

JUNE 2012

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# THE GUIDE

## to Sustainable Tourism

“  
**THOUGH WE  
TRAVEL THE WORLD  
OVER TO FIND THE  
BEAUTIFUL, WE MUST  
CARRY IT WITH US OR  
WE FIND IT NOT.**  
”

— RALPH WALDO EMERSON

blue&green  
tomorrow



# About BLUE & GREEN TOMORROW

## ➔ **Essential intelligence on sustainable investing and living**

Blue & Green Tomorrow wants to support innovative businesses that balance the needs of the planet, its people and our prosperity.

## ➔ We aim to provide our readers with the knowledge they need to make informed choices without prejudice, scaremongering or greenwash.

## ➔ **We want the world to be as blue and green tomorrow as it was yesterday.**

## ➔ We believe that everyone can play a part and anyone can make a difference. Not by going back through misplaced nostalgia to some bygone age, but by striding out to a bright new future in which we take advantage of the new approaches that can improve our quality of life, the food we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink and the land we live on.



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**WITHOUT**  
**COSTING**  
**THE EARTH.**  
**THERE IS NO**  
**PLAN (ET) B.**

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**2012**



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[THE GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM]

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# FOREWORD

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I sit and write this foreword on a beautiful sunny day in England ahead of a long weekend in honour of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee with the London 2012 Olympics looming, and I'm left wondering: "why leave the UK for a holiday?"

But no doubt, come the weekend, the sun will take his hat off again, clouds will descend, the temperature will drop, and I will be planning my next break to more clement climes. Such is the British way of life.

Having pulled together content for the Guide to Sustainable Tourism, what I will now be asking myself is: how can I reduce my impact and ensure my holiday actually benefits others?

No doubt, staying in the UK is a good option. At a time when the economic gloom matches the British weather, spending your hard earned money in the UK would certainly do no harm to our own GDP—admittedly, the UK doesn't rely as heavily on tourism as a good many other nations (see page 8), but still, there are more than a handful of towns that do count tourism among their more successful industries.

I recently drove up to Dalhousie Castle near Edinburgh and, given that the weather was spectacular, I couldn't have enjoyed a more pleasant stay. Of course, in retrospect, I almost certainly should have taken the train—undoubtedly the least carbon intensive form of transport. But then I wouldn't have been able to enjoy the highlight of my trip—driving through the borders on fabulous and little-used B roads. Luckily, it's just as easy to offset carbon from road travel as it is for air (see page 40).

What the Guide to Sustainable Tourism really tells us is that it's all about balance and little more than a modicum of common sense and consideration.

It is totally unacceptable that the time we enjoy so much should be to the detriment of the

environment and the people in the places we visit. And I believe that most people would not enjoy their holiday if they realised that was the case.

Flying usually often gets bad press, but then again, it enables us to visit the places that depend upon tourism to survive—places that are often impractical to reach in any other way. A frank interview with ATAG's Paul Steele shows us that the aviation industry is entirely focused on sustainability with some very ambitious targets for the future.

I think it's fair to say that if you can travel by train, you should. But don't be afraid of flying—if you offset your carbon and heed the wise words within this guide, the positive impacts of your holiday will far outweigh the negatives.

Sustainable tourism is on the right pathway to becoming the only kind of tourism. It is making the mainstream media and I feel confident that the excellent work being done by so many in the industry will continue to ripple outwards.

On a side note, I do feel some reservation about the future of tourism given the UN World Tourism Organisation's recent decision to make Robert Mugabe a champion of the industry. The Zimbabwean president, currently himself the subject of a travel ban, has been accused of ethnic cleansing and election rigging amongst other things, so is an outlandish choice. I think it's best to simply ignore it.

I truly hope you enjoy reading The Guide to Sustainable Tourism and that it opens your eyes to a new way of experiencing the many wonders of the world. ●

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**RICH WHITWORTH**

Editor, Blue & Green Tomorrow

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE GUIDE TO  
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
GENTLY ENCOURAGES  
YOU TO CONSIDER THE  
IMPACT YOUR HOLIDAYS  
HAVE ON THE PEOPLE  
AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
AT YOUR DESTINATION.

## STOP THAT!

Firstly, let's make something clear: The Guide to Sustainable Tourism is not telling you to stop doing one of the things you most likely love—travelling the world.

Though there are many books and guides out there that frown upon anything but the greenest, most eco-active kind of tourism, there are a good many people in the industry who have a more open view of sustainability; put simply, it is about reducing our negative impact, increasing our positive impact and—importantly and sometimes ignored in the process—having a great time.

## STARS OF THE GUIDE

*Blue & Green Tomorrow* are proud and honoured to include the insights and opinions of a wide range of

experts in 2012's Guide.

No sustainable tourism literature worth its salt would be complete without the voice of Chris Breen, Chairman of AITO's Sustainable Tourism Committee. Chris explains his route into sustainability and what drives him; it is with slight regret that the written word is unable to fully reproduce the passion so openly expressed in his interview (page 18).

We are very grateful to Tom Barber, prolific writer and travel company founder, who found time in his hectic schedule to grace The Guide with his extremely wise words—and his hat (page 32).

Responsible tourism guru Justin Francis tells us how to travel like a local (page 22) and Paul Steele from the Air Traffic Action Group stands up for the aviation industry.

The one thing all of our contributors have in common is a strong desire to make the tourism industry more sustainable from every perspective.

## THE ONLY OPTION

Sue Hurdle, Chief Executive of The Travel Foundation, offers a very broad view of sustainable tourism (page 24)—indeed, the bold ambition of the organisation is to make sustainable tourism the only kind of tourism.

This point of view is likely to resonate with all readers; in many cases simply thinking more carefully about what we do when we are abroad can make all the difference. The travel tips section is a fantastic quick reference guide that has the ability to make sustainable tourism converts out of us all in seconds.

## THE CARBON ISSUE

For some time, offsetting carbon from air travel has caused confusion. The Guide keeps things simple (page 40)—we fully encourage carbon offsetting, but note that is but a single issue. Reducing the negative impacts of tourism goes much deeper than how we get to our destination.

## PEOPLE AND PLACES

The message that is reiterated time and time again within our 2012 Guide to Sustainable Tourism is that the people and places affected by tourism must be protected—and sometimes that can lead to conflicting ideas of what sustainable tourism means. But with more tourists out there asking questions and demanding accountability, tourism can be a wonderful thing for all concerned. ●

[THE GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM]

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# BOOMING BUSINESS

**T**ourism is big business. In 2010, the total global value of the tourist industry was suggested to be some \$919 billion, and even though it has been in decline for a short period of time (due to the global economic downturn), 2010's increase of 4.7% in real terms has more than counterbalanced this. A recent report suggested that the net impact of the tourist industry might well be even higher (see right).

