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# Guide to Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Travel

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Tourism accounts for about [8% of global greenhouse gas emissions](#), making it a huge contributor to the greenhouse effect





and climate change. Travelers often neglect to consider the environmental impacts of traveling and opt for convenience, comfort, spontaneity, or even luxury — all factors that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. As a result, travelers become disconnected from their actions and don't realize how much harm they are causing by simply going on vacation.

Sustainable travel is becoming a [major trend in the travel industry](#). As a result, airlines are putting forth initiatives to be more fuel-efficient, hotels are adopting green practices, and cities are offering alternative modes of transportation for travelers. There are many things that you can do to make sure that you're sustainable while on the go, including:

- Planning and booking your trip;
- Packing;
- Eco-friendly transportation both to and while at your destination;
- Eco-friendly accommodations and lodgings such as green hotels;
- Eco-friendly dining, entertainment, and other activities;
- Supporting eco-tourism.

It's essential to understand all aspects of green travel — from before your departure to returning home — to make sure you produce the smallest carbon footprint you can during your travels.

## Planning for Sustainable Traveling

One of the most critical green travel habits to adopt is planning in advance. Planning is essential to sustainable traveling, allowing you to look ahead and make eco-friendly choices for your journey. You must plan and give yourself enough time to research ecologically responsible choices and keep your home sustainable while you're away.

If you don't prepare your house, it will consume a lot of energy while you're away, and you will wind up spending more money on your power bill. Unplug unnecessary appliances when you're on vacation, such as the television, microwave ovens, and other devices. Another trick you can try in order to save on energy consumption while on your trip is adjusting the thermostat to minimize air conditioning or heat usage.





## Booking

Historically, booking flights and lodging involved mountains of paperwork. Going paperless and electronically filing these papers is a significant way to decrease your carbon footprint in the digital age. Go green and consider booking your flights online, using travel websites that offer fuel-efficient flights and eco-friendly accommodations.

Additionally, your booking phase is where you will make many of the eco-friendly decisions for your travels. Be sure to look for green hotels, sustainable restaurants, and flights with lower emissions and sustainable practices.

## Packing

One eco-friendly travel tip to adopt is [packing efficiently and minimally](#). This includes maximizing space in your travel bags, trying not to check luggage, and focusing on reusable or recyclable items to cut down on waste. You can save room in your bags by understanding what the weather will be like at your destination and cutting your travel items down to the essentials.

You can travel much lighter without unnecessary clothing or items you will seldom use during your trip. If possible, make sure your travel bags are made out of sustainable material as well.

## Observing Your Travel Dates

Specific locations have a particular period of the year when a lot of people wish to visit. These travel hotspots can be overrun with greenhouse gas emissions during peak tourism periods due to the number of cars, buses, and other forms of transportation used. Additionally, the large influx in population can harm the environment.

It is best to [travel to a region during the off-season](#) or a month or two earlier or later. You may have a better experience without so many people trying to do the same things as you during your trip.

## Consider Sustainable Cities

If you are trying to reduce the carbon footprint of your travel, try traveling to sustainable cities. Sustainable cities have several eco-



friendly features, including efficient public transportation and recycling programs in place. If possible, when planning your trip, make sure the town you visit has policies already in effect that will benefit from increased tourism, such as the incentivization of sustainable restaurants and green hotels.

Some sustainable cities to consider traveling to include:

- **Berlin, Germany:** Berlin has green hotels and restaurants and is known as a sustainable city. Also, green travel within Berlin is easy to do by riding the many alternative transportation options, including buses and trains.
- **Oslo, Norway:** Oslo is known for sustainable transportation, green hotels, and restaurants. In addition to its eco-friendly accommodations and dining options, the city has a sustainable public transit system in place with an online tracking app that allows travelers to see when their next bus will arrive.
- **Copenhagen, Denmark:** Copenhagen has green hotels, sustainable restaurants, and accommodations available for eco-travelers. The city also provides alternative transportation in the form of biking paths throughout the community that offer a safe way to get around.
- **Paris, France:** Paris has several travel options including eco-friendly accommodations, sustainable restaurants, and green transportation. Riding the metro is an easy way to get around this city while decreasing your carbon footprint.
- **San Francisco, United States:** San Francisco is a city with many green hotels, sustainable restaurants, and eco-friendly accommodations. The city has implemented several eco-friendly initiatives, including electric bus lines that run throughout the area.

## Transportation

Three-quarters of [CO2 emissions from tourism](#) are transport-related. While air travel — mostly planes — is the most significant contributor, cars, busses, trains, and boats are also to blame. Maintaining your green travel habits will be essential for planning sustainable transportation both before and during your trip.

- **Before your trip:** If you are traveling by plane, there are several variables you will have to consider for the most sustainable flight. These variables include distance, time of your trip, and traveling alone or in a group. [Google Flights](#) is a tool you can use that identifies which flight has the lowest





carbon emissions. It also has information on places to explore and eco-friendly hotels as part of Google's new sustainability initiative. It would help if you also researched the most eco-friendly airlines to determine their waste and recycling policies, carbon emissions, and other short- and long-term sustainability goals.

- **During your trip:** You can maintain green travel habits by taking alternative transportation options, such as biking to your destination and using more sustainable forms of public transport like trains or buses. Consider using alternative modes of travel between destinations — for example, walking instead of using a car service during days where you're sightseeing in an urban area. If you do need a car for travel, consider ride-sharing.

