

# Untours

## 2021 Pennsylvania Benefit Corporation Report

It is hard to imagine a harder set of challenges than the ones that 2020 and early 2021 have presented to Untours. Like others in the travel industry and small businesses in general, we have struggled this past year.

With international travel shut down, we have worked hard to service customers in multiple rounds of cancellations and rebookings while working with almost no revenue beyond benefits from the Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP).

We have worked to retain staff during this time of hardship, stay connected to our clients, experiment with virtual travel on Zoom, and build for a new and better future when travel does reopen.

### Updates and News From 2020-21

#### COVID-19 Response for Our Clients

We have drafted policies on cancellations with the welfare of our clients and our vendors (apartment owners dependent on rental income for their livelihood) in mind. We have worked hard to share updates, answer questions, and re-accommodate Untourists as lockdowns and travel restrictions are extended.

We continue to take care of cancelling guests and to make plans for their future travel in 2022, and we look ahead to a brighter future, including one that actually offers Untours the chance to make revenue and send curious travelers abroad in the style of close-to-the-culture travel we have pioneered.



## **COVID-19 Response in Our Community**

- Untours staff has observed local ordinances by working from home.
- Untours has worked hard to foster community within its loyal client base, sharing updates on our community's favorite places and people in Europe.
- Untours employees have been engaged in the community, donating blood, collecting for local food pantries, and checking in with Untours family and friends.

## **Black Lives Matter**

Like others, we were horrified by the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd and the numerous other people of color who have died at the hands of police officers. Many of us have marched in our communities to help raise awareness of systemic racism and injustice.

At the same time, we are educating ourselves, reading, talking, and speaking out for change. We have used Untours social media to share resources. We have supported the work of the Untours Foundation in sharing Black and Brown voices and getting capital into those communities to help build and protect small business;

We have a lot to learn but are committed to continuing our education and advocacy.

## **Untours at Home**

In 2020 we rolled out new online programming to connect grounded Untours travelers with the places in Europe that they love. Our small program has featured lectures, concerts, cooking classes, and talks broadcast live from Europe on Zoom. It has allowed us to offer limited paid hours to our European colleagues while engaging our Untourist community with interesting and educational content and creating a new social outlet in an isolating time. Our Virtual Weekend series has allowed us to explore the culture of spotlighted destinations in more depth, offering new insights and educational opportunities.

## **Carbon Offsets**

Untours' Green Tag program offers travelers a chance to offset the CO2 created by their vacation. Guests can make a donation to buy a carbon offset and we invest that money in green projects that help fight climate change.

With no travel in 2020, there was little to offset, but we did offset our office energy usage and commuting. We donated \$294 to offset our environmental impact, partnering with Native Energy to fund a clean water effort in Haiti.

## Our Policies and Ongoing Business Practices

Our mission of cross-cultural understanding is central in all we do. We've always believed we helped people learn about and respect cultural differences through our mode of travel--based in apartments, close to the ground, centered in residential neighborhoods and small villages, with longer stays and opportunities to connect with the local people.

**Here is how we live our values:**



## Governance

2020 has presented some of the stiffest challenges our company has ever faced.

Employees have been directly engaged in the decision making and policy setting around COVID-19, including consulting on client-facing policies and key staffing plans.

In 2020-21, the Untours president has shared quarterly fiscal reports with staff and answered questions about earnings, revenue, profits, and growth plans.

- The board has community representation.
- Financial information and other administrative decision making information is shared openly with employees.
- Customers and staff have channels to voice grievances and complaints.
- Untours has a whistle blower policy.
- Social and environmental values and objectives are part of new employee orientation, as well as part of ongoing employee training and annual evaluations.

## Workers and Workplace

Despite a radical cutback in hours and income, Untours has retained all but two members of the staff it had when the COVID-19 outbreak started. Current staff members have worked here for 15 - 25 years, enjoying generous paid vacation and sick time.

Untours management has been as generous as possible during this extreme situation, continuing to provide health care benefits, consulting with staff on major company decisions, and arranging limited work hours in the most beneficial way possible for the individuals who are employed by Untours.



While Untours is under severe staffing time cuts based on COVID-19, these are the standards Untours normally provides for its employees.

- Workers receive health benefits; Untours pays 100%.
- The highest paid employee makes less than 5x the lowest paid full-time employee.
- Untours' lowest paid employee is paid more than a living wage.
- Full time employees are offered dental coverage, short term disability, life insurance, and health insurance for spouses and domestic partners.
- Employees enjoy a wellness reimbursement that subsidizes gym memberships, yoga and dance classes, and other activities that contribute to health and wellbeing.
- The company offers a 401 K policy to employees and gives a partial match for employee contributions when profits allow it.
- Work-life balance is valued, and employees are given freedom to work flexible hours and from home as needed.
- Employees have an annual evaluation and are able to look at their career objectives and evaluate company leadership.
- Untours offers partial reimbursement for job-related education, language, and skill development, encouraging staff to build skills.
- Family values:
  - 30 days paid maternity & 11 days paid paternity leave to full time employees.
  - Untours honors FMLA, though its staff size does not require it.
  - A financial adoption benefit is offered to employees.

## Community



Untours is committed to serving its community and encourages employees to volunteer. In 2020, under COVID lockdowns, our small staff still managed to contribute 108 hours of community service.