Other reports have noted that the tourism industry may represent up to 70% of the local economy for some of the world's poorest countries. More importantly, the impact of tourism in emerging and developing economies is outstripping that of developed nations. The World Tourism Organization notes that recovery was particularly strong in emerging economies, where arrivals grew faster (up 8%) than in advanced ones (an increase of only 5%). Additionally, the share in international tourist arrivals received by emerging and developing economies has steadily risen, from 31% in 1990 to 47% in 2010.

Although the desire to travel without causing additional damage to the environment has been popular since the 1960s and the birth of the green



The overall export income generated by inbound tourism, including passenger transport, exceeded **US\$1 TRILLION** in 2010, or close to **US\$3 BILLION** a day. Tourism exports account for as much as 30% of the world's exports of commercial services and 6% of overall exports of goods and services. Globally, as an export category, tourism ranks fourth after fuels, chemicals and automotive products. (UNWTO, 2011)

movement, other features of sustainable travel and tourism are more recent. Sustainable tourism tends to focus on several often-overlapping issues at the point of destination regarding:

The social welfare standards of citizens

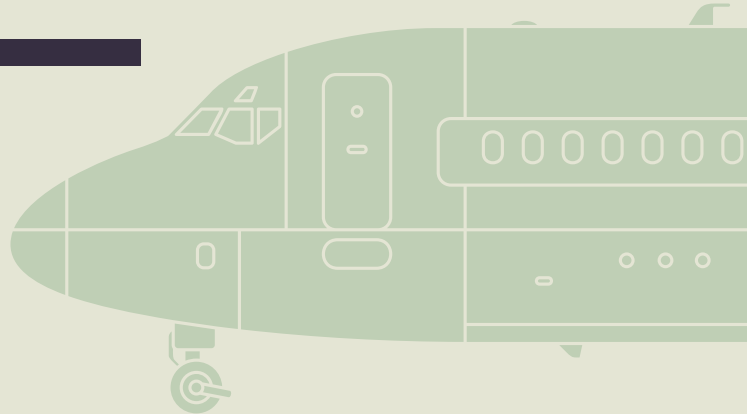
The damage to natural resources and cultures

The impact of tourist income to people

The ecological impact of travel

More commonly still in the past ten years, ethically- or sustainably-minded online travel sites have sprung up to capitalize on a niche market facilitated by the Internet. Operating online allows companies to reduce costs and appeal to a wider audience and therefore keep prices competitive while still ensuring the maximum benefit to the destination country and the environment. ●

# CURRENT VALUE IN THE UK



[THE GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM]

Data from the Co-Operative Group indicates a steady rise in the UK's sustainable tourism market. The responsible tour operators in this report account for holidays designed to consider the environmental and social impacts on the destination, while environmental tourist attractions include "UK-based environmental attractions".

**FIGURE 1:** UK annual expenditure on responsible and environmental holidays, 2001-09. Data from the Co-Operative Group [www.goodwithmoney.co.uk/ethical-consumerism-report-2010](http://www.goodwithmoney.co.uk/ethical-consumerism-report-2010)

**ENVIRONMENTAL TOURIST  
ATTRACTIONS (£ MILLION)**

**RESPONSIBLE TOUR  
OPERATORS (£ MILLION)**



As can be seen, there is an upward trend for responsible tour operators (who cover foreign travel), while UK based environmental attractions remain relatively static. Although it is encouraging to see numbers topping the hundred million pound mark nationally, this makes up only a small fraction of what the UK spends on tourism each year.

