

Step gently on the world

“Travelling by air has the highest environmental impact of any form of transport”

Partly in reaction to the misuse of the ecotourism label, and partly in recognition that the principles of ecotourism could – and should – apply to all tourism, not just in natural areas, a new paradigm has emerged: responsible tourism.

Responsible tourism can be more-or-less defined as travel that takes into consideration the ‘triple bottom line’ environmental, cultural and economic issues.

Strive for travel that minimises negative environmental impacts and, where possible, makes positive contributions to the conservation of biodiversity, wilderness, natural and human heritage. Where travellers and locals learn and share information, leading to better appreciation and understanding.

Travel should respect

culture and traditions and recognise the rights of all peoples to be involved in decisions that affect their lives and to determine their future. By involving and engaging local people, there is authentic interaction and greater understanding between travellers and hosts, which builds cultural pride and community confidence.

Travel needs to provide financial benefits for the host community and operates on the principles of fair trade. Monies spent by travellers remain in the community through the use of locally owned accommodation, staff and services; funding community initiatives, training or other in-kind support.

As a traveller, responsible tourism is about accepting responsibility for your actions, attitudes and impacts: through your



conscious choices, you can minimise your personal impact and make a positive contribution. Be a part of the solution, rather than the problem.

In its best manifestations, responsible tourism can

be a powerful tool for conservation of biodiversity and for sustainable development.

In recent years, cheap flights have opened up the skies and the furthest corners of the planet, enabling

more travellers to fly further and more frequently than ever before. It's been a boon for many developing countries, where tourism (at least of the responsible variety) has provided social and economic benefits to communities.

It's a great win for everyone, right? Well, not quite, when you consider the real cost of getting to those far-flung places.

Travelling by air has the highest environmental impact of any form of transport, as it chews up more carbon dioxide producing fossil fuels and spits out more water vapour and other heat-trapping gases than any other way of getting around. According to the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change, commercial aircraft already account for 3% to 4% of the total human impact on climate change – and it's growing.

So what's a responsible traveller to do? There are a number of things you can do to reduce your personal energy use.

First up, you could stay home. Yeah, right. But you could consider staying closer to home. If you just want to fly and flop on a beach, do

you really need to go to the other side of the planet to do it? How much exploring have you done in your own country?

Secondly you can use other modes of transport: trains, buses, boats, kayaks, bicycles and walking are all viable options. And they're all good ways to connect with the world around you and to meet local people, without leaving much trace of your travels. Even if you fly to your destination, you can then take buses, for example, rather than internal flights.

The third option is to go carbon neutral. Several organisations – some charities, some businesses – will offset the emissions caused by your flight in exchange for a contribution to their cause. The carbon emissions from that Melbourne to London flight, for example can be offset with an investment of less than \$50 at www.climatecare.org. Also check out the site www.carbonneutral.com.au.

If you want to calculate how much carbon your next flight will emit, check out the carbon dioxide Air Travel Calculator at www.climatecare.org

Extract from *Lonely Planet's Code Green book*

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