Among our volunteer efforts in the community:

- Activism and education around racial justice
  - Phone banking for causes that matter to us
  - Working at the polls on voting day
  - Donating blood
  - Collecting food and fundraising for local food banks
  - Organizing financial relief funds
  - At-home projects for MLK Day
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- Untours organizes volunteer opportunities for employees on MLK Day. Full time employees get up to two paid days off a year for community service.
  - Untours fosters online community and engagement with our clients and fellow travelers on social media.
  - Untours has always worked to encourage thoughtful global engagement and open information exchange among its customers and other travelers, and believes in sharing helpful information even with those who do not buy our products.
  - Untours was set up to donate the majority of its profits to the Untours Foundation, and that is what Untours continues to do as business conditions allow.
  - Untours works side by side with the Untours Foundation, hosting office space and offering other regular material support to its operations and fundraising efforts.
  - Untours favors using local and minority-owned vendors when possible and has a written policy supporting this.
  - Company workforce is majority women.
  - The Untours office hosts community groups like the Fair Trade Committee for meetings and events.

## Environment

Travel has been grounded, to excellent effect for the environment. Untours was engaged in the conversation about overtourism before the pandemic and is looking at ways to “rebuild better” when travel does return.



In the meantime, office energy usage is radically reduced and commutes have all but disappeared as staff's limited hours are worked largely from home.

Untours' solar installation produced 24,667 kWh kWh from Feb 2019 - Feb 2020.

- We have an 18.8 kW solar installation that provides a substantial portion of the electricity used in the building.
- Carbon offsets are purchased for employee travel and commuting.
- 100% of the additional electricity purchased is from renewable sources.
- Company recycling includes paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, and metal.
- Recycling efforts also include in-office worm composting for food scraps and stations for employees to recycle batteries and plastic bags from work and home use.
- Office paper products are sourced with the highest levels of post-consumer recycled content, and office furniture is salvage/reused.
- The company uses non toxic cleaning supplies, organic and sustainable kitchen supplies, and reusable or compostable catering supplies.
- Office measures to conserve energy include the use of Energy Star equipment when possible, programmable thermostats, and moderation in heating and cooling.
- All electronics are donated or disposed of responsibly.
- Consumer mailings are very limited and are printed on high post-consumer recycled content paper.
- In-office printing defaults to double sided to save paper.

## Impact Business Models

**In the COVID-19 era**, our guests cannot travel, and so our impact is limited. But even with reductions in staff hours, we are working to develop new ideas to help our loyal clientele stay engaged in the world and keep learning about other countries and cultures. We are working to foster community across oceans, as we network with staff and clients who are at home and grounded from travel.

**Our Untours at Home programs** have allowed some community connection, social engagement, and education about other cultures and places.

We normally measure how well our Untours travel product serves our mission of cross cultural understanding. On post-trip surveys, we asked Untours guests *How much do you agree with the following statement: Untours offers an excellent value for the price?*

Our score in 2019 was 8.2 out of a possible 10. Unfortunately we had no travel in 2020 so have nothing to weigh against this benchmark.

- Our product and service benefits consumers by promoting cross-cultural peace and understanding through travel. We strive to provide clients with a deep experience of the cultures they visit, and we promote education and respect for other cultures and the preservation of cultural heritage. This was the vision of our founder Hal Taussig.
- We have expanded our offerings through Untours Marketplace to include eye-opening travels in the developing world with responsible partners like G Adventure and to emerging destinations like Cuba.
- We wish to lead by example, as leaders in thoughtful travel within the travel industry and as leaders of responsible business practices in the broader business community.
- Our product connects people, our business values people, our profits lift people.

## Verification and the triple bottom line

All of these practices are independently verified in our regular review and rigorous recertification process with B Lab. See their report [here](#). With these practices and policies, we hope to serve the triple bottom line of people (clients, staff, and community), planet, and profit.

As for profit, we work hard to turn a fair but hearty profit so that we can support the work of the Untours Foundation.

The Untours Foundation owns Untours and uses the profits of the business to invest in the community to create jobs and economic opportunities for those who need help. With a series of low-interest loans, they began to share the company wealth in 1993. Over the years since, Untours has funneled the majority of its post-tax profits into the foundation and continues to support the mission of the foundation.



*Living our founder's vision and following the ideal he set in our mission statement (We love you, Hall!)*

## **The Untours Mission Statement**

Untours' purpose is to foster a healthy and healing society that unites people of different cultures and economic statuses. We feel it is imperative to reconnect people to each other and to the earth. We hope that we, as a company, can be the change we wish to see in the world.

We seek to achieve this purpose by:

- Helping clients, employees, and suppliers reach a deeper understanding of other cultures and enabling employees to facilitate this exchange.
- Creating travel opportunities for people who could not otherwise afford to do so.
- Paying most employees above-average wages and benefits for businesses of similar size in our industry while maintaining a lower-than-average gap between the highest and lowest paid.
- Giving employees a chance to participate in shaping the company's personality and to perform jobs that are rewarding and stimulating.
- Seeking a diverse workforce, never discriminating based on age, race, gender, nationality, religion, physical ability, or sexual orientation.
- Delighting customers by exceeding their expectations.
- Choosing suppliers and business partners who share our values whenever possible.
- Being a good neighbor and a positive force for change in our local community.
- Minimizing negative environmental & cultural effects of tourism on local communities.
- Working toward environmentally sustainable business practices in the U.S. and abroad.
- Using business profits to promote economic and social justice.

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