

Award-Winning Journalist Tonya Fitzpatrick Brings Destination Stewardship Conversation to Martha's Vineyard

Oak Bluffs author talk examines who benefits from tourism, resident quality of life and the future of popular destinations

OAK BLUFFS, MA, UNITED STATES, August 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Award-winning journalist and author Tonya Fitzpatrick brought a timely conversation about tourism growth and community well-being to Martha's Vineyard on Aug. 15, challenging residents and visitors to look beyond visitor counts and ask a harder question: Who benefits when tourism grows?

Fitzpatrick, author of [Destination Stewardship](#): Drive Sustainability, Economic Renewal, and Cultural Integrity (Kogan Page, April 2026), spoke at the [Oak Bluffs Public Library](#) during "A Place to Visit. A Place to Live.," a community conversation moderated by World Footprints co-founder Ian Fitzpatrick.

The discussion moved beyond tourism promotion to the realities communities can face when popularity puts pressure on housing, infrastructure, locally owned businesses, cultural identity and everyday quality of life.

"Just because tourism is an economic engine, we don't know where the engine is taking people," Fitzpatrick told the audience.

She argued that visitor volume and hotel occupancy alone cannot show whether tourism is working for a community. Destinations also need to ask whether residents benefit, whether



Author and award-winning journalist Tonya Fitzpatrick discusses tourism, community and destination stewardship with moderator Ian Fitzpatrick during her Aug. 15 author talk at the Oak Bluffs Public Library on Martha's Vineyard.

small businesses participate meaningfully in the tourism economy, whether infrastructure keeps pace and whether the culture that gives a place its identity is being protected.

Fitzpatrick described destination stewardship as the collective, long-term care of a place. That approach, she said, requires meaningful participation from residents, cultural custodians, businesses, policymakers and tourism leaders.

Travelers have responsibilities, too.

“As travelers, I think sometimes we forget when we travel to a destination, we travel to somebody’s home,” Fitzpatrick said.

She encouraged visitors to consider where their money goes, support locally owned businesses, learn about the communities they visit and respect the people and traditions that give destinations their character.

That led to another question that resonated during the discussion: “Are you celebrating that culture or are you consuming that culture?”

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*Tonya Fitzpatrick, author of
Destination Stewardship*

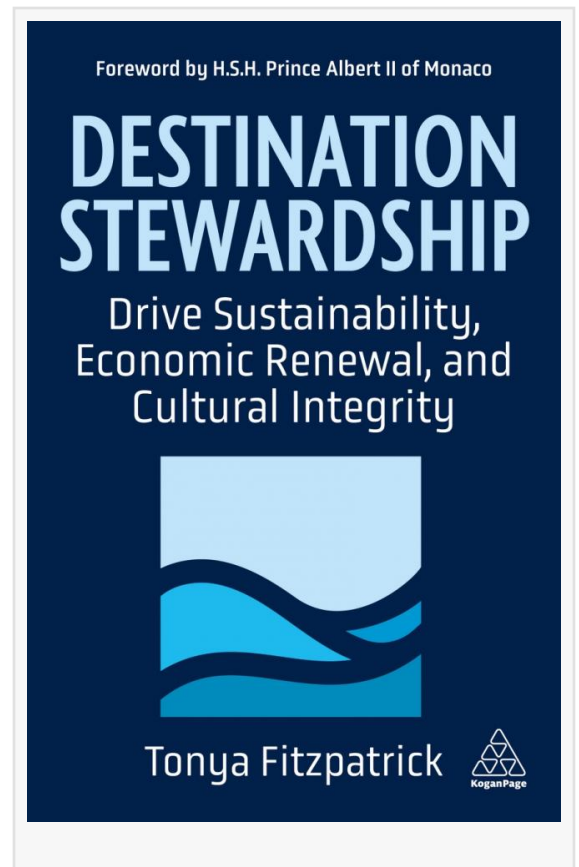
Audience members extended the conversation with questions about overtourism, resident participation, cultural preservation, local history and how communities can bring different voices together before tourism pressures become crises.

Fitzpatrick was careful not to prescribe solutions for Martha’s Vineyard. She and Ian Fitzpatrick have returned to

the island regularly for years, but she emphasized that they are visitors and that the people who live and work there understand its pressures and priorities in ways visitors cannot.

The Oak Bluffs conversation reflects the broader argument of Destination Stewardship: tourism should be managed not simply for growth, but for the long-term health of the communities, cultures and environments on which tourism depends.

ABOUT DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP



Destination Stewardship: Drive Sustainability, Economic Renewal, and Cultural Integrity, published by Kogan Page in April 2026, is a practical resource for destination organizations, policymakers, tourism businesses, educators and community leaders. It examines governance, partnerships, measurement, funding, cultural preservation and the economic choices involved in moving from volume-driven tourism toward long-term stewardship.

Using real-world examples and practical frameworks, the book explores how destinations can create economic opportunity while protecting community well-being, local identity and natural and cultural assets. It also challenges conventional definitions of tourism success by asking destinations to look beyond visitor numbers and consider measurable outcomes for residents and communities.

The Destination Stewardship Center featured the book in an article titled "[The First True Book on Destination Stewardship](#)." It includes a foreword by H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco and is available through Kogan Page, Amazon, Barnes & Noble and wherever books are sold.

ABOUT TONYA FITZPATRICK

Tonya Fitzpatrick, Esq., is an award-winning journalist, author, lawyer, media executive and three-time TEDx speaker. She is co-founder and CEO of World Footprints and serves on the Maryland Tourism Development Board. Her work explores the intersection of tourism, culture, economic development, community well-being and responsible destination management.

Fitzpatrick has addressed national and international audiences including Destinations International, ITB Berlin and the NYU Tisch Center of Hospitality. Her background also includes government and public policy, including service as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Policy at the U.S. Department of Education.

Her journalism and industry work have received multiple honors, including Black Travel Journalist of the Year and Travel Unity's DEI Champion Award.

ABOUT WORLD FOOTPRINTS

Founded in 2007 by Tonya and Ian Fitzpatrick, World Footprints is a social-impact travel media platform built around the principle of Ubuntu—"I am because we are." Through journalism, podcasts, interviews and public conversations, World Footprints explores travel through the lenses of culture, history, sustainability, social impact and human connection.

Its award-winning media work seeks out stories and voices often overlooked in traditional travel coverage while examining how travel can strengthen understanding between people and communities.

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