) than have them fly instead. Secondly, hotspots are often major transport hubs, and an overnight en route at a connection hub can often make overland journeys significantly more comfortable and enjoyable for our customers, which is our priority.

We use the term 'hotspots' as shorthand for places where tourism has reached such a high level it is deemed to be negatively affecting a location, either year round or seasonally.

Methodology

We conducted a research project to identify tourism hotspots by reviewing qualitative sources such as news reports of local policies and destination marketing organisation strategies. We considered various factors, including tourism zoning, Airbnb restrictions, tourist taxes, seasonal environmental damage, and pre-registration requirements. Our Content Lead, Rachel Mills made a final judgement call using this context and her experience.

This year we migrated our reporting from being a manual process using booking data to using our technology to accurately record nights stayed in specific locations. As we did this on August 14th 2022 we only processed data from here onwards for this report, but this reflects a large majority of our data for the year.



Other highlights

- **We partnered with tourism bodies to promote places looking for tourists:** We expanded our partnerships with tourist boards and destination marketing/management organisations (DMOs), e.g. **NBTC (DMO for the Netherlands)**. The team there helped us to develop our product to help people get off the beaten path and visit canal cities like Delft and Utrecht, tulip fields that aren't Keukenhof, and the South Limburg hills for cycling. They even sent cupcakes to help us celebrate our third birthday!



Next steps

- Strengthen our network of local partners to increase our local understanding of hotspots and demand/supply dynamics per region as we continue to expand.
- Introduce seasonality for hotspots: many locations rely on tourism to fuel their local economies, but suffer from seasonal peaks. We will introduce a seasonal understanding of hotspot locations so we book minimal stays there in busy periods but prioritise off-season visits, instead of applying the same blanket system penalty all year.
- Deprioritise chain hotels automatically: we plan to introduce a programmatic prioritisation of non chain hotels so that when they exist in our system, they are only used as a backup if locally-owned stays are unavailable.

Key results

86%

of the money we paid to our accommodation partners was spent with locally-owned businesses, not international chain hotels.



Signed with a new accommodation booking partner to increase our ability to work with local, independent accommodation partners at scale through a new technology API connection.



Gained access to structured sustainability data for accommodation through an accommodation booking partner and began integrating it into our databases

Goal 3: Increase the proportion of tourism spend on sustainable products

This goal helps us focus on increasing the proportion of holiday spending that goes to businesses that are part of, and good for, the community and environment they are established in and the wider world. In the last year we've focused on prioritising bookings with locally-owned accommodation businesses (versus international chains) and non-tourist transport operators wherever possible.

For example, we use the Scotrail service over the Glenfinnan viaduct in Scotland instead of the Jacobite steam train and the Rätische Bahn Swiss local service through the Bernina Pass

instead of the Bernina Express, unless our customers specifically request otherwise.

This helps to keep the money our customers spend on their holidays within local economies, benefitting the people who live in the areas they're visiting. Local transport services are often lower carbon than tourist services (heritage steam trains for example) and are often hop-on, hop-off, making for a better customer experience.

The use of local infrastructure can also help justify future investments that locals will benefit from.

Methodology

We reviewed our list of accommodation suppliers manually and tagged all international chains (e.g. Radisson, Hyatt) from our list of suppliers so that we could report on their prevalence.

Yazmin & James on their vegan honeymoon Byway trip to France

Upon returning they told us about a vegan bakery they found which we've added to our tech and now can pop up as a recommendation for vegan trips to Paris!

