



What is sustainable tourism?

BY JULIET KINSMAN 26 January 2022

Put simply, sustainable tourism is when travellers take trips that actively do more good than they are having a negative impact, says sustainability editor, Juliet Kinsman. So what does good look like? And how do we measure the good that we're doing when it comes to social and environmental impact?

Weighing up the trade-offs of our travels and balancing what's life-enriching or eco-enhancing for people and the planet – and what's not great about what's left in our wake – is the cornerstone of sustainable tourism. Staying in an off-grid, solar-powered bamboo shack where no concrete was used in construction, where they only employ locals and operations work entirely in harmony with nature? Fantastic! Getting to that far-flung destination via a fossil-fuel guzzling plane? Not so fabulous. But it's about the bigger picture. Many climate activists will say that for anyone who cares about the environment to even contemplate flying is preposterous. But there are many reasons why the future for all will be brighter if more of us engage with different geographies and other humans with contrasting outlooks.

Sustainable tourism can vary greatly in how it looks and there's more to it than meets the eye (or Instagram post). It's at its most compelling when it actively supports the protection of wildlife or reforestation, has a light touch on natural resources and fossil fuels and leaves money in the pockets of local communities. That's ecotourism at its very best.

5 ways to travel more sustainably:





1. Commit to nature-positive tourism

Actively supporting conservation and boosting biodiversity by staying in lodges or on reserves where your tourism spend pays to protect wildlife is the poster for positive-impact travel. Especially in destinations that have been starved of all funding through the pandemic curtailing critical charity-supporting escapades from Africa to the Amazon.

[Learn about the biggest sustainable travel breakthroughs from the past 50 years](#)



2. Take community-enriching adventures

Travellers booking hotels and guesthouses owned and run by locals who act as custodians of Indigenous culture gets a green light. Community-based tourism can be life-changing. Opting for independently-owned hotels that consider all stakeholders in every business decision is bang on the sustainable-tourism money.





3. Minimise time in the sky

Planning itineraries that involve as little time on planes as possible is an eco-tourism hallmark. But if you do need aviation to get you from A to B, then make those contrails count and invest in offsetting to at least help in the capturing of carbon somewhere else.

[Read more about how you can reduce your carbon footprint if you're flying.](#)

4. Hold businesses accountable

If the labels 'eco-friendly' and 'sustainability' were only granted permission for use when they were attached to actions actively doing more good than bad, they'd spend a lot of time on the bench. In the absence of a universally mandated definition, we need to have conversations where we hold businesses to account. Some hotels offer behind-the-scenes eco-tours to demonstrate how they're becoming greener. Sneaking a peek behind the scenes at incredible initiatives has made me appreciate the good hospitality can do when it puts its mind to it.

Learn more: [read a piece all about the sustainable travel terms you need to know](#)

5. Choose your travel agent carefully

At World Class Adventures, we realize that climate change is, without a doubt, one of the biggest threats to our planet's future. We know that tourism is responsible for 8% of the world's carbon footprint and this has to be confronted. That's why we're committed to doing our part to offset our carbon emissions.

Carbon offsetting allows you to balance out your climate impact and compensate for the emissions that your trip produces. It accomplishes this by reducing CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions in other parts of the world.

We partner with Sustainable Travel International to calculate carbon emissions for each of the flights we sell, utilizing internationally-recognized greenhouse gas emissions factors from the EPA. We then contribute the equivalent value to STI on your behalf to support offsetting projects across the globe.

We do recognise that offsetting is not enough, and will be taking steps in the coming year to reduce our footprint, with the ultimate goal of becoming a carbon-neutral business

HOW CARBON OFFSETTING WORKS

Carbon offsetting allows you to balance out your climate impact and compensate for the emissions you produce by reducing CO2 elsewhere:

