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INTERNATIONAL DAY  
FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism

## Travel Responsibly

Sustainable travel is about making simple choices to lessen your negative impact on a given destination. Individually, each one of these choices makes only a small difference. But collectively, these little things can have a huge impact. How we travel, what we carry, what we eat and drink, what we do at our destination, what we buy, and what we leave behind, can all change the impact we have. Respecting our world and all that makes us different and unique will enhance your travel experience.

To highlight what we all can do as individual travelers to preserve the integrity of our environment, the following list has been compiled from a range of sources, including the United Nations World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and is intended for use by the general public.

### Respect wildlife and their natural habitats

Observe wildlife quietly and from a distance so they are not scared or forced to flee. Do not disturb wildlife or plants for a "better look". Never feed wildlife. Feeding animals makes them habituated to and reliant on humans, and often leads to attacks and possible death for the animal.

### Respect indigenous peoples and local communities

Opening your mind to other cultures and traditions, and being respectful of diversity, can transform your travel experience. Learn as much as possible about your destination before you arrive even, and take time to understand the customs, norms and traditions. Remember to always be tolerant and respectful of local social and cultural traditions and practices. Avoid behaviour that could offend the local population. Any tourism activities should be conducted in harmony with the attributes and traditions of the host regions and countries and in respect for their laws, practices and customs.

### Prevent the spread of disease

Before departure, check with health professionals about any vaccinations you may need in the country or countries you are visiting. Ensure that your vaccinations are up to date to prevent the risk of introducing new diseases to your destinations. Take precautions commensurate with the risks involved and consult medical advice as necessary.



Convention on  
Biological Diversity





### **Prevent spread of invasive alien species**

As a traveler, whether you know it or not, you pick up a lot of “hitchhikers” along the way. These hitchhikers can come in many forms. Seeds, insect egg, and other living material can hitchhike on your shoes to new locations (both your destination and your home on your way back), where they might become invasive alien species. Invasive alien species often lead to the elimination of local species and is one of the most significant drivers of biodiversity loss. When natural habitats for wildlife are degraded and biodiversity is lost, crucial ecosystem services are compromised also for humans, most often affecting first the poor and the most vulnerable, women and children.

### **Be vigilant when making purchases**

The purchases we make can have a profound impact on wildlife. Think twice before buying or consuming something made out of an exotic tree, plant or wild animal or rare rock or fossil. Some species, and products made with them, are because of their endangered nature, banned or restricted from being traded or imported/exported. Therefore travellers would be contributing to the demise of the species and breaking the law to buy them or travel with them. Other products and the materials they’re made with might also be using biodiversity/species in a non-sustainable manner (even if not endangered at the present) and travellers should encourage the sustainable use of biodiversity. If in doubt, consult credible sources like CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and WWF. Generally refrain from buying products such as bags made from wild leather, carvings made from ivory, or mounted insects, shells or animals. Often sound alternatives are available, such as purchasing handicrafts made by local artisans where the profits go directly to local communities rather than poachers or unscrupulous traders. Safeguarding a country’s wildlife is the most sustainable way of securing the future for the people who depend on it for survival.

### **In protected areas, access only the places open to visitors**

The world’s national parks and nature reserves receive around eight billion visits every year, according to a recent study . Increasing the number of visitors to protected areas can be an effective tool for conservation and community development, provided well-functioning management systems are in place. When travelling on foot, stay on established tracks whenever possible to minimise disturbance or damage to the soil and vegetated surfaces. Where a track does not exist, take the most direct route and avoid vegetation, fragile terrain and wildlife. Never touch or harass wild animals. Refrain from illegal camping and don’t light fires.

### **Be careful when diving near coral reefs**

Coral reefs are very delicate and biodiverse ecosystems, and extremely endangered globally. Never touch them, step on them, or damage them by snorkeling or diving too close. Avoid using sunscreen if possible when diving near them. If you must use sunscreen, avoid sunscreens that contain oxybenzone, a common UV-filtering compound. Many commonly used sunscreens can both kill and cause DNA damage in coral. The best way to protect coral reefs when diving is to cover your skin with a long-sleeve shirt, rash guard and wet suit.



## Sustainable travel tips

### Do like the locals

If possible, choose locally owned lodges and hotels. Use local buses, car rental companies and airlines. Buy locally made handcrafts and products. Respect livelihoods of local vendors and artisans by paying a fair price (i.e. do not try to haggle prices down below a reasonable level). Eat in local restaurants, shop in local markets, and attend local festivals and events. If you have the means, hire local guides with in-depth knowledge of the area.