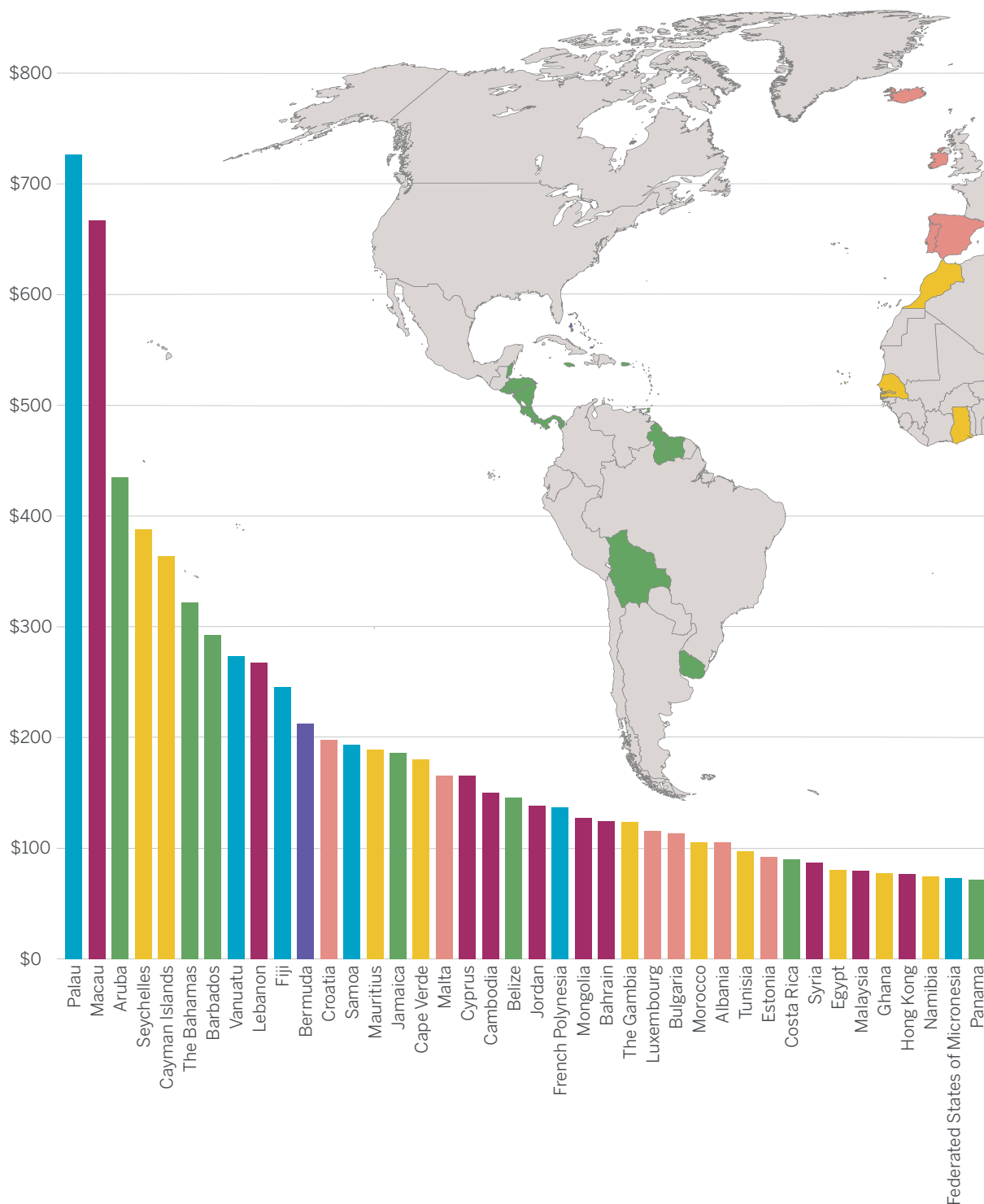
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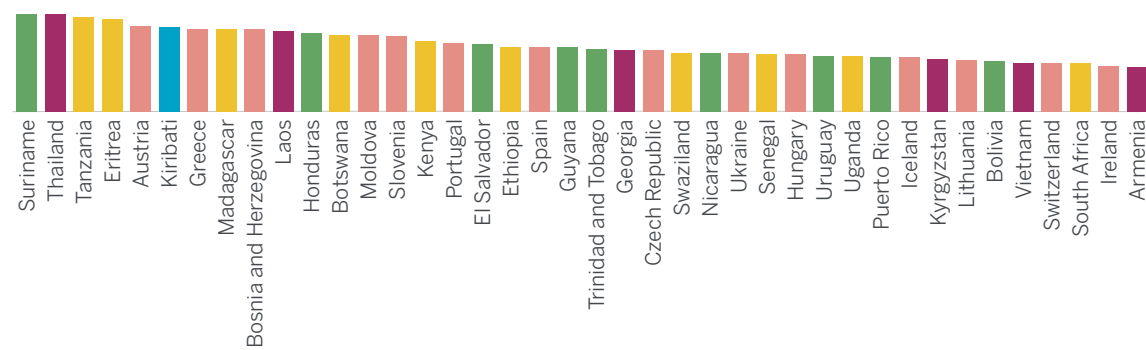
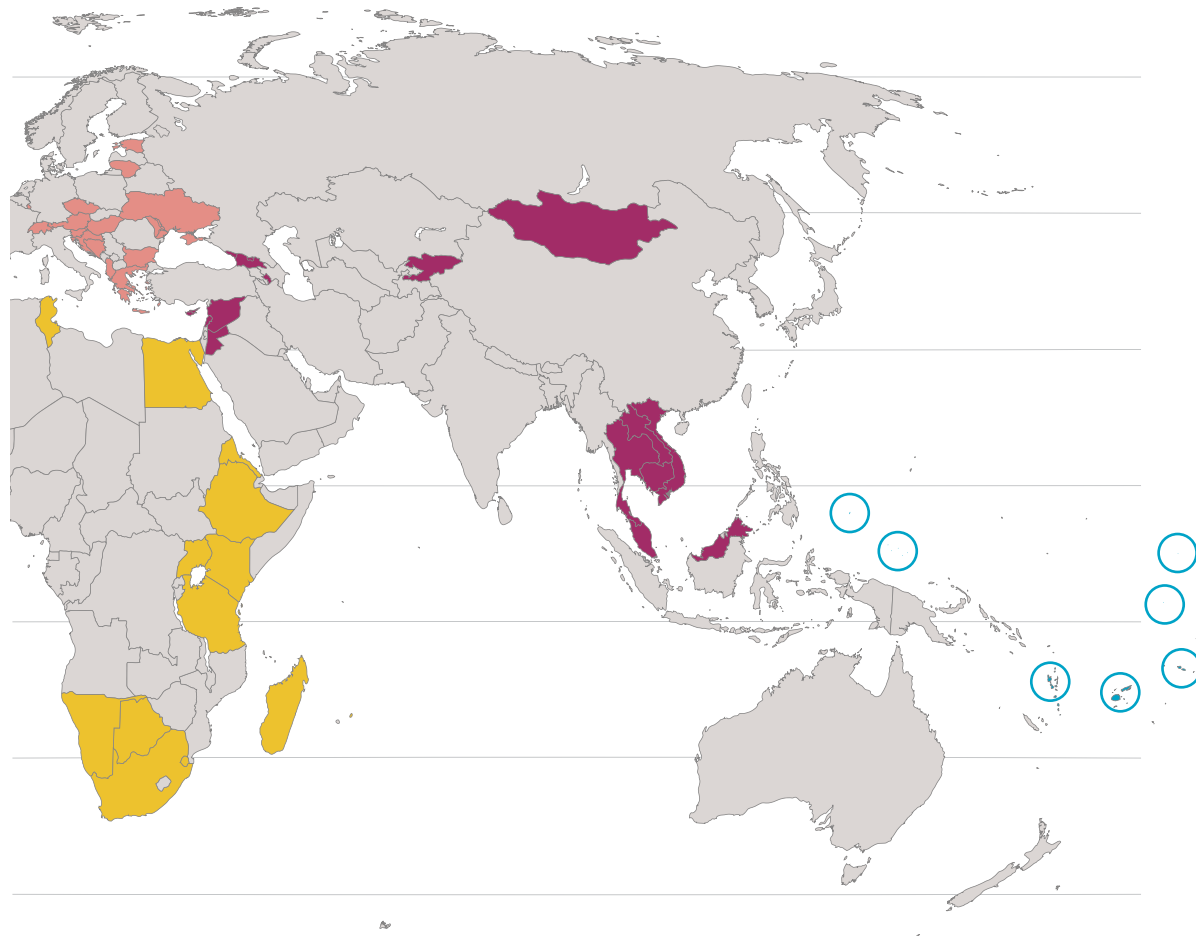


# ECO(NOMIC) IMPACTS

INCOME FROM TOURISM—TOP 80 COUNTRIES IN TERMS OF \$ PER \$1,000 OF GDP



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## Defining Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is usually defined as holiday travel that attempts to reduce harm to the environment and local people and cultures, while at the same time avoiding travel to countries with negative social programs and human rights practices.

Modern sustainable tourism can take many forms and the following list reflects the main considerations. Some operators may be able to satisfy all criteria but, as always, it is important to ask questions to ensure that your own needs are fully met.

### Natural destinations

Travel to natural destinations reduces the dependence on large-scale tourist attractions—for example, theme parks and large hotel resorts—that often carry with them a huge ecological impact, both in the space they take up and the cost it takes to run them on a daily basis.

