

Five ways to become a more eco-friendly traveller

If you want to join the sustainable travel movement, but don't really know where to start, it's easier than you think.

"Speaking as someone with a PhD in environmental science, you don't need a PhD in environmental science to make a difference when you travel," says Louise de Waal, founder of Green Girls in Africa, a sustainable blog based in South Africa.

"Start small and start at home. Be mindful of unnecessary plastic packaging such as single-serve wrapping, plastic bags, and straws. Once you get into this habit, you'll automatically take this on the road with you."



The travel industry is getting stuck in to help you become a more sustainable traveller, explains Nicky Potgieter, Flight Centre Travel Group Leisure marketing leader.

"Being a responsible traveller also starts with aligning yourself with travel brands that strive to maintain a level of social responsibility and keep sustainability in mind. Speak to a local travel expert on their recommendations for eco-friendly accommodation, sustainable travel activities, and destinations where you can contribute to conserving the environment," she says.

If you're keen to get your 'green' foot in the door this Earth Day, here are five simple tips from Flight Centre that could turn you into a more conscious traveller on your next holiday:

Sip, don't suck

One of the largest sustainability movements to emerge in the last year is the 'no straws' initiative. It simply involves saying no to the use of plastic sipping straws. As a sustainable traveller, you can reduce your plastic consumption, just by avoiding straws on the road, be it a morning smoothie on the go or milkshake with a meal. Sip directly from the glass/cup, or invest in a reusable spoon and straw to keep as your new travel companion.



Reuse your bottle

On the subject of plastic, when venturing to hot countries, get into the habit of taking a reusable water bottle with you to minimise the use of disposable plastic water bottles. Fill it up in restaurants and from water coolers in your hotel lobby. The benefit of a reusable bottle is that you can carry it empty through airport security and fill it up just before you board, so you'll have enough to drink on your flight.



Support local

While you're travelling, avoid buying mass-produced souvenirs. Opt instead for handmade arts and crafts made from sustainable and recycled materials. Not only will you be supporting the local community, but you'll be departing with meaningful mementoes and gifts for friends and families back home. This is one of the easiest ways to get your head around being more responsible. Even taking the time to immerse yourself in the local customs and traditions is a step in the right direction of being a responsible traveller.



Join the community

Besides aligning yourself with meaningful travel brands and experts, social media is one of the best places to start educating yourself proactively on sustainable travel initiatives that you can be a part of. It all starts with a simple 'follow' or 'like'. Get your sustainable travel inspiration from online influencers and bloggers who advocate travelling responsibly, as well as online travel community-led groups on Facebook such as [Tourism Tackles Plastic SA](#), great for joining conversations based on sustainable initiatives.



Head off the beaten track

Becoming a responsible traveller starts with building your relationship with the environment. Think about destinations and travel experiences in which you can surround yourself with nature. It really is that simple. Remote beaches and national parks are a great place to start as they typically aren't overrun by tourists. Tread lightly through countries that advocate conservation and sustainability such as the Seychelles, which is currently embarking on the development of two new marine parks; Mauritius, which is aiming to have a 100% Renewable Energy System by 2050; and Rwanda, which banned the use of plastic bags in 2006.

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