### Choose nature-friendly accommodation

Ask hotels/lodges about their environmental policies. Do they have an environmental policy? Have they implemented energy and water saving measures – for example, spacious hotel complexes with park-like pastures that need constant watering have tremendous water consumption. Do they contribute to local conservation efforts and support local communities? Do they compost? Recycle? Reuse towels and bed linens for multiple days. Avoid using the hotel laundry if possible, as they typically wash each guest's clothes separately

### Conserve water and power

Take short showers (the average hotel guest uses over 300 litres of water per night/in a luxury hotel it is approximately 1800 litres). Globally, tourists consume three times the amount of freshwater contained in Lake Superior per year in freshwater, and use 80% of Japan's primary energy supply. Therefore, turn off the taps while shaving and brushing your teeth, report dripping taps and turn off lights and heating or air conditioning when not in use. Reuse towels for multiple days.

### Eat wisely

Choose wisely what you put on your plate. Try to choose locally sourced produce that is in season. Be aware that certain endangered species may be on the menu without your knowledge. Ask local conservation organizations for a list of what to look out for.

### Avoid plastic

Reduce the use of single-use plastics at the individual level by using reusable shopping bags and water bottles. Do not use straws to drink. Buy sodas in glass bottles that can be recycled. Choose cosmetic and personal care products that don't contain microplastics – as microplastics tend not to be filtered out during sewage treatment and are released directly into rivers, lakes and the ocean.

### Don't litter

Dispose waste responsibly. Carry back all non-biodegradable litter. If you're camping, leave campsites litter-free before departing.

### Slow travel

If you have the time, take the bus, train, or ship where you can. It is more environmentally friendly. Try to fly less frequently and stay in one place for a longer time. When you do need to fly, opt for non-stop flights rather than connections. Fewer flights mean fewer emissions.



### Offset your carbon emissions

Long-haul air or car travel, and accommodation, are a significant source of carbon dioxide emissions, contributing to climate change and its impacts on biodiversity. You can easily determine the approximate volume of carbon of your trip through specialized travel portals. Take the time to learn about a carbon offsetting project, initiative or organization that not only compensates emissions but does it by reducing deforestation and forest degradation, thereby contributing to conservation, sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (also called the REDD+ approach). By using REDD+ for your carbon offsetting, the carbon you pay for comes in the form of a natural forest. Natural forests are more efficient in absorbing carbon, and keeping it for longer, than planted monoculture forests, such as single species pines or eucalyptus plantations. Your financial contribution can lead to ecosystem restoration.

### Stay informed

Be informed as to what you as a traveler can do to ensure the best experience possible, for both you and for the environment:

- **UN World Tourism Organization** - Global Code of Ethics for Tourism: <http://ethics.unwto.org/en/content/global-code-ethics-tourism>
- **UN World Tourism Organization** - The Responsible Tourist and Traveler, a practical guide for travelers: <http://ethics.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/responsibletravelerbrochureen.pdf>
- **UN World Tourism Organization** - Tips for a responsible traveler: <http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/tipsforresponsibletraveller25-01.pdf>
- **Green Passport** - UN Environment initiative helps travelers make tourism a sustainable activity: [www.unep.fr/greenpassport](http://www.unep.fr/greenpassport)
- **Buyer Beware** - Guide to souvenirs to avoid while traveling: [http://assets.worldwildlife.org/publications/315/files/original/Buyer-Beware.pdf?1345686864&\\_ga=1.226170202.1531626328.1402066044](http://assets.worldwildlife.org/publications/315/files/original/Buyer-Beware.pdf?1345686864&_ga=1.226170202.1531626328.1402066044)
- **Tourism Review** - News portal targeted at travel and tourism professionals: [www.tourism-review.com](http://www.tourism-review.com)
- **The International Ecotourism Society** - Non-profit organization dedicated to promoting ecotourism: [www.ecotourism.org](http://www.ecotourism.org)
- **The World Travel and Tourism Council** - Brings together major players in the travel and tourism sector, enabling them to speak with one voice to governments and international bodies: [www.wttc.org/tourism-for-tomorrow-awards/winners-and-finalists-2017](http://www.wttc.org/tourism-for-tomorrow-awards/winners-and-finalists-2017)
- **Sustainable Travel International** - Helps governments, companies, NGOs and local communities to use tourism to achieve the right balance between economic development, green growth, and protection of their natural and cultural assets: <http://sustainabletravel.org>

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