

Carbon Neutral PATA Events

Guidelines for Planning and Delivering Carbon Neutral Events at PATA

As a signatory of the [Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism](#), the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has strengthened our commitment to reducing and mitigating the association's carbon footprint including through our **in-person events**. This document provides guidelines for making sure all PATA events are carbon neutral.

The proposed strategy follows the pathway: 1) Assessment; 2) Reduction; 3) Implementation; 4) Offsetting; and 5) Benchmarking.

1. Assessment

"If you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it". It is *fundamental* to measure the footprint of the event to understand which areas need more attention and to be able to benchmark our efforts for all future events.

To measure an event's footprint, **we need data** that must be collected *before* and *after* the event.

Before data

General information:

- Number of days of the event (both open to public and for preparation, mounting/dismounting)
- Total number of attendees (including delegates, speakers and staff)

Delegates and staff information:

- City where attendees will travel from
- Flights taken and departure points
- Road trips taken and departure points
- Rail trips taken and departure points
- Number of nights in accommodation of choice (with footprint)
- % of attendees offsetting travel

After data

Contact the venue's management/events team to collect the event's impact report, consisting of the following:

- Amount of water consumed during the event
- Number of meals catered for
- Total purchased electricity for the event (distinguished by categories like coal, biofuel, renewable, etc.)
- Total waste generated in tons (distinguished by categories like organic, inorganic)
- Total waste recycled/donated
- % of waste diverted from landfill (ideally 100%)

Calculations

With this data, it will be possible to calculate the total carbon footprint of the event. Various calculators available online can be used for this, such as from [My Climate](#), [ICAO](#) and the [US Environmental Protection Agency](#).

2. Reduction

When it comes to sustainability, **reduction of impacts is always the main goal**. There are many areas in which we can reduce carbon emissions in an event, such as a) location of the event; b) venue; c) accommodation; d) transportation; and e) marketing and media.

A. Location

The location (city, country) where the event will be held will heavily impact the travel distance of attendees. And travelling to and from the event is the **largest single contributor** to carbon emissions.

For this reason, the location of the event needs to be selected based on, first and foremost, **where most of the attendees will be coming from** (e.g., if most delegates are based in Southeast Asia, the event's footprint will be smaller if it takes place within SE Asia).

Other aspects to be considered are:

- Urban infrastructure: How is the public transportation system at this destination? Will attendees be able to use it? Do public transportation vehicles use fossil fuels or low-carbon alternatives?
- Waste infrastructure: Does the destination have a good recycling infrastructure?

Therefore, priority must be given to destinations that:

1. are close to the main target audience location;
2. have convenient and low-carbon public transport;
3. have good recycling and waste management infrastructure.

B. Venue

The venue's **location** is also critical because it will dictate the attendees' travel distance from public transport, accommodation, facilities and airport/train/bus station. Priority should be given to venues that:

- are located nearby public transport (400 metres / 5 min walk to from the nearest bus/metro station);
- have bicycle facilities nearby.

Apart from location, the venue selection must also be based on their **commitment to sustainability** and to delivering carbon neutral events. The venue should have strategies in place in the following areas:

Energy

- Use on site renewable energy or purchase green power.
- Have rooms and spaces that utilise daylight.
- Have energy-saving devices throughout the property.
- Control room temperature (manually/sensors) to reduce energy consumption and for user comfort.

Water

- Use less water by design and operation optimisation.
- Have water-saving devices throughout the property.
- Have signages for both guests and staff on the importance of reducing water consumption.

Waste

- Not use any single-use plastics in the event such as water bottles, straws, single-use packed napkins/cutlery, etc.
- Have water refill stations throughout the property.
- Separate all waste (e.g., food waste, plastic, glass, paper, aluminium, etc.) and ensure their responsible disposal.
- Separate food waste into meat/non-meat.
- Have a composting site/biodigester for food waste.
- Donate food surpluses.

Food

- Source food locally (within 100 km distance from the destination) – at least 80% of all food.
- Prioritise plant-based dishes.
- Have signages for guests on the buffets and/or menus to raise awareness towards food waste reduction and the Zero Food Waste Policy.

C. Accommodation

The hotels to be selected for staff and suggested to delegates should also be **committed to sustainability**, and priority should be given to those which possess a Sustainability Policy or, ideally, a certification. The minimum requirements are:

- energy reduction strategies and green energy initiatives;
- water reduction strategies with water efficient fixtures; and
- waste management.

