

"Forever Mighty" & Sustainable Tourism in Utah

Flint Timmins

08/02/2021



"Forever Mighty" & Sustainable Tourism in Utah

By: Flint Timmins, Utah Office of Tourism
From Amsterdam to Zion National Park, destinations around the world are speaking up about being “loved to death,” a feeling that visitor behavior is actually damaging the very features that make a destination desirable. Many North American Gateway and Natural Amenity Region (GNAR) communities are reeling from the effects of increased visitation, much of which comes from visitors who are new to nature. These communities are employing strategies to educate travelers and recreators on how to visit responsibly and behave in ways that strengthen, sustain, and preserve everything that makes their destination special.

Responsible Travel

According to the [Global Sustainable Tourism Council](#), responsible travel (also called responsible visitation or tourism) describes the behavior of visitors who desire to act and make choices that follow the principles of sustainable tourism. Responsible travel is about much more than going green: it’s about visiting a destination in a manner that benefits and protects the local economy and culture as well as the environment. Along with reusable straws and WAG bags, examples of responsible travel

might include purchasing supplies at local stores, hiring a guide, and visiting popular tourist spots at off-peak times.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the powerful draw that GNAR communities have for Americans, and the need for responsible travel in gateway and natural amenity rich areas. Whether fleeing COVID hotspots, taking advantage of new remote work opportunities, or simply taking a break from home quarantine, visitors flocked to these communities. While the incredible volume of visitors brought much-needed revenues to struggling businesses, in some cases it also brought graffiti, litter, and crowded trails. More than ever, GNAR destinations saw the need to educate their visitors on how to visit responsibly and respectfully.

Keeping Utah Forever Mighty



As visitation to Utah continues to grow, the [Utah Office of Tourism \(UOT\)](#) is working to encourage those visitors to experience Utah thoughtfully and respectfully. UOT’s [Red Emerald Strategic Plan](#) focuses on (among other management and development tactics) attracting responsible visitors who will be prepared, make positive impacts, and leave with a greater understanding and appreciation of our state.

UOT recently unveiled its [Forever Mighty initiative](#), an educational campaign intended to encourage responsible visitation from out-of-state visitors as well as residents. This effort is more than just a multi-media marketing campaign, it is an ethos of thoughtful travel where visitors minimize their impact while maximizing their experience. This ethos infects everything our office does, from promotional materials like these [television spots](#) to the daily work of our staff.

Stronger Together

We're not alone in our efforts, either. UOT has partnered with equally passionate organizations to amplify the message. Our fellow state agencies like the State Historic Preservation Office, Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation, and Division of State Parks have each crafted messaging encouraging responsible behavior while exploring Utah. Nonprofits like Leave No Trace, Tread Lightly!, and the Global Sustainable Travel Council lend their expertise to help us develop Utah specific messaging and extend our reach. We partner with our federal land managers to coordinate messaging and do our part to address the challenges they face. States across the West do similar work to communicate responsible travel.

Local destinations are also doing their part. Moab, UT's *"Do It Like A Local"* campaign shared tips and advice on reducing negative visitor impacts in one of West's most popular destinations. Ogden, UT has partnered with *Pledge For The Wild* on an [initiative](#) to share responsible travel tips and encourage recreators to donate to a local trails nonprofit.

Anyone Can Do It

While we're proud of our efforts so far, we know that we can't stop now. Utah will continue to grow as a visitor destination and as a new home for thousands of families, and we will continue to encourage responsible travel to keep Utah Forever Mighty.



Flint Timmins is the destination development lead with the Utah Office of Tourism where he assists local governments in developing and managing the amenities, infrastructure, and leadership necessary to become welcoming destinations for visitors. He previously worked for the State's Division of Housing and Community Development where he conducted rural research, provided local government planning assistance, and supported the division's infrastructure funding programs. Flint graduated with a master's degree in public administration from the Romney Institute of Public Management at Brigham Young University.



(GNAR Community Springdale, UT at night)