12 Concluding Remarks

I hope that by now you can see that 'sustainability', a deceptively simple word, is a journey itself, and based on the discussion in Chapter 11, perhaps not even our end goal. The guiding principles of sustainability are to strategically plan using a holistic and adaptive approach; preserve essential ecological processes as well as protect human heritage and biodiversity; develop in a way that sustains productivity over the long-term for all generations; and achieve a better balance of fairness and opportunity between nations. No small task and one that defies our current business-as-usual approach, raising a number of questions about growth, and whether it is even still the best approach given our state of planetary boundaries overshoot.

According to the UNWTO, the end goal for sustainable tourism as a sector is to "*take full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities*". It's a constant process of measuring your impacts, adjusting your practices, working with stakeholders and supply chains, keeping abreast of sustainability-oriented innovations, and scanning your social, technological, environmental, economic and political environments to be able to manage the changes that are inevitably coming your way. In this way, we move from linear thinking to a more systems-based approach that sees tourism as part of a wider, complex whole.

By taking a systems approach, we see that making tourism more sustainable is also a structural issue. Our focus on economic growth through consumption has led to what Pope Francis has called our 'throwaway culture'. It affects production mechanisms as much as it does the service sector and experiences themselves. When was the last time you stopped to really savour a travel experience once you returned home? Or did you immediately start looking for the next experience? Do you revisit those photos posted on social media or have they drowned in a tidal wave of the newest best thing?

The Covid-19 pandemic certainly gave us all pause for thought as stay-at-home orders came about, borders closed, supply chains became severely disrupted and many of the things that we took for granted could no longer be taken for granted. A number of destinations and businesses, as well as researchers,