### Minimal impact

In an ideal world, tourism would have zero negative impact, but this is a practical impossibility. Instead, one of the central tenets of the sustainable tourism movement is to do as little harm as possible, whether this is by choosing transportation methods that produce less pollution, staying in sustainable and non-exploitative accommodation, or even by avoiding certain areas altogether.

### Environmental awareness

While sustainable holidays attempt to make only a small impact, it is important to note that the sheer scale of the travel industry means that individual contributions, at the current level, make little difference overall. With that in mind, some travellers choose holidays that support programs designed to increase environmental awareness, further spreading the word about ecological causes and encouraging others to follow in their low-carbon or socially-minded footsteps.

### Direct financial benefits for conservation

In many cases, the ecological impact of a holiday comes in the damage of tourism to a localised

geographical area, causing significant changes to wildlife (both flora and fauna). Sustainable tourism attempts to ameliorate this problem by supporting programs directly linked to aiding conservation of plant and animal species in the affected areas, ensuring that the money is used to help a very specific region.

### Direct financial benefits and empowerment for local people

As above, many people choose holidays that directly benefit a specific local community. However, ensuring that financial assistance and trade reaches those who actually work in the local area can be especially problematic in countries that are well-known for failings in bureaucracy, either caused by inefficiency or outright corruption.

### Respect local culture

Ensuring that traditional ways of life are only minimally disrupted is also important. As such, it is common for travellers to avoid Westernised holiday experiences in favour of a more authentic foreign experience.

### Support human rights and democratic movements

Along with the focus on ecological and environmental factors, social welfare concerns are often at the forefront of travellers' minds. As such, they often choose to avoid countries with a poor record on human rights or where there is a corrupt or tyrannical government regime that is responsible for oppression of the nation's citizens.

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 ETHICAL DESTINATIONS

# THE ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL WELFARE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**E**very year, Ethical Traveler compiles a list of the Developing World's 10 Best Ethical Destinations. Ethical Traveler describes the process: "We begin our research by focusing on three general categories: environmental protection, social welfare, and human rights. For each of these categories, we look at information past and present so that we understand not only the current state of a country, but how it has changed over time. This helps us select countries that are actively improving the state of their people, government, and environment". Indeed, the ability to assess active engagement is important in any measure of sustainability. The current 2012 list is shown on the right—the countries in red also appeared on 2011's list, with Barbados, Lithuania and Poland being replaced. However, in 2010, the list was substantially different, with Belize, Ghana, Namibia, the Seychelles, South Africa and Suriname all featuring. In 2011—after featuring Suriname on the 2010 list—Ethical Traveler noted: "Suriname was removed from our list after the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination urged Suriname to ensure legal acknowledgment of the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples. We remove Suriname with regret, as the country had

conquered a place in last year's Top 10 due to its unspoiled rainforest biodiversity and sincere efforts towards ecotourism and environmental preservation."

Though Suriname failed to make the grade, it is important to note that even on Ethical Traveler's list, the definition of ethical, or rather the criteria for selection, must be broadened. Indeed, some countries suffer from issues that could render them unacceptable as destinations for the more discerning or particular traveller. Below are comments from Ethical Traveler regarding their selection process and the countries that still made the cut despite serious issues.

"None of the countries on this year's Ethical Destinations list is perfect, and four countries must include special caveats. In Barbados and Dominica, homosexuality remains criminalized. Normally this is a deal-breaker for us, but the laws do not appear to be zealously enforced. We sincerely hope that our vote of confidence will persuade these country's leaders to repeal these backward laws. Latvia, Lithuania and Poland should do more to prevent discrimination against ethnic and sexual minorities while Costa Rica, Argentina, and Barbados have to step up their efforts even further to halt sex trafficking." (www.ethicaltraveler.org, 2010)

FOR  
2012

Ethical Traveler's top ten countries (listed alphabetically)



Argentina



The Bahamas



Chile



Costa Rica



Dominica



Latvia



Mauritius



Palau



Serbia



Uruguay

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# GETTING THERE



Ethical screening certainly takes into account a number of serious factors and is a good way to select a holiday destination, but there are additional practical considerations to be taken into account when examining the value of a destination in terms sustainability; namely, the further environmental

impact of travel to the given location, and the country's GDP per capita; the lower the GDP, the higher the value of tourist money in a local economy.

Taking as an example the Ethical Traveler's destination list, the three shortest journeys and thus, least polluting are listed below and based on a flight from London to the national capital.

Poland

1,452

DISTANCE FROM LONDON (KM)

Latvia

1,679

DISTANCE FROM LONDON (KM)

Serbia

1,694

DISTANCE FROM LONDON (KM)



However, even the shortest of these flights – London to Warsaw – would equate to a round trip of almost 3,000km, or over half a

tonne (522kg) of carbon dioxide released per passenger.

For a different spin and noting that Ethical Traveler is an American publication, calculating from New York City (the largest airport

system in the United States, second in the world in terms of passenger traffic, and first in the world in terms of total flight operations), the figures of course are different.

The Bahamas

1,764

DISTANCE FROM NEW YORK (KM)

Belize

2,962

DISTANCE FROM NEW YORK (KM)

Dominica

3,070

DISTANCE FROM NEW YORK (KM)



Even the best of these represents a 3,500km round trip, or 635kg of carbon dioxide released per person.

The average distance for all places listed over the three years was again significantly higher for New York than London, with a round trip coming in at approximately 14,500km and 15,514km respectively—the equivalent of 2.6 tonnes and almost 2.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide per person.

Given that the point of origin has as much impact on emissions as the destination, sustainable tourism based on distance becomes entirely subjective and could distort a choice made based on more relevant criteria. That said, despite the benefits of supporting the economies of these countries (and the social welfare programs of the nations in question), it is impossible to avoid the fact that travel there represents a significant expenditure in carbon emissions over time.

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We support various conservation projects around the islands including a marine education project and the Azores bullfinch project as well as encouraging low impact tourism amongst our clients.

Our sustainable travel credentials have earned us the highest 5 star award from AITO.



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# SUPPORTING DEVELOPING ECONOMIES

**A**way from environmental considerations and moving towards concerns regarding social welfare, there is a clear trend towards promoting the tourist industries of less-economically developed countries worldwide. In many cases, this can be crucially important in helping countries get back on their feet after a significant natural disaster (or even terrorist event, as in the case of the Bali bombings of 2002).

Of the nineteen countries selected by the Ethical Traveler survey, there is a significant difference in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. The data below compares the countries by GDP at purchasing power parity per capita (the value of all

final goods and services produced within a country in a given year divided by the average (or mid-year) population for the same year). Also included are figures for the UK and USA, as well as the global GDP per capita when PPP is taken into account (currently \$10,700).

