

The Responsible Traveler Guide

Authors



Dr Sonya Graci

Sustainable business specialist, Director of Accommodating Green
Assistant Professor at the Ted Rogers School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Ryerson University, Toronto



Jaqueline Kuehnel

Corporate social responsibility, climate change and business specialist.
Managing Director of JK Consulting Enterprises



GreenHotels
& Responsible Tourism Initiative
<http://green.hotelscombined.com>



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Introduction



People love to travel, so much so that in 2008 over 922 million people crossed the world by air, land and sea [1]. From city holidays to hiking trips, travel can be beneficial in a number of ways for the community, the environment and your personal well-being. However, the planet is fragile and both tourists and suppliers are endeavoring to understand how they can lessen their impact. This means doing the least harm possible to the natural environment, valuing and protecting the local culture, and providing as much economic benefit as possible.

Whether you already are a committed green individual at home, or you just want to learn how to become a green traveler, this guide provides useful information to assist you to plan your journey.

To be an aware and conscientious traveler will help protect the places we love.

We owe it to the local people and to future travelers who, like ourselves, want to enjoy unspoiled sites and cultures.

A few facts about travel and tourism

Often travel and tourism is taken for granted and few people know how large, complex and fragmented this industry is. In 2008, the tourism industry generated over 944 billion dollars in revenue worldwide [2].

It is no wonder then, that travel and tourism can provide many great benefits to many regions worldwide. There are, however, many things that could be done differently to avoid damaging the wonderful places we visit.



Benefits of tourism



The key benefits of tourism are economic, socio-cultural and environmental.

Economic benefits – Tourism can provide direct jobs to the community such as tour guides or hotel housekeeping. Indirect employment is generated through other industries such as agriculture, food production, and retail.

Visitors' expenditure generates income for the local community and can lead to the alleviation of poverty in countries which are heavily reliant on tourism.

Economic diversification is important to areas where there may be a concentration of environmentally damaging industries such as mining or manufacturing.

Infrastructure development such as airports, roads, schools, hospitals, and retail areas have the potential to benefit the local community and can aid economic

development by allowing more trade and better flow of goods and services.

Social benefits - Tourism can bring about a real sense of pride and identity to communities. By showcasing distinct characteristics of their ways of life, history and culture, tourism can encourage the preservation of traditions which may be at risk of disappearing.

Environmental benefits - Tourism provides financial support for the conservation of ecosystems and natural resource management, making the destination more authentic and desirable to visitors. It also adds more value to the local tourism business.



Negative impacts of tourism



Many of the negative impacts of tourism occur when the amount of visitors is greater than the environment's ability to cope with the visitor volume.

Consequences of exceeding the environmental capacity include strain on already scarce resources such as water, energy, food and natural habitat areas. In addition, unchecked tourism development may lead to soil erosion, increased pollution and waste, discharges into the sea and waterways, increased pressure on endangered species of animals and plants, and heightened vulnerability to deforestation, as well as loss of biodiversity.

The same way that tourism can encourage the preservation of socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, mass tourism may also erode traditional values by introducing foreign lifestyles which are in conflict with the cultural, historical, and religious heritage of the community.

The tourism paradox therefore lies in the tension between our desire to travel the world, and the need to provide the most benefits with the least harm. Many well-intentioned people in the public and private sector are hard at work looking for solutions that will provide viable, long-term socio-economic benefits for tourist areas.

Building a culture of sustainability will however, take time and you, the traveler, can become part of the solution.



Before you go, while you are there and when you return

Making the right choices can have a profound impact in the way tourism products and services are operated and marketed. Consumer pressure will force businesses to make changes to meet the needs of a more conscientious traveler – don't underestimate your power to influence change!

Where do you start?

Taking a trip involves several important stages and *The Responsible Traveler Guide* provides a comprehensive list of the possible green choices you can make while planning your trip, before you leave home, while you are there, and when you return.

You can start by taking a few minutes to check if the travel supplier and destination you are considering has a published environmental policy, a corporate social responsibility statement, sustainability guidelines, or green practices.

“Green” is defined in many different ways and it can often be confusing. Try and look for a commitment to being environmentally and socially conscious by the companies and destinations you are considering. Also look for concrete actions taken and their accomplishments to date, such as savings in water, energy and waste. Their commitment to the community and their employees is also a good indication of their corporate social responsibility efforts.

Check consumer websites which have responsible travel reviews, green travel magazines, blogs, and any other sources which may provide insights into green and ethical business practices.

A little bit of research will go a long way in selecting suppliers and destinations that are aligned with your values and which meet your environmental expectations.



Before you go, while you are there and when you return

Now you can get started....

Planning the journey

Some people have a clear idea of where they want to go, but don't yet know **how** they will get there. Others know they are going somewhere, but are not quite sure **where**. Regardless of whether you are in the planning stage, some questions need to be answered first.

- 1 Where to go (destination)?
- 2 How to get there (transportation)?
- 3 Where to stay (accommodation)?
- 4 What to do while there (excursions, dining, shopping)?

Choosing the most environmentally sustaining options available to fit your personal preferences, and the destinations you will be visiting, will provide a more fulfilling travel experience.

Before you leave home

Being a green traveler starts by making sure that while you are away, you have considered what can be done in your home/residence. Some things to keep in mind are:



- What do you need to do to save energy while your home is empty?
 - ✓ Turn down the thermostat on your hot water heater, adjusting your AC/heat.
 - ✓ Turn water heater to lowest setting.
 - ✓ Turn water off at outside connection to prevent flooding should a pipe break while you're gone.
 - ✓ Appliances, such as TVs and cable converter boxes, should be unplugged because they can draw or "leak" as much as 40 watts per hour even when they're off.
 - ✓ Turn icemaker off to prevent flooding should it break while you're away.
- Are there any subscriptions or deliveries which can be put on hold or donated such as newspapers, magazines, produce?
- What will you pack to avoid extra weight on airplanes or other forms of transport?
- What can you leave behind to avoid unnecessary packaging and waste that will have to be disposed of at the destination?



Before you go, while you are there and when you return

While you are there

You have arrived and now the fun starts. It is in the destination where the traveler has the most impact on the environment and local community. Therefore, keeping a few things in mind while enjoying your vacation will go a long way to make your visit green.

Consider what you can do while:

- ✓ [Staying at your hotel](#)
- ✓ [Sightseeing and taking excursions](#)
- ✓ [Eating](#)
- ✓ [Shopping](#)
- ✓ [Taking photographs](#)



The overall tourism impact can also be measured by:

- ✓ How your environmental impact in the area you are visiting can be minimized.
- ✓ How you can support and encourage the destination to preserve its socio-cultural authenticity.
- ✓ How your expenditure can benefit the local economy.

When you return

Travel can have a profound and lasting effect, and when you return home, it is likely that you will want to share your experience with as many people as possible. This will help other travelers make sensible choices, but also assist the destination and travel suppliers to implement more sustainable practices. Don't underestimate the power of the travel experience and use it to improve the tourism offering and livelihood of people in the destinations you visit.

Some ideas to take action are:

- How can you make your story known to other travelers?
 - ✓ Distribute your responsible travel tips as widely as possible.
 - ✓ Share your photos on social media.
 - ✓ Tell family and friends about the wonderful memories you made.
 - ✓ Tell them what was easy about being a responsible traveler and tell them what was challenging about traveling sustainably.
 - ✓ Tell them how much you enjoyed the eco-lodge you stayed at, or the organic wine you drank, or the hike you took went on.
 - ✓ Tell them what a challenge it was to get from one side of the country to the other via public transportation, but in the end it was worth it because of the experiences you had on the way.