Another crucial aspect regarding the selection of accommodation providers is the **location**. It is required that all selected hotels are within a **3 km radius of the venue**.

D. Transportation

The transportation within the destination, by both delegates and staff, should also be **low carbon**. This can be achieved by:

- encouraging delegates to use public transport or the shared transportation provided;
- prioritising green/low carbon* vans for delegates/staff transportation; and
- using bulk transportations options for moving goods around and reducing the amount to be transported.

*Priority should be given to vehicles that use: 1) electricity; 2) compressed natural gas; 3) petrol; and 4) diesel.

E. Marketing and media

It is also important to **raise awareness** of delegates and speakers towards PATA's commitment to carbon neutral events. Many changes will take place on the future events, so it is crucial to communicate these changes to attendees to gain their **support** and **participation** – especially those who have been to previous PATA events.

Topics to be covered in the promotional/informative materials to delegates include:

- PATA's commitment to carbon neutrality;
- available low-carbon transport options (public transportation and PATA's shared vehicles); and
- zero single-use plastic policy (water refill stations will be available and guests are encouraged to bring their reusable bottles or they can purchase them at the event).

Finally, to reduce paper waste in communications:

- limit the promotion and marketing to digital content only, except in cases where printed materials are absolutely necessary (e.g., for people with disabilities);
- use an event app for sharing information with delegates, such as the ones already being

- used by PATA;
- if paper is unavoidable, reuse paper and/or use recycled paper.

3. Implementation

To successfully implement these guidelines before, during and after the event, it is important to have at **least one designated PATA staff** to **oversee** all the above activities and **ensure compliance** of the minimum requirements. This person would be responsible for the following:

Before the event

- Gather the necessary information for the assessment (see 'Before data' on Step 1)
- Research and select a destination that meets the criteria (Step 2.a.)
- Research and select a venue that meets the criteria (Step 2.b.)
- Research and select accommodation providers that meet the criteria (Step 2.c.)
- Research and select low-carbon transportation service providers (Step 2.d.)
- Communicate with attendees the sustainability strategies of the event (Step 2.e.)

During the event

- Ensure that the suppliers provided information matches with on-site operations (Does the venue really have energy/water-saving devices installed? Is the transportation company really using a low carbon fleet? Are there separate bins for different types of waste in the venue?).
- Check room temperature to avoid energy overconsumption (between 22-26°C).
- Check if no single-use plastics are being used or given to attendees (e.g., straws in drinks) and that there are enough water refill stations.
- Check if the menu contains only locally-sourced ingredients (e.g., no salmon in Sarawak) and if there are signages in the restaurant area educating attendees about the Zero Food Waste Policy.

After the event

- Gather the necessary information for the assessment (see 'After data' on Step 1).
- Calculate the event's footprint and offset.

4. Offsetting

Offsetting is *not* an ultimate solution to carbon emissions. It is only after optimising and substantially **reducing** footprint that we utilise offsetting as a means to **balance emissions that are unavoidable**.

To offset, it is important to:

- collect carbon offset payments from all delegates, even the ones with complimentary access;
- select a local project (ideally in the same city/state (e.g., Sarawak), but if not possible, same

- area (e.g., Borneo) or country (e.g., Malaysia);
- select an offsetting agency/project that is third-party certified;
- communicate the offsetting project's name, location and other details to delegates and thank their contribution.

5. Benchmarking

The Assessment (Step 1) is important for calculating the event's footprint but also for **setting reduction goals for future events** and **working towards continuous improvement**.

It is recommended to conduct a yearly comparative analysis of all events (with before & after data) to find out what was that year's number of emissions per person. This figure will enable PATA to improve upon existing sustainability strategies and policies, their implementation and acceptance.

PATA should also maintain a region-wise database of all events to better understand the relationship between the number of carbon emissions and the events' destinations. This will help in the selection of location for future events.

Noor Ahmad Hamid
Chief Executive Officer



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Noor Ahmad Hamid', is written over a faint, semi-transparent PATA logo. The logo consists of the word 'PATA' in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with 'Pacific Asia Travel Association' written in a smaller font below it.

This is a public document and will be reviewed annually.

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