Ghana, the lowest-ranked country on the list, has a GDP per capita that is less than one tenth the GDP per capita for the Bahamas, which is ranked highest. In fact, the Bahamas ranks only \$5,000 less than the UK, which makes it difficult to justify a trip there based on the grounds of boosting an economy in need alone. Of the nineteen countries selected by Ethical Traveler over the past three years, only five fall below the global GDP per capita: Ghana, Namibia, Belize, Suriname, and Serbia.



However, while it might appear that Ethical Traveler's focus ignores the poorest countries, the survey's methodology does hint at a possible correlation:

*The Millennium Challenge Corporation also offers information on such aspects of social welfare as immunization rates, girls' access to primary education, and health expenditure. That none of the MCC partner countries—typically some of the poorest in the world—actually made it on to the Ethical Destinations list this year points to a deep connection between economic and social health.*

A country's economic success is closely linked to its social welfare provision and (in many cases) its views towards human rights and treatment of its citizens, with a significant degree of correlation. Unfortunately, this produces a vicious spiral because countries that could use additional tourist revenue to help promote social welfare are not seen as desirable tourist locations.

For more detailed figures regarding the Ethical Traveler Top 10 for each year, please refer to Appendix A.

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THE ORIGINAL AND STILL THE BEST

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# TRULY WILD FRONTIERS

**MET IN KASHMIR BY THE FRIENDLIEST OF FACES, YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS WITH SENSATIONS OF EXCITEMENT, ANXIOUSNESS AND WONDERMENT AS YOU FOLLOW YOUR GUIDE—YOUR FRIEND—TO FRESH PASTURES. ONE WEEK LATER, NOT ONLY HAVE YOU BECOME IMMERSSED IN YOUR NEWFOUND SURROUNDINGS, BUT ALSO, NO DOUBT, GATHERED FANTASTIC MEMORIES AND IMPRESSIONS TO LAST A LIFETIME.**

**I**t's a wild world out there. *"To travel the Wild Frontiers way is not to be scared by getting out of your comfort zone, and actually experiencing the world"* said Jonny Bealby, acclaimed travel writer and founder of Wild Frontiers [[www.wildfrontiers.co.uk/](http://www.wildfrontiers.co.uk/)]. Bealby spoke to *Blue and Green Tomorrow* about his award-winning adventure travel company and appealed to aspiring travellers to *"get out there and see the world."*

The company, founded in 2002, has weaved an inspiring web of adventure journeys. Experiences conducted *"by travellers, for travellers"* allow clients to intimately live among new cultural discoveries with local and experienced tour guides. We were intrigued to find out more about a sustainable business plan hatched high in the sublime mountain ranges of central Afghanistan.

In fact, Bealby was struck with the desire to share his discoveries while staying with a Pagan Tribe deep in the Hindu Kush. His proposal? *'Adventure travel'* on a large-scale basis.

*"People have travelled an awful lot now. And I think that they do want something more than just going abroad. I mean, 20 years ago, going abroad was a big enough buzz, whether it was Spain or a bit further afield."*

Most people have now been abroad many times and Bealby thinks the game has changed: *"What they are looking for is an experienced guide to take them out of their comfort zone and challenge them slightly, and through that challenge they learn not just about the world that they are looking at and being a part of, but themselves as well."*

Wild Frontiers emerges as an innovative approach to commercial travel both in its natural achievements in sustainability and in its inspirational ambitions to give something back to its most treasured communities. By working alongside valued and experienced guides and designing each trip with a strong sense of the culture and

ecology, Wild Frontiers intertwines intimate local knowledge and positive impacts into every journey.

*"I believe that the contacts we have give our clients a kind of vicarious friendship, which they can use to learn and understand so much more about the place than simply staying there, not knowing who to talk to", explains Bealby*

*"We take out all the kinds of potential mistakes, we cut to the chase, and give everybody the chance to experience in two weeks what would normally take three months to achieve."*



By the very nature of the company's ethos of ecological sustainability, Wild Frontiers have, from the off, had the ability to employ measures of responsible outlooks into its journeys.

*"I've always believed that responsible travel and sustainable travel should be encompassed in the trip that you sell, it shouldn't be a side issue."*

*"I think that the whole trip that you run should be created in a sustainable manner. By which I mean you should, wherever possible, be putting together an itinerary that uses local hotels, local facilities, local guides, porters, etc., paying them all a decent wage and investing as much money as possible into the area."*

*"In this, you are feeding your money into the whole area rather than just into the*

*bank accounts of large corporations. I think that is the most important thing, it becomes self fulfilling because the nature of the trips that we conduct are, by their very essence, sustainable."*

Being one of the first companies in 2005 to entirely offset carbon emissions, Wild Frontiers' vow of sustainability stretches to all corners of the company's targets.

The Wild Frontiers Foundation [[www.wildfrontiers.co.uk/responsible-travel/](http://www.wildfrontiers.co.uk/responsible-travel/)] was formed in 2010 with ambitions to 'give something back' and has successfully managed to raise over £65,000—a phenomenal achievement considering how little time the scheme has been up and running.

*"As much as I wanted the trips themselves to be sustainable and responsible, I was also aware of the fact that—not just from a Wild Frontiers' point of view but also from the clients point of view—there was a strong desire to give something extra back."*

*"We decided that we would actually form our own foundation and have been raising money for that ever since."*

In the past, money has been raised through specific fundraising events. Johnny's recent trip to Pakistan achieved £20,000 worth of donations, with school aid the main focus. *"The Foundation gives us a platform to do these wonderful things",* said Bealby.

*"It also allows us to provide money for disaster relief. I think the Wild Frontiers Foundation is something that can grow to become a significant part of our story."*

The trips become a celebrated escape from a homogenised world. *"It's about going to the south east of Asia and seeing it how South East Asians see it, going to the sub-continents and seeing them how the Pakistanis or Bangladeshis see them. It's taking people into the world that the local people inhabit; it could be that of princes or it could be that of shepherds."*

Wild Frontiers brings together modern adventure travel with a sense of sustainable awareness that is so rare.



[www.wildfrontiers.co.uk](http://www.wildfrontiers.co.uk)

# WILD FRONTIERS



## WILD CULTURE

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Trekking and multi-activity trips



## WILD CHILD

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# STRIVING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT TOUR OPERATORS (AITO) BRINGS TOGETHER OVER 140 OF BRITAIN'S SPECIALIST TRAVEL COMPANIES—AND IT TAKES SUSTAINABLE TOURISM VERY SERIOUSLY. BSGT CAUGHT UP WITH CHRIS BREEN, CHAIRMAN OF AITO'S SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITTEE.