Before you go, while you are there and when you return

- *Give constructive feedback to your travel agent, your tour company, your hotel, and excursion operator.* Suppliers cannot make changes unless you let them know about your experiences, both positive and negative!
- *Get involved with charitable organizations which help to alleviate some of the socio-economic issues affecting the places you have visited.*
- Explore more. Traveling is just the start of the learning. Once you return home, continue exploring and get involved to try to remedy some of the problems that captured your attention. Build on your knowledge.
- Connect with the nationals of the places you just visited in your own country. Go to ethnic restaurants, cultural events, or get involved with an organization that pursues a cause which touched your heart.

Mapping your travel lifecycle with responsible travel in mind **before you go, while you are there, and when you return**, will help you and the places you visit create a more gentle and beneficial type of tourism worldwide.





Transportation

Transportation represents over one quarter of the world's energy consumption and emissions of greenhouse gases. The number of vehicles on the road (700 million in 2005) [3] has increased tenfold in the last 60 years. The car is the most prevalent form of motorized transportation, ahead of bus and train. Airlines transport over 2.5 billion people a year [4], and represent two to five percent of all global greenhouse gas emissions.

Today's business and leisure travelers face numerous opportunities to reduce their negative impact on the environment. The first step is to understand how each transportation mode affects the environment, and then try to minimize pollution and carbon dioxide emissions by making the best possible choices for your particular travel circumstances and preference.

Some important considerations for your journey are:

- How far are you going?
- How much time do you have to get there?
- How long are you staying in the destination?
- Are you traveling for business or pleasure?
- What is your budget?
- How many people are traveling?
- How frequently do you travel in that form of transport (loyalty points)?

When choosing the form of transport, consider the following:

- Which transportation mode is the most fuel efficient and has the least carbon emissions i.e. air, car, train, bus, boat etc?
- Are there alternatives to my preferred form of transport for short, mid and long haul trips i.e. air vs. train?
- Are there environmental alternatives available for my chosen form of transport i.e. hybrid or electric car rental
- Are there things I can do differently to lessen the environmental impact i.e. travel light, use alternative forms of transport for the journey, buy carbon offsets?

Having explored the various travel options and transportation alternatives, we can now explore each one of them in more detail.



Transportation

Air travel



In 2009, 2.5 billion people traveled by plane worldwide. Flying is a time-efficient way of traveling, however airplanes are very fuel intensive and produce considerable amounts of carbon emissions, pollution and noise. The airline industry has recognized these environmental concerns and has been actively addressing them for decades. Airlines work closely with:

- Aircraft manufacturers who are designing next generation of fuel efficient planes.
- Air traffic controllers who are improving the flow of traffic at airports worldwide.
- Scientists who are researching non-fossil jet fuel options.

Although airlines have progressively increased fuel efficiency, reduced noise, pollution and carbon emissions, until an alternative to jet fuel is found, air travel will continue to be the largest part of your travel footprint.

There are nevertheless, several things you can do to travel smarter by air:

- Select airlines which have a published environmental and/or corporate social responsibility policy.
- Select airlines which have newer aircraft as these are more fuel efficient.
- Take longer trips instead of many shorter ones, thus reducing the overall number of flights per year.
- Fly direct as multiple take-offs and landings on route to the final destination will increase emissions considerably.
- Fly during the day where possible as scientists have found that the warming effect of an aircraft is much greater in the dark, because of the effects of the condensation trails (contrails) they leave.
- Keep your baggage weight to a minimum, as lighter baggage helps to save fuel and carbon emissions.
- Purchase reputable certified carbon offsets if you wish to support carbon reduction projects in your community or around the world.

Car travel

Whether you use your own car to embark on a road trip, or rent a vehicle abroad, there are many green driving tips that will assist you to cut down fuel consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and save money on the way.



Transportation

The good news is that the auto industry is continuing to develop more fuel-efficient cars, as well as alternative fuel technology. Many car rental agencies are upgrading their fleets, and hybrid and electric vehicles are becoming more widely accepted.

Renting a car with the environment in mind includes:

- Selecting car rental companies that have a published environmental and/or corporate social responsibility policy.
- Selecting a car that fits your needs including:
 - ✓ number of passengers
 - ✓ distance
 - ✓ terrain
 - ✓ length of trip
- Turning down upgrades as larger vehicles use more fuel.
- Requesting cars that have the best mileage possible.
- Asking if they have hybrid or electric cars.

Some general green driving tips include:

- **Know where you are going.** Planning your itinerary in advance may save time and frustrating detours which will consume more fuel, create pollution, and carbon emissions.
- **Do several trips in one.** Where possible, combine sightseeing trips and other errands in one trip.

- **Travel light.** Heavy loaded cars consume more fuel and take up more room, making the trip less comfortable for the passengers.
- **Avoid speeding.** Cars driven at higher speeds increase drag and lower fuel economy.
- **Fill up with the most efficient fuel.** Follow the car manufacturer guidelines for the fuel type needed. This will make the car run better and emit less pollution and emissions.
- **Share your ride** Carpooling may avoid another vehicle clogging up the road and it can also be fun to have company. Check with friends or car pooling websites.
- **Keep your tires inflated.** Check tire pressure and follow the car manufacturer guidelines. Over time, tires lose pressure and increase rolling resistance, thus wasting fuel.
- **Stay light on the breaks.** Cars use the most gas with abrupt acceleration and breaking. Keep a reasonable distance from the car ahead and watch for any slowdowns to avoid sudden breaking..
- **Use AC wisely.** At lower speeds having the windows down may be more efficient, but on the highway, it will increase drag substantially and reduce fuel efficiency.



Transportation

Buses

Research has shown that one full coach has five times less carbon dioxide emissions, per passenger per kilometer, than a jet aircraft on the same route. For every full coach, there are 16 fewer cars on the road. This makes bus/coach transport a very environmentally efficient mode of transport [5].

Intercity coaches are a green alternative to cars as they carry more people across long distances. Modern coaches are fuel efficient and are often equipped with toilets, onboard entertainment, and offer express routes.

Public buses are often seen as a budget-conscious mode of transport in some countries, but they provide an environmentally friendly option that allows you to learn more about the local community's way of life.

Shuttles allow you to hop aboard mini-vans with passengers headed to the same hotel or attraction. You will save money by sharing the ride and won't have to worry about getting lost.

Trains



As a form of mass transport, trains have the potential to be an efficient and environmental way to travel. Many countries have extensive rail networks which allow for intermodal connectivity between airports and urban centers, substantially reducing car traffic.

As operational efficiencies, route networks, and environmental best practices vary widely around the world, be sure to check train company websites to see what they are doing about sustainability in their country, and choose those that advertise their green efforts.

There are of course other benefits to train travel; it is generally cheaper than flying, it uses less fuel than air travel, cities and regions can be explored in a slower and more relaxed way, it supports national rail systems which employ people from the area, and it is used by locals and tourist alike.



Transportation

Water transport



Travelling by sea on a cruise ship, taking a passenger ferry, or lazily drifting on a river boat, are all great ways of exploring the world.

However, the environmental and socio-economic impact of the various marine sectors has not been clearly established. The responsible traveler should research more into sustainable best practices in water transport, especially large cruise ships, if you are considering booking a sea-bound vacation.

Over 13.5 million people worldwide took a cruise in 2009, making the cruise industry a mass form of tourism [6]. Inevitably, such high passenger volume raises concerns about the impact of large vessels at sea and in ports. The cruise sector acknowledges the issues related to pollution and waste and is making industry-wide efforts to implement a range of initiatives aimed at minimizing its environmental impact, support conservation of marine ecosystems, and work to improve the livelihood of the communities in which they operate.

These include:

- Check cruise line and other marine transportation websites for sustainable practices. Select the company which is making the most environmental and social effort.
- Check cruise line industry websites to learn about the latest technological advances for sea vessels as well as innovative retrofitting of existing fleets.
- Visit travel and cruising websites to see passenger reviews about environmental practices.

For those who love the sea, there are also small cruise line options, sailing, and yachting.



Transportation

Bicycles

Bicycles are four to five times faster than walking, and in traffic jams, faster than motor vehicles! Bicycles provide the most efficient human-powered form of transport, they are economical, environmentally sustainable, and provide an incredible opportunity to explore off the beaten track and share real life experiences with the locals.



Bike tours have gained popularity in recent years as more people want to keep fit while experiencing a slower and authentic form of travel.

Many cities also offer bike rentals allowing for an economical, clean, and easy way to move about urban areas.

Inquire if your hotel or resort provides bikes for guests and take the opportunity to pedal your way through the local community.

Always be sure to abide by local traffic and safety laws, and respect the dress codes of the places you ride in.

Walking

The ultimate in fuel-efficiency, with the added bonus of a health benefit! Many destinations are highly accessible on foot. Where possible, try to take the extra time to sightsee, visit a restaurant, go to your hotel, or shop, using the oldest form of transport.



Accommodation



Individually, hotels do not have a significant negative impact on the environment, or consume a substantial amount of resources. However, collectively, this impact is quite large. In addition, hotels can be extremely wasteful. It has been estimated that seventy-five percent of environmental impact that hotels have on the environment, can be directly related to excessive consumption [7].

It is due to this waste and inefficiency that “green” hotels are rapidly gaining popularity. More and more properties are choosing to reduce their environmental footprint by performing upgrades to reduce energy and water consumption, recycling, composting food, buying from local food producers, and being less wasteful.

As with transportation, selecting green accommodation is dependent on many variable travel factors as well as your personal preferences. Some key considerations are:

- ***Where is the hotel located?*** Some areas have a wide range of hotels to choose from, whereas others may have a limited number of accommodation choices. Chose the one which has the best possible environmental record for the place you are visiting.
- ***How many of you are sharing the accommodation?*** The higher the room occupancy, the less expensive it is per person. It also saves on housekeeping and energy, provided green guidelines are followed by all guests.



Accommodation

- **How long are you staying at the hotel?** Short stays may require less housekeeping. Take advantage of energy savings options offered by the hotel.
 - **What is your budget?** Some hotels with eco labels may be more expensive, but may provide best practices in environmental sustainability.
 - **What type of hotels are you staying in?** Large resort-style properties offer more accommodation options and recreational facilities, but are obviously more energy intensive than smaller hotels. Booking family or community-run accommodation also provides a greater benefit to the places you visit.
- Some tips for identifying a green hotel are:
- Check hotel websites and search for environmental policies.
 - Does the hotel have green certification or eco labels?
 - Has the hotel won any environmental awards or has received recognition from tour operators and consumers?
 - Check consumer and green hotel websites for feedback on responsible practices.
 - Talk to like-minded friends who may have visited green hotels recently.
 - Post a question using social media websites to see if anyone knows of a green hotel they have stayed in the place where you are going.



Accommodation

What can you do to be a “green guest?”

As a guest you can play a role not only by complying with existing responsible initiatives, but by giving feedback about what you would like to see implemented.

The four areas to be aware of are energy, water, waste, purchasing and housekeeping.

To save energy



Hotels are extremely energy intensive as they use energy 24 hours a day 7 days a week! Hotels use generally more energy per visitor than local residents, as they have energy-intensive facilities, such as bars, restaurants, and pools. Spacious hotel rooms need large amounts of energy to keep guests cool in hot temperatures, and equal amounts of energy to keep them warm during cold winters. The average energy consumption per bed per night in an average size hotel is approximately 130 Megajoules [8]. Studies have determined that a hotel emits an average 20.6 kg (45.3lbs) of carbon dioxide per night [9].

To find out about some of the current best practices related to energy efficiency in the accommodation industry click [here](#)...

Here is what you can do as a traveler to reduce your energy use and carbon footprint while staying at a hotel:

- Turn off any lights, TV, radio, and shut off or lower the air conditioner or heater when leaving the hotel room for the day, or when checking out
- Work with the seasons. During summer months, close the drapes to keep the sun’s heat out; during winter months, keep drapes open to heat the room during the day.
- Public areas are generally too cold or too hot. Advise the hotel to adjust the air conditioning (summer) or heat (winter) in areas such as the lobby and banquet room.

Find out more

To find out about some of the current best practices in the accommodation industry related to:

- energy efficiency, click [here](#).
- water conservation, click [here](#).
- waste management, click [here](#).



Accommodation

To conserve water

Tourists and residents alike require a clean and dependable supply of water for survival and activities such as drinking, cooking and cleaning. Water provision is integral to the operation of amenities usually expected by tourists, such as swimming pools, landscaped gardens and golf courses. It is also essential to support industries such as agriculture that supply the tourism industry. Tourists usually require more water than local residents on a per person basis.

It has been estimated that 15,000 cubic meters of water would typically supply 100 rural farmers for three years and 100 urban families for two years, yet this volume only supplies 100 luxury hotel guests for less than two months [10]. In more arid regions, tourist water consumption can equal up to 440 liters a day per person, which is almost double the average amount of water used by residents in Spain [11]. To find out about some of the current best practices related to water conservation in the accommodation industry [click here](#).

Here is what you, as a traveler, can do to reduce water consumption during your stay:

- Reduce the amount of water used for bathing or showering.
 - ✓ Showers use less water than baths.
 - ✓ Turn off water while soaping up and rinsing.
- Flush the toilet only when needed.
- Don't run the tap while brushing your teeth.

To minimize waste

Waste generation is one of the most visible effects on the environment. One estimate identified that an average hotel produces in excess of one kilogram of waste per guest per day [12]. 50-60 percent of the waste materials in an accommodation facility, can be recycled or reused.

To find out about some of the current best practices related to waste management in the accommodation industry [click here](#) (link to corresponding hotel guide section).



Here is what you can do as a traveler to reduce your waste:

- Ask if there is a guests' recycling program and thank management for their efforts in person and/or on their comment cards.
- Where possible, recycle your waste: bottles, cans, paper, and plastic bags.
- If recycling is not available in your guest room, minimize your waste as much as possible and suggest to the hotel manager in person, or on your comment card, that they adopt a recycling program.



Accommodation

- Tell reception you only need the room key and save any unnecessary paperwork such as maps and promotions. They are likely to be online, or in the room already.
- Ask for only one key if you are traveling alone, and be sure to turn it in for the hotel to reuse.
- Avoid the use of Styrofoam cups and containers whenever possible.
- Carry and use a re-usable coffee mug, water bottle, and a “carry all” bag for you to fill with extra shopping.
- Carry a reusable plastic bag to put dirty laundry to take back home.
- Don’t bring your litter on holiday with you. Remove all excess packaging from toiletries, clothes and gifts, as waste disposal may be difficult in developing countries.

Housekeeping and hotel amenities



Hotels strive to provide great service, but often well-intentioned in-room amenities, such as toiletries, fruit baskets, and welcome snacks may go to waste. If you feel you will not consume them, thank the manager and decline the courtesy offer. Also, make sure you ask not to change your towels and linens on a daily basis, as this conserves water and energy!

Making the stay in your room green

- Comply with the practice of not changing your sheets and towels every day.
- If you see that the linen and towels are being changed daily, contact housekeeping, or leave them a note.
- Use the same number of towels and linen you would at home.
- Pack your own personal items such as shampoo, conditioner, lotion, shower cap, reusable mug, pen and pencil.



Accommodation

- Avoid buying personal items in small amounts locally. It generally comes with wasteful packaging.
- Leave unopened amenities in the room and take home opened ones to give as gifts, or donate to your local charity.
- For short trips, contact housekeeping to decline housekeeping service and turn-down service during your stay.
- Separate the towels and washcloths you will use during your stay and leave all others untouched so housekeeping will know they were not used.
- Ask the hotel to use bio degradable cleaning products as thousands of tons of chemicals used by the hospitality industry leak into the environment yearly.

Using the resort and hotels amenities

Pool/beaches



Many hotels have pool facilities and/or have beach fronts. Tips to staying green while having fun are:

- Re-use pool and beach towels wherever possible.
- Take only short rinses in the communal shower.
- Use water-soluble suntan lotion in pools.
- Avoid wearing sunscreen when snorkeling, diving, or swimming near coral reefs. The chemicals in the sunscreen can contaminate the aquatic ecosystems.
- Avoid mosquito repellent with DEET or other harmful chemicals which contaminate the water.
- Ask for reusable cups, plates, and cutlery for drinks and food served pool and beachside.



Accommodation

- If available, dispose waste in the receptacles provided, or bring a plastic bag to recycle in your room.
- Avoid motorized sports as they create noise, fuel pollution, and disrupt aquatic life.
- Ask if pool or beach attendants are tipped for their services, and reward them for good service accordingly.

Golf courses

Golf is a wonderful sport and its popularity is growing worldwide. Awareness about its environmental impact is also rising and golf clubs are starting to address issues related to water use, toxic pesticides, biodiversity loss, and community displacement.

Golf players should enquire with the golf club directly and consider choosing the establishments which publicly advertise the best environmental and social practices. A good resource for golfers is the Golf Environment Organization [13].

Beyond the environment

As an active member of the local community, hotels have a role to play in the social well-being of the area in which they operate. Some questions to ask are:

- Does the hotel source their food and products locally where possible?
- Does the hotel have and practice policies regarding fair and equitable employment?
- Does the hotel support community development projects?
- Does the hotel support marine and land conservation programs?
- Do they offer activities and excursions, which are operated by the local community?



Excursions

Sightseeing

Travelling is all about getting to know the places you visit. From a city tour in a European city to world heritage sites, planning excursions with the thought of having the least possible impact while also benefiting the local community will make for a satisfying outing. Some things you can do include:

- Read up on the destination before you go and learn a few words of the local language
- Respect local cultures, traditions, and holy places - if in doubt, ask.
- Local people have different ways of thinking and diverse concepts of time; being patient and accepting will go a long way in enjoying your visit.
- Get into the habit of asking questions about local ways of doing things.
- Ask the hotel or tourism authority if there are conservation or social projects that you could visit on your trip, and how you could help support them.
- Hire a local guide - you'll discover more about the area's culture and people, and they will earn an income directly from you.
- Wildlife and ecotourism can help conserve endangered species and some cultural traditions, take interest of how this is being done.
- Watch wildlife responsibly and in the least disruptive way possible.

- Don't touch, handle, feed, or ride on aquatic life. These actions may stress the animal, interrupt natural behaviors, or provoke aggressive behaviors in a normally nonaggressive species.



- Be concerned about the welfare of animals in marine or land shows, and if not satisfied of the conservation role and treatments in these performances, avoid these attractions altogether.





Excursions

- Visit national parks and private reserves to help fund conservation projects and environmental education.
- Support **rural and indigenous tourism** as it will provide income to communities in isolated areas.
- **Keep the places you visit clean.**
Always dispose of your own waste.
- Archeological sites are fragile places. Tread carefully and do not take anything from the site. They are the local peoples' heritage and they should stay untouched.
- Sit it in a park or public square, people-watch, or start a conversation with a local.
- Go off the beaten track and visit non-touristy neighborhoods to have a drink or a meal in authentic places.
- Picnic in parks or the beach, and be part of the recreational activities local people enjoy.
- Attend religious services, but be sure you show respect by dressing appropriately and be aware of expected behaviors and customs.
- Watch festivals and special ceremonies in an unobtrusive and thoughtful way.



- Visit museums, especially those which showcase the local history. The visitors' fee will go to preserving the local culture.
- UNESCO's World Heritage sites [14] are a treasure to humanity. They are always worth a visit for their history, culture, customs, and legends.

Other wonderful pastimes that make travel enjoyable, benefit the destination, and get you connected with local people include:



Excursions

Eating



One of the greatest pleasures of traveling is eating, and there is generally plenty of it on holidays! From trying an exotic dish at a family owned restaurant, to picking up fresh produce in a farmers' market, going local is the best way to support the place you visit, while also enjoying fantastic food. Some considerations are:

- Consume foods that are produced locally, and require less wasteful transportation to reach the area you are visiting.
- Eat local dishes as much as you feel comfortable in doing, and ask questions about the origin of the food.
- Order off the buffet or specials of the day, as these foods are generally prepared from fresh produce and in larger quantities.
- Always avoid food waste by ordering the right sized portions.
- Drink draft beer and carbonated beverages from the tap/fountain, to avoid bottles and extra packaging.
- If possible, drink tap water at restaurants, versus bottled water.
- Buy the local bottled water brand, if tap water is not recommended. This avoids the transportation carbon footprint and packaging.
- Ask about the source of the food if it is a concern to you, i.e. salmon, other fish, and seafood [15], as well as any menu items which may be from endangered species, are scarce, or are unethically sourced.
- Ask the hotel, especially all inclusive resorts, what happens with leftover food. Do they compost it, give to employees, or donate it to the local charity?
- Drink organically made beverages where available.
- Try regional wines, beers and spirits instead of drinking multinational brands which have a bigger environmental footprint because of shipping



Excursions

Shopping



Shopping is a wonderful way of supporting the places you visit. But above all, it gives you a chance to bring back unique gifts which showcase the culture and heritage of the places you visit. For a “guilt free” shopping experience, and to ensure that your money goes to those who need it the most, keep some of these tips in mind:

- Buy crafts made with indigenous materials and labor from the local community, versus mass produced souvenirs which are often imported and have a bigger ecological footprint.
- Avoid souvenirs made from endangered woods and minerals, or animal products from threatened species. When in doubt, always ask the vendor about the source of the materials and labor used.
- Patronize locally owned businesses, markets, and bazaars, instead of large shopping areas.
- Buy lightweight and small souvenirs, as the extra space and weight uses more energy to bring home.

- Buy something the locality is famous for; something unique which identifies the destination. People are proud of their heritage and love to share it with the world.



- Bargaining may be expected in some cultures, but avoid aggressive and confrontational behavior. A fair price, or a little more, may provide much needed support for a local vendor and his/her family.



Other important responsible travel actions

Go digital – *using technology to avoid waste*

- Travel information is now readily available on the web; avoid expensive glossy brochures that will go to waste or have to be recycled.
- When printing airline, hotel, car rental confirmations, or other online travel documents, print only the relevant pages for check-in. Terms and Conditions can be saved in your computer
- Purchase electronic-tickets for airline travel whenever possible and use mobile technology for boarding passes where available.
- Ask for invoices to be emailed instead of having a paper receipt. You can print them at home if needed or view them on a mobile device.



Taking pictures responsibly – *thoughtful ways to create guilt free memories*

- Take photos in a sensitive way by being informed of local peoples' attitudes towards being photographed.
- Learn about the culture's traditions or superstitions, and always ask for permission, before pressing the shutter.
- Money may be expected. Establish a price before you take the photos to avoid unpleasant misunderstandings.
- Places of worship, museums, memorials, cemeteries and historical sites may have policies on picture taking which may not be clearly displayed. Always ask the attendant.
- Airports, military bases, and government buildings may be interesting to photograph, but are generally off limits. Taking photos in these places may be punished harshly. It is not worth the trouble. Ask first.
- Consider if the person being photographed could be put in peril with local authorities in countries that may have sensitive political and religious conditions.
- Children are wonderful subjects, but always ask the parents for permission first.



Concluding statement

Traveling is a wonderful adventure and to do it in a sensitive and responsible way will only make the experiences more meaningful and authentic.

However, it is also important to remember that the road towards achieving sustainability in tourism will be a long and slow one. Every little action from travelers and suppliers will make incremental positive changes to help the preservation of the destinations' natural beauty and heritage.

The *Responsible Traveler Guide* is the start of a new way of experiencing travel.

It is a journey worth taking for you, and for future generations.

Enjoy.



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