

Sustainable Travel: Greening your Vacation

Sustainable travel tips for the eco-friendly traveler.

Whoever said a change is as good as a vacation had obviously never been on holiday. Nothing's better than a good vacation! What we do have to change is the way we travel. Sustainable travel is the responsibility of every holiday-maker. As many of you head south for a little sunshine over the winter months, there are ways for you to mitigate the carbon footprint of your holiday.

Let's start by calculating just how much greenhouse gas your traveling has incurred. [Travel carbon calculators](#) abound online and make it easy to work out the carbon footprint of your travels. Once you know how much carbon your holiday has created, the easy solution is to purchase carbon offset credits which are usually available from your airline's website.

But carbon offset credits aren't the only solution. Here are few money-saving tips that can help to keep your vacation lean and green:

- Take-offs and landings burn more fuel, so opt for direct flights when possible.
- Pack light as heavy loads cause planes and cars to burn more fuel.
- Want a more creative solution than just dolling out cash for carbon offsets? Plant a tree! In fact, plant a whole forest. Just a couple of trees a year with a [reforestation project](#) can compensate for the carbon footprint of your work or leisure travel.
- Short showers and reusing towels is something most of us know about, but add to your bathroom repertoire by taking your own toiletries so that you aren't encouraging waste with all those teeny tiny bottles of shampoo and shower gel.
- Avoid bottled water, take your own bottle instead and ask at hotel reception where you can refill it with water that is safe for drinking.
- Vote for green travel with your dollars—choose hotels with an eco-friendly approach, opt for public transport instead of taxis, support small business run by locals and eat in-season meals from restaurants owned by local residents.
- Take a small backpack for shopping and day trips so you have a place to store your water bottle and to avoid using shopping bags.
- Walk or hire a bike for sightseeing; it's fun, cheap and environmentally friendly. Book walking or riding tours of the city and burn all those holiday cocktails.
- Do your homework before going on tours with animals. Ensure that your tour guide treats animals humanely and you don't endanger wildlife or natural fauna in any way.
- Check your shoes for dirt before you leave. Sensitive ecological tourist destinations like the [Galapagos Islands](#)' natural vegetation is being threatened by invasive species which grow from seeds that fall from the soles of tourist's shoes.
- Thinking of taking a cruise? Many cruises are notoriously harsh on the environment, consuming millions

of tons of fuel and dumping about a [billion tons of sewage](#) into the oceans every year. Some cruise lines are trying to clean up their act. You can see how they rate on the Friends of the Earth's [annual report](#).

- Before you leave, turn off and unplug all your appliances. Electronics on standby mode account for [10-15%](#) of your home energy bill. Turn down your thermostat and switch your water heater over to the vacation setting.

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