## How did you get involved with AITO and more specifically, sustainable tourism?

I started out working as a naturalist guide in Zambia's Luangwa Valley, which is probably one of the finest wildlife locations anywhere in the world, and in my view is certainly Africa's. I came back and worked for a big travel agency in London. A year or two after that I started Wildlife Worldwide [www.wildlifeworldwide.com], which I ran and grew for many years—it's now 20 years young and still specializes in bespoke, personalised wildlife holidays around the world.

I can't think of a better way of spending a holiday than enjoying the beauty of wide-open spaces while at the same time giving something back to those places.

Wildlife Worldwide was a member of AITO for many years. There has always been a very strong environmental and sustainable ethic to what I do. I've always had a strong interest in sustainable tourism. I am now the Chairman of the AITO Sustainable Tourism Committee and very proud and delighted to be so.

## Do you have any personal stories that have shaped your views about sustainable tourism?

One of my very good Zambian friends, as a result of the work he



Green tourism and responsible travel are key concerns for AITO and its members. Each potential member's sustainable tourism credentials are examined before they may join, to ensure sustainability and that local cultures and the environment are treated with the utmost care and respect.  
— [www.aito.co.uk](http://www.aito.co.uk)

was doing as a naturalist guide, ended up with an opportunity to come over to the UK to do a Masters degree in wildlife and conservation based tourism. The opportunity was offered by a client who could see that this chap was a highly intelligent and brilliant guy. He now actually lectures here in the UK.

It's an amazing story—especially for someone who had spent the majority of their life

in a remote part of Africa. He now regularly travels back to Africa leading trips and teaching people about the destination and conservation-based tourism.

## How does the AITO Sustainable Tourism Committee function?

Essentially, it is our job to influence the way the different members of AITO to operate from a sustainability perspective. All members of AITO are completely (and proudly) independent and many of them are doing outstanding things when it comes to sustainable tourism in the areas of the world where they operate. We try to collate a lot of that information and promote it to newer members who want help and guidance on how they can improve, whether it's here in the UK or overseas.

## Could you give some examples of sustainable projects run by AITO members?

There are many AITO operators who are doing amazing stuff—and amazingly they don't shout it from the rooftops.

There is a fantastic project in Mexico, which is supported by Nomadic Thoughts [www.nomadicthoughts.com], called New Life Mexico [www.newlifemexico.com]. It works to support vulnerable children and young people through social, health and education programmes. It's got an excellent website [www.newlifemexico.com]—well worth a look. But it's all supported entirely by tourism and is a great example.

There is a lot of extremely good work going on in The Gambia, which is being supported by an organisation called Serenity Holidays [www.serenity.co.uk] or Gambia Experience [www.gambia.co.uk]. They've done an enormous

amount of work to help local people develop their own businesses—some in tourism—entirely backed by the tourism industry.

**What do you think drives people to become involved in these inspiring projects?**

Largely, in my experience, the people who are involved in this good work around the world—certainly all of my industry colleagues, friends and associates—are very much doing it for the right reasons; because they want to improve the lives of people in the destinations they work in—be that Nepal, Gabon, Brazil, Mexico or wherever.

A lot of what is done by tour operators is borne out of a great passion for a particular region. Journey Latin America [[www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk](http://www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk)], which is another one of AITO's members, is another really good example. They do fantastic work in Mexico, Colombia and many other countries in Latin America.

In my case, it was my first really wild experience of going to a really wild place. That experience helped me build a company, which has helped me personally look at different parts of the world with a respectful head on my shoulders—and it's a fantastic privilege to be able to say that.

**Responsible or sustainable—traveller or tourist... Is there a difference?**

To answer the first part of the question, responsible tourism versus sustainable tourism, I think that is partly an issue of nomenclature—in so far as, what many organisations historically referred to as responsible tourism is now referred to as sustainable tourism. But I think that sustainable tourism is probably the right terminology. You could be in Canada driving



along the road within the speed limit and claim to be responsible, but you might be in a car that does one mile to the gallon, so you weren't travelling in a very sustainable manner!

I think the word sustainable talks about the future, whereas responsible doesn't necessarily take that into account. Given the choice, we'd go for sustainable every time, but for many people, it's just the flick of a switch, perhaps wrongly so.

Regarding traveller or tourist, I'm going to give you a very personal answer. I think it's pure and utter snobbery. I think it stems back to the time when people used to travel with backpacks—and there's nothing

wrong with that; I've done it myself. But there was an air of superiority from those that travelled with backpacks over people who went on a two week holiday to the south of France or Italy for example. Actually, the reality is that if you are going somewhere to see, enjoy or experience it, whether you refer to yourself as a traveller or a tourist doesn't really matter. If you're not a resident there, you must be a visitor.

I am delighted to go to the Masai Mara as a tourist. If someone else wants to refer to me as a traveller or anything else, it makes no difference.

**Who should be driving**

**sustainable tourism—industry or the consumer?**

It is absolutely the industry's responsibility. There is no doubt about that in my mind. If a company cannot be bothered to offer sustainable holidays, by definition it must have a limited life span. If what a company is offering is destroying the very place it relies upon, then the product is finite.

As an example, if I was offering holidays to go and mine gold in northern Australia, I've got a relatively limited time period over which those holidays can operate—I'm using up the resources—there's nothing sustainable about that. On the other hand, if I'm offering tours to go and see places where gold exists, I can do that 'til kingdom come.

**What trends are you seeing in public awareness of sustainable tourism?**

Sustainable tourism is increasingly spoken about by journalists and as it permeates the media, there seems to be an increased desire from people travelling overseas to ensure that they are doing it the right way.

I'm a great advocate of travelling overseas, not only because I run a travel company, but also because it's enormous fun and educational. Meeting people in new places is one of life's great privileges. But for many destinations, people will have to fly, which has carbon emission implications and how horrendous that can be for the environment, so pressure needs to be applied to airlines to improve what they operate.

Airlines are consequently starting to talk about the types of fuel that they are using or developing to make air travel a more sustainable option.

[see 'Come fly with me', an interview with ATAG's Paul Steele]

**Could you tell us about AITO's sustainable star classification system [[http://www.aito.co.uk/corporate\\_RT\\_Starclass.asp](http://www.aito.co.uk/corporate_RT_Starclass.asp)]?**

First things first: all AITO companies fulfill an obligation to 100% commitment to sustainable tourism—those are one star organisations. And depending on the level of responsible or sustainable activity, organisations can gain 2, 3, 4 or 5 stars.

The star rating system was never really designed to be consumer facing—there are a number of organisations, like Travelife, that are becoming industry standard in terms of rating systems.

It's really a self-help system within AITO to encourage members to develop and improve sustainable practices. Through training and development companies can enhance sustainability with and for each other.

**What is your view on carbon offsetting?**

My personal view, which may or may not be shared by AITO, is that whilst carbon offsetting is very important, we now need to think "beyond carbon".

We need to be thinking about the conservation of resources generally, whether that's water or other minerals. And we need to find ways in which we can help local communities and some of the poorest people be resilient to the climatic changes, both short and long term, that we are all facing.

I think if people want to offset their carbon, that's fantastic and important, but we must remember that it is only one small part of the picture.

I got involved a while ago in an email discussion with a journalist who decided not to travel to a particular location in the world because it would have been too detrimental from

the point of view of carbon emissions. And when I read that, it made me very angry. The particular area in question was very good for gorillas and I felt that it was important for that person to visit the area and report on what they'd seen.

For me, it is utterly hypocritical to say, I've been there and I know how good it is, but you can't go because this area needs to be preserved, and to get there is bad for the planet. That's nuts.

**Other thoughts for our readers?**

Discussions of this nature are interesting, especially if they have an impact—if they touch a nerve for someone somewhere. And if that one individual decides to take a more sustainable holiday or thinks about something in a more sustainable way on the back of having read an article, then this interview has been worthwhile.

The message definitely needs to be projected that sustainability in travel is crucially important for us and future generations. Otherwise, our children won't be able to enjoy many of the great things we've been privileged enough to enjoy ourselves.

The thing that drives me personally and professionally is that if I do what I'm doing well enough, and those people that I influence around me do it well enough, with luck and a fair wind, my three children should be able to see the many wonderful things that I've had the opportunity to see.

For more information on AITO and its policies on sustainable tourism, visit [www.aito.co.uk](http://www.aito.co.uk).

Wildlife Worldwide  
[www.wildlifeworldwide.com](http://www.wildlifeworldwide.com)



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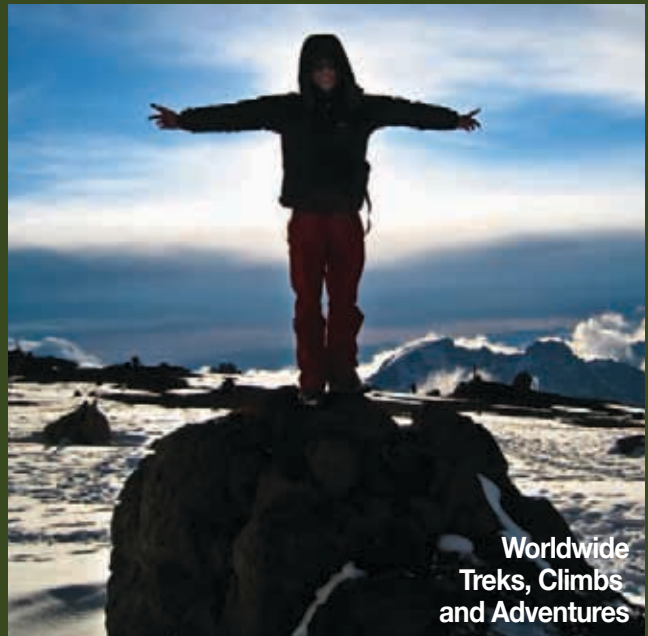
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# TRAVELLING LIKE A LOCAL

B&GT INTERVIEWS  
JUSTIN FRANCIS,  
MANAGING DIRECTOR AT  
RESPONSIBLETRAVEL.  
COM—A COMPANY  
THAT PRIDES ITSELF  
ON SEEKING OUT TRULY  
RESPONSIBLE TOUR  
OPERATORS AROUND  
THE WORLD

**How did you get into the tourism industry and what was your thinking before and after your trip to Zambia in 2000?**

My experience working at The Body Shop had sparked in me a passion for businesses built and based on strong values. I admired ethical entrepreneurs such as Anita Roddick. My trip to Zambia inspired me to pursue the idea of combining tourism, business and ethics. I saw the difference that tourism could make to a place when done properly, as it was in Kawaza Village, Zambia. The

village headman asked me to find a way to tell the world about his village.

**How did you get investors on board with the project?**

It wasn't easy. 2001 was just after the dot com collapse and 9/11. Those investors that did come on board were visionaries and wholly believed in the power of the Internet and responsible tourism as a proposition. Anita Roddick saw the potential in our business and I think her initial backing helped bring in other investors and supporters.

**What is the thinking behind the company's tagline "Travel like a local"?**

The people who live in a destination know it best—they know where to go, where not to go, the history, culture and intricacies of a place like no one else. Our holidays are all run by people with a deep connection to the place in which they are operating; they live or work in the destination and have fallen in love with it. Their passion and enthusiasm makes for an exceptional holiday experience. No matter what type of holiday you choose, travelling with our partners is more than just a brief stay somewhere—it's a real connection with the people, the landscape, the culture, the food and the environment.

**What does sustainable tourism mean to you?**

I think 'sustainable tourism' is a difficult concept because we all know there are parts of tourism that are inherently unsustainable. However, what does resonate with me is the term 'responsible tourism', which is about tourism businesses and travellers taking responsibility for the impacts of tourism; minimising the negative impacts and maximising the positives.

**What should responsible tourism mean for the consumer?**

Responsible tourism has to be about a different style of travel. For the traveller, it is about richer, deeper travel experiences as well as taking responsibility for the impacts, minimising the negative impacts and maximising the positives. These are the two sides of the coin. If 'responsible tourism' is just an academic concept we won't change things. It has got to enter to lexicon of the everyday traveller.

**What is the number one hot topic in sustainable and responsible tourism right now?**

Carbon remains a hot topic, it's still a huge issue and it's not going to go away. The other issue is the need to separate the truly responsible businesses out there from the 'greenwashers'.

**What are some other important trends and issues that consumers should be aware of?**

There is currently a broadening of choice across budgets, meaning that increasingly there's something available for everyone in the responsible tourism space. Messages such as 'reduce, reuse, recycle' are being increasingly understood. Perhaps the least understood aspect is the need for cultural understanding and sensitivity.

**There has been a lot in the news lately about the economic benefits of sustainable tourism.**

**Do you think the environment has been put on the back burner?**

No, I don't. However, I am pleased to see that economic impacts are moving more to the fore. The early days of the eco travel movement were dominated by the idea of 'leave no footprints.' This tended to neglect any concern for the impacts on local people. As Lord Marshall said: "Tourism is essentially the renting out for short-term lets of other people's environments." We must not forget this.

