



Agency steps up to end the ocean plastic crisis

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Rick MacSwain, the managing director of Network Travel in Edmonton, Alta., took a different approach towards a more sustainable future. MacSwain's agency Network Travel partnered with Certified B Corporation 4Ocean on its One Pound Promise to end the ocean plastic crisis. "It really hit closer to home while on a cruise and wondering what was floating off in the distance from the view of my balcony. As we got closer, I was saddened to discover that we were sailing through a massive floating patch of debris," MacSwain tells Travel Courier. "I remember the conversation with my friends while looking overboard. 'With all the debate and government spending about saving our climate, how can this even be possible? How can we be sailing through an island of trash and only a short distance from a historic port in Europe? Why isn't anyone talking about this?' Cleaning up ocean garbage is something that has an immediate effect for marine life." MacSwain says the initiative came about after watching a documentary about how oceans are an unprotected dumping ground for plastics and abandoned fishing nets with his 19-year-old daughter. "My daughter mentioned the 4Ocean group and how she loved the work they were doing," he said. "I did some research and realized their founders had a

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similar experience [to mine] and they decided to take action. 4Ocean creates bracelets from recycled plastics and each bracelet that is sold comes with their One Pound Promise to remove a pound of plastic and trash from our oceans, rivers, and coastlines. 4Ocean's goal is to pull 20 million pounds of trash by the end of 2021." In addition to bracelets, 4Ocean creates a variety of products from recycled plastics including sneakers and reusable shopping bags. As of Feb. 13, 2021, the 4Ocean team pulled 13 million pounds of trash from the ocean towards its goal of reaching 20 million pounds by the end of the year. "The 4Ocean group is a natural fit for Network Travel and our industry," he says. "We want to do our part and bring awareness as many travel experiences involve oceans, rivers, coastlines and beaches. Our oceans are our largest carbon sinks on earth and the protection

of marine life, and their environment is something we are very passionate about. In support of 4Ocean, we are bringing awareness by periodically hosting promotions with complimentary bracelets for our clients who purchase ocean, river or beach experiences." Now that travel and tourism will soon be a reality again, Network Travel is also offering experiences in destinations that depend on thoughtful and sustainable tourism for the survival of a species or the economy of a community. "In countries such as Uganda, the protection of their gorilla population from poaching is dependent upon tourism dollars. Gorilla trekking experiences are escorted by local park guides and the numbers are strictly regulated by government permits," he explains. "Our guests experience a lodge called Ride 4 a Woman. This is an authentic Ugandan experience supporting a local charitable organization set up to support women struggling with poverty and domestic violence." Another destination the agency is focused supporting sustainably is Kenya through Land Cruiser tours with private local drivers and guides, which are capped at four people per vehicle. "Your safari game drive begins at the Nairobi airport and circles the highlights of the country," he says. "Guests meet each night at their lodge to share their stories while enjoying the Sundowner experience. The driver and guides are employed locally, and guests are immersed into the local communities and cultures along the route." MacSwain also points to the river cruise industry as an "excellent example" of supporting sustainable tourism. "River cruises provide a more intimate experience with less guests, avoiding a massive influx of tourists at each stop. Many river cruises provide the food and wines of the regions they are passing through," he explains. "River communities see a significant boost to their economies and display a pride of ownership as they welcome tourists to their shops and cafes."