Other highlights

- We coded up our accommodation database to identify international chain hotels and began tracking a new metric, 'nights at non-chain hotels', to help us measure our progress towards this third goal.
- We launched a sustainable ski product through a collaboration with sustainable ski writer Mary Novakovitch, featuring twenty resorts that can be reached by train, including completely car-free Saas-Fee, plus sustainable and independent accommodation and sustainable winter activities.
- We worked with local experts to source accommodation from partnering with tourism boards to travelling to discover accommodation personally, we've added a wealth of locally owned and sustainable hotels.
- We added over 800 new local activity suggestions that encourage our customers off the beaten path and toward sustainable businesses, sourced by our team of travel experts in collaboration with customers, local journalists and destination marketing organisations, as well as our travel experts' research and our customers. For example, an electric boat tour in Leiden (the Netherlands); kayaking on the Aurlandsfjord in Flåm (Norway), and off-piste ski touring in Davos (Switzerland).
- We added sustainable recommendations from our customers to help other Byway travellers visiting in future benefit from their discoveries.



Next steps

- Prioritise sustainable, locally run stays programmatically within our trip creation technology. In future, extend this to activity recommendations as well.
- Prioritise local transport services over tourist services programmatically in our technology, supporting local infrastructure.
- Introduce more advanced sustainability data for our hotel partners, from usage of plastic bottles in bathrooms to the serving of locally-sourced food so that this too can be used for smart, sustainable choices.



Values progress



Cabs 1 day ago

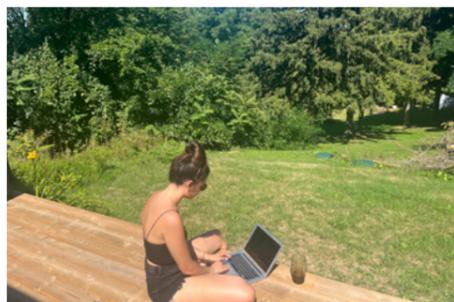
Shoutout to [@techteam](#) [@Richard Levy](#) [@Cat](#) and everyone in general for making this Ramadan so much more comfortable and for being so understanding ... we don't realise how lucky we are to work at such an amazing company ❤️ 🕌

(edited)



Becca 14 minutes ago

Last summer, I visited my family back in Canada and worked from there. It was so nice to take an extended trip back home without using all of my vacation time. I'm grateful for Byway's flexible hours policy that meant I could work from my family's backyard 🙌



Love the journey

Making slow travel mainstream is a journey we approach with the optimism and openness needed to learn and grow.

- Current employee Net Promoter Score is 72%.
- Current team's average happiness is 8.6/10.0.
- Introduced a weekly capacity survey for every team member to help us measure, make visible, and act on 'busyness'.
- Formalised flexible working to allow the team to work 80 hours over two weeks, whenever they want, with a rota for full time customer support shared across all customer-facing roles.
- Introduced Wednesday shoutouts in Slack, where anyone in the team can shout out to anyone they've really appreciated over the last week.
- Introduced an onboarding survey to measure how well we integrate and support new starters.
- Ran our first wellness survey to get feedback on how the team takes care of themselves and how Byway can best support and facilitate wellness.
- Launched a wellness squad to action feedback from our surveys and implement changes to help keep our scores high as we grow.
- Had some fun: we hosted a team away weekend to Eastbourne, an away day to Brighton, picnics, socials and lots of games both in person and remotely.

Trust and be trusted

Trust in each other is the foundation of our team. We share insights widely and are a trustworthy business grounded in openness.

- Got radically transparent with each other with monthly all-hands P&L and strategy meetings to facilitate transparency, ownership and equity across the team.
- Shared our experiences and data with the industry, press and other businesses and spoke about sustainable travel at the Green Heart Hero awards at Houses of Parliament.
- Formed a leadership team for more shared responsibility, accountability and ownership to scale decision making.
- Created internal guidelines around the ethics of experimenting with AI and set up an AI Ethics Steering Committee; we're continuing to monitor regulation and seek expert advice.
- Ran an open 360 review for the entire leadership team (>60% of the team gave direct positive and constructive feedback to Cat, our CEO) and trained the team on how to give and receive feedback.
- Held our first Byway Breakfast to get feedback from our customers and to involve them in more of our decision making and product roadmap planning.
- Launched cross-functional OKR squads aligned with our top three company goals to help bring many brains around our biggest opportunities and challenges and distribute ownership for our biggest step changes.
- Trained our team in How to Say No to clarify their autonomy and decision making powers as 'captains of their own ships'.
- Invested in expert coaching to support various team members from leadership to interns.



Holly 2 months ago

I know I missed shout outs but I did want to do a big shoutout to anyone who filled in our leadership 360s. This process has been really valuable and I had loads of useful comments and lots of very nice ones too. And a massive shout out to [@Cat](#) for running this process. It's a huge amount of time for her to spend helping the team be better and has been like having a personal executive coach/therapist! Also big shout out to [@Richard Levy](#) [@aurelie](#) [@Neil](#) [@Paul Conroy](#) who are also putting in a heck of a lot of work into this too. 🎉



Byway



Marta Yarza · 2nd

CEO of Yarza Twins creative ag... [+ Follow](#) ✕

8mo ·

Accessible design for a slow-travel company. How [Byway](#) wants to lead by example:

We recently had the great honour of creating the graphic identity of Byway, the best slow-travel company in Europe that seeks to reduce the environmental impact of traveling. One of the most critical points of this brand re-design, apart from creating a logo with unique typography, was accessibility. For Byway it is very important that people with visual, hearing or mobility handicaps feel included in their travel packages, and creating a brand around this was a challenge!

Byway

Mainstream means everyone

We listen to, respect, amplify and support all stakeholders and have guidelines around diversity, equity and inclusion.

- Formalised our investments in hiring diversity: we only pay for hiring services (platforms and recruiters) that help us source potential candidates from a more diverse hiring pool. We've declined to work with recruiters without diversity commitments.
- Begun introducing structured Accessibility data for accommodation, tagging features including wheelchair accessible, accessible room and bathroom, auditory guidelines.
- Committed to offering accessible versions of all of our trips, even where it requires significant adjustments and even if it's unprofitable to do so.
- Worked with on-the-ground experts to decide what to include and how to present it as we entered new markets and travel niches, for example commissioning travel writers Rashmi Narayan, a Morocco expert, to help with our Morocco launch and Mary Novakovitch, a sustainable ski expert, to help us with that.
- Rebranded our company using accessible fonts and colours producing a readability score and checking our colour combinations with colour vision deficiencies.



Conclusion

Support us



Sign up for our newsletter

Join our team

We've found our audiences, built a lot of our technology and we're scaling

If you've made it this far, you will know we've grown a lot! We've created flight-free holidays to loads of new (to us) regions. Tech advancements have been phenomenal and all go towards scaling bookings and making trips ever more personalised. We've focused a lot on increasing efficiencies to handle the extraordinary increase in customer demand.

We're building our network and influencing the industry

Our growth and expansion has been turbocharged by a wave of support and enablement from our partners, destination marketing organisations and our network of community advocates and local journalists. It takes a village to raise a business and our support network must take enormous credit - thank you all.

As we grow, we're focussing on retaining our values

Being a values-led company means we prioritise how we conduct ourselves as individuals and as a team. It means fostering a work environment that is inclusive and

practising transparency and honesty in all aspects of our operations, from how we communicate with our customers to how we work with our partners and suppliers. By leading with our values, we aim to create a positive impact not just in what we do, but how we do it. This commitment aligns with the core principles of being a B Corp, which are not just about environmental and social responsibility, but governance, accountability, and transparency.

We're ready to reach a mainstream audience

We're grateful for the attention we have received through marketing, press and partnerships, which has enabled us to attract a significant number of customers seeking out flight-free travel. Looking forward, we recognise the need to expand our reach to bring more people into the sustainability fold. To achieve this, we'll be exploring new ways to grab the attention of potential customers and develop the tools they need to book their flight-free trips.

We are proud of Byway's growth since our last report, hugely thankful for our team and support network, and ready to smash goals in 2023/24. As a mission-led company we want to make flight-free holidays the norm and we're really excited to have you all along for the journey!