**Has the choice of transport clouded the issue of sustainable or responsible tourism?**

It's a critically important issue, but it has been very polarising. The debate has ended up with flying being the bad guy and train travel all good. But that's not helpful to the debate as many parts of the world are not accessible by train, and aviation is not going to disappear. It has been presented far too crudely and simplistically by the media and some activists.

**Carbon offsetting is suffering an identity crisis of late. What is your opinion and what should tourists be doing on this front?**

In 2009, we removed carbon offsetting functionality from our website as we felt it was distracting from the real issues—i.e., that we all need to be reducing our carbon emissions



as much as possible. You can read more about our advice to tourists and why we made the move we did on our website.

**If you could pick some top destinations based on the positive impacts of tourism, what would they be and why?**

Tourism is the principle export in 30% of developing countries and growing fast. For example, in Tanzania tourism is 8.2% of GDP, and has grown over 1000% in the last ten years. The positive



impact that tourism can have in developing countries is clear—it is a labour intensive industry and therefore creates jobs, often employing marginalised groups, particularly women. And it has a higher potential for linkages with local enterprises, such as craft sellers, markets, restaurants, local food producers, etc. In addition, much closer to home, tourism is becoming an increasingly important diversification tool for farmers. In fact, 60% of UK farmers have already branched out into agro-tourism, and are partly dependent on it for their livelihoods and to enable them to conserve the landscapes we so love.

**Where will you be travelling for your main holiday this year?**

Norfolk and the French Pyrenees staying with the Base Camp Explorer Group [[www.basecampexplorer.com](http://www.basecampexplorer.com)]

**If you were stuck on a desert island, which one would it be and who with?**

Zanzibar, with my wife; we spent our honeymoon there.

**For more information on many of the issues mentioned in the interview, visit [www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com)**



# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: THE ONLY OPTION

THE TRAVEL FOUNDATION WAS SET UP BY THE INDUSTRY FOR THE INDUSTRY. "THE REASON WE EXIST IS TO HELP THE INDUSTRY UNDERSTAND AND REDUCE THE IMPACTS OF TOURISM ON THE DESTINATIONS THAT IT SO DEPENDS UPON", SAYS SUE HURDLE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE TRAVEL FOUNDATION, IN AN INTERVIEW WITH B&GT.

**S**ue Hurdle began her career in a way that is familiar to many in the travel industry.

"I started off working overseas in holiday resorts and decided it would be great to have a career in an industry that helps people to have a good time". But it was while working for a large tour operator in 1993 that she read a piece in the trade press that gave her cause to stop and think.

"The article talked about a new resort development in Goa. According to the article the local community was having its water supplies reduced at certain times of the day so that the new resort could provide enough water for swimming pools, golf courses and so on, which seemed a rather strange affair to me. I felt I needed to learn more and managed to persuade Thomas Cook to pay for me to take a Masters degree in Tourism and Social Responsibility." The course was one of the first of its kind in those days, but Hurdle is pleased to say that there are many more courses available today.



"Having spent a year learning about the issues, I had the bit between my teeth and decided that I really needed to dedicate the next few years of my career trying to help the mainstream tourism industry understand what it could do to make tourism better for destinations. From the perspective of both the environment and the people who live there."

Hurdle ended up working for a small charity called 'Action For Conservation Through Tourism', setting up a discussion forum with the mainstream industry. Initially, the likes of British Airways and Airtours sat around the table soon to be joined by other big household names, such as First Choice, in addition to the trade association

ABTA. "The aim was really to help the industry think about the issues surrounding sustainability and how it applies to mainstream tourism". In 2001, the Government got interested in preparation for Rio+10, but has lost momentum since then, which is a source of disappointment for Hurdle

"Ten years ago, it was great to have the UK Government really driving [sustainable tourism], engaging lots of different organisations, NGOs and the industry, but 10 years on, for Rio+20 the UK Government is not looking at tourism, so that incentive is no longer there".

Returning to the back story, the Government's interest in the discussion forum led to funding, which was matched by the industry, that was used to set-up what today is called The Travel Foundation, now nine years old.

When asked how the industry has changed in that time, Hurdle has some positive news. "When we started, very few mainstream companies had even begun to think about sustainable tourism, let alone have a policy. Ten years down the line, the major tour operators in the UK

have all begun to think about it; they all have policies and the majority employ someone who has specific responsibility for figuring out how their business can be more sustainable”.

“The great risk is, if the industry doesn’t do anything to protect the people and the environment in destinations, they won’t have a business in the future. We all want to go and lie on a nice clean beach and we want to feel welcomed by the people, eat nice food, enjoy the local ambience and take home positive memories of our visit. And if businesses don’t look after these things, in the end they don’t really have a product to sell.”

Discussing semantics of sustainable, responsible, ethical or eco tourism, Hurdle hits the nail on the head with something less complicated: “It’s really about tourism that is simply better. Better for destinations, better for people, better for the environment”.

Following on from the need to balance the needs of the planet, its people and prosperity and the fact that everyone becomes a winner with sustainable tourism, the concept of all-encompassing sustainability sprang forth.

“What we often say to companies is that things need to be sustainable at every level. It’s a competitive market and we are aware that, at the moment, people are particularly price conscious. But actually, when you start looking at sustainability, it’s not about cost; it’s as much about quality of experience.”

“When you mention sustainable tourism, people are sometimes confused and start thinking about particular types of holiday. But what we are saying is that sustainable tourism can and should be any kind of tourism. All tourism has an impact, which can be good or bad.



“ WHEN WE STARTED,  
VERY FEW MAINSTREAM  
COMPANIES HAD EVEN BEGUN TO  
THINK ABOUT SUSTAINABLE TOURISM,  
LET ALONE HAVE A POLICY ”

“ The challenge is to make the sustainable option the only option—the norm.”

And it needn’t necessarily be about staying in an eco-lodge and travelling there by bicycle. “Sustainable tourism can be about staying in a very mainstream destination in a very mainstream hotel. If that hotel is reducing the amount of water and energy it uses on your behalf, and if it’s sourcing its produce from local farmers, and if it’s making sure that the excursions it offers are benefitting the local community, then it is on its way to being a sustainable product.”

It is a very broad definition of sustainable tourism that doesn’t match the traditional one that often comes to mind, but it’s

hugely compelling; it leaves no room for excuses—including concerns about cost—from anyone in the travel industry.

Indeed, the initial driver for a lot of businesses to become interested in sustainability is profit. “It’s also about reducing operational costs. If you can reduce the electricity and water use in your hotels, you can reduce the costs of hosting guests for the night, which can directly affect the bottom line”.

“It can also help differentiate a company from its competitors—if you can offer consumers a better experience through more sustainable practices, then it becomes a real business benefit. And that is what The Travