



ABBOTT'S TRAVEL

Cycling is the preferred mode of transport in Copenhagen, one of the world's most eco-friendly cities

THE CONSCIOUS TRAVELLER

When it comes to globetrotting with the planet in mind, you might know the basics, but there's more to sustainable tourism than you may at first think

As we reach the end of what is hopefully the final lockdown, people are understandably keen to embark upon their first post-pandemic holiday.

Yet the enforced period of restricted movement has caused many to look more closely at the issue of travelling more sustainably and more people are seeking to align their desire to travel with their environmental values.

Sustainable travel is all about

finding a way that tourism can be maintained long-term without harming natural and cultural environments. It first emerged in the 80s and as awareness has grown and tourists become more widely travelled, it has become an increasingly progressive trend.

However, as more travellers seek ways to limit their carbon footprint, confusion has arisen on how to do this successfully. One common misconception is that the ideal form of environmentally

friendly travel is eco-tourism. While these areas are of high importance, they are extremely sensitive to human impact and vulnerable to environmental damage or cultural disturbance, which is something to bear in mind. In many instances though, with the correct research and knowledge of where eco-tourism is practiced effectively, they can be excellent places to visit.

The Galapagos National Park is one such example. Despite



There are measures in place to ensure both the protection and preservation of the Galapagos Islands



Embracing the local lifestyle in places like Morocco will make your trip more authentic while supporting the local community

it being a fragile environment, there are measures in place to ensure both the protection and preservation of the island, whilst allowing tourists to enjoy all it has to offer. Tour providers on the island must ensure the conservation of water and energy, recycle and treat waste material plus source their products and staff locally, offering them additional training. There is also a strict limit on how many people can visit at a single time which ensures tourists can enjoy the pristine beaches, wildlife, snorkelling, diving, hiking, views and landscape whilst still being considerate of the environment.

Another example of an eco-friendly destination is Costa Rica, one of the most biodiverse places in the world and set to be its first plastic free and carbon neutral country. Renowned as a global leader for sustainability, 30 per cent of the natural land is protected and an astonishing 93 per cent of its electricity is generated from renewable resources. There is a diverse array of activities visitors can enjoy from rainforest hikes, whale-watching, diving, surfing and mangrove swamp tours.

Sustainable travel is not limited to seeking ways to reduce your environmental impact, it also considers the overall impact that tourism has on the locals and respecting cultural heritage. The way you spend money can have a huge impact on meeting the needs of the host population in terms of improving living conditions in

both the short and long term.

When visiting Morocco for example, buying locally produced goods from market stalls and dining in independent restaurants are excellent ways to help boost the local economy. Although we can all fall victim to sticking to what is familiar, try staying in locally owned hotels rather than the big hotel chains. Embracing the local lifestyle will not only make your trip more authentic, but it also supports the local community and promotes long-term sustainable development.

For city breaks, there are a few which seem to be ahead in combating sustainability issues with Denmark's capital, Copenhagen achieving the proud status of being the world's most eco-friendly city. It is set to become the first carbon-neutral city by 2025 and its citizens prefer cycling as their main form of transportation, with only 29 per cent of households owning a car. The majority of hotels provide guests with a bike and a most food served in public organisations is organically produced.

The Balearics have recently pledged to make sustainable tourism the heart of its post-Covid recovery strategy and it is likely many other countries will follow suit. Prior to the pandemic, one tenth of the global population were travelling internationally and the industry's aim is not to limit this growth, but to increase it in a way that supports and protects the destination environment and its host country, whilst allowing a

positive experience for the tourist.

After a year in lockdown, escapism and the opportunity to experience new things is highly desired. When you next get the chance to travel, why not make an effort to plan a trip that will provide you with unforgettable experiences, whilst promoting sustainable development and environmental protection of the places you get to enjoy.

Doing the right thing

Intrepid Travel is an Australian owned company and one of the only carbon neutral tour operators as well as being the world's first to commit to science-based sustainability targets. They are focused on 'how' as opposed to 'where' to travel in 2021 and have incorporated wider industry trends into their newest trips including forms of slow travel, the rise of regenerative travel, and the growth of wilderness and activity holidays. They offer a range of sustainable global tours which include staying in locally owned accommodation, hiring local guides, and have banned all elephant rides. Tour operators like Intrepid highlight the obligation for the travel industry to re-focus and adapt and it is likely many more will follow suit. ■

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