Once you've got your transportation lined out, you'll want to turn your attention to eco-friendly accommodations that you can pursue.

## Eco-Friendly Travel Accommodations

If you are an eco-conscious tourist, it is essential to explore travel accommodations. Do your research before booking a hotel or resort so that you have an eco-friendly option on the table for your trip. This includes hotels with certifications such as the [LEED certification](#). You can also find green lodging options available through Airbnb and other short-term housing rentals.

### Environmentally Friendly Hotels and Lodging

No matter what kind of travel accommodations you choose to stay in — hotel/resort, Airbnb/rental, hostel — there are several ways to reduce the carbon footprint of your lodging.

One travel tip for hotels is to request a green room, where the hotel has taken measures to cut down on energy use. For example, some hotels have stopped providing plastic water bottles in rooms and instead provide eco-friendly reusable water containers for guests.

It is best to stay in locally-owned accommodations, including guest houses, private Airbnbs, and other local rentals. Be sure to be mindful of the thermostat in your room, never preheating or





pre-cooling it when you are away. In another effort to conserve energy, make sure to turn the lights off when you leave. To save water, try not to wash your towels every day.

When you're considering options for lodging, be sure to look for Energy Star Properties or other certified eco-friendly businesses using directories like The [EarthCheck Responsible and Sustainable Directory](#). It is becoming more and more the case that you will be able to find an eco-friendly hotel.

Hotels recognize the environmental impact of traveling, and places such as the San Francisco Marriott Marquis are doing their part for sustainable practices such as recycling. While it does do wonders for [marketing a hotel and brand](#), many hotels are [embracing energy-saving technologies](#). This includes composting, water conservation, and finding alternative energy sources to do their part in lessening the carbon footprint of their business and its customers.

## Dining and Entertainment

You can still enjoy your night out on the town with restaurants and entertainment venues that have a green mindset. An eco-friendly perspective for eating and entertainment should include supporting local businesses, restaurants, and cultural centers. When dining, try locally sourced food and local customs and traditions. This way, you support the industry in that area while also giving back to the community. You can enjoy local flavors and culture without adding more strain on global resources.

You can often find eco-friendly restaurants when traveling, as more and more green-themed restaurants pop up across the world. For example, in Washington D.C., you can find eco-friendly dining at [Founding Farmers restaurant](#). This green-certified restaurant uses sustainable ingredients, including environmentally friendly food products through their relationship with local farmers throughout North America.

Restaurants know how important sustainability is to customers, and many are taking steps to [build a green reputation](#). Often, marketing your restaurant in today's world will involve [integrating "green" into the brand](#).

When touring, consider a local guidebook to support the economy. You can typically find local guidebooks at many attractions, where some may even offer a discount for tourists





who choose to take this route. Many companies provide [green tours](#) for a variety of locations. Often you will find tours that emphasize preserving the nature and culture of where you are visiting. If you plan a marina, beach, or boat tour, look for a [Blue Flag certified organization](#). These operators also embody principles that preserve their respective environments.

## Supporting Eco-Tourism

Eco-tourism refers to tourism that minimizes environmental impact and promotes sustainable practices. Education and awareness are great ways to help protect exotic and threatened environments. For instance, visiting the Galapagos Islands involves eco-tourism that focuses on educational experiences and sustainable practices. Many companies offer green trips to exotic locations, including outdoor adventures like kayaking, hiking, and biking tours.

You can support eco-tourism by ensuring you are supporting sustainable businesses. When booking travel, be sure to find eco-friendly lodgings and transportation options that support sustainable practices like green hotels. You can also look for eco-tours offered by companies and local tour guides. When at your destination, be sure to support dining and entertainment venues that are sustainable. You can even get involved with eco-friendly volunteering opportunities for a more immersive travel experience.

## Resources for Eco-Friendly Travelers

Eco-conscious travelers will need to explore several resources to find sustainable transportation, green hotels, and restaurants.

When planning your trip, consider the next destination you want to visit. There are many resources available that can help you create a sustainable trip from home to wherever you may go.

- [Ethical Traveler](#): Ethical Traveler is a guide to green and ethical tourism. You can use the site as an information resource for travel. This includes eco-friendly transportation, accommodations like green hotels and resorts, and sustainable dining options like organic restaurants offering local cuisine.





- [Green Lodging News](#): Green Lodging News is a green hotel and sustainable lodging directory. This directory will help you find hotels, resorts, lodges, and bed and breakfast options that are eco-friendly throughout the world. You can also use this site to learn about eco-conscious government practices for businesses within specific areas of interest.
- [Nature Conservancy](#): The Nature Conservancy has green travel ideas for eco-friendly destinations in the United States, Latin America, Asia Pacific, Africa, and Europe. The site also offers trips that support sustainable businesses throughout the world through responsible tourism practices.
- [Rainforest Alliance](#): The Rainforest Alliance is another travel resource that offers green destinations throughout the world. Green hotels and resorts are also listed on this site. In addition, you will find information about eco-friendly tours, restaurants offering sustainable menus, and airlines that support sustainable practices in aviation and beyond.
- [Sustainable Travel International](#): Sustainable Travel International is a travel directory that focuses on eco-travel worldwide. You can use this resource to find eco-friendly tourism destinations, sustainable airlines, and hotels with green practices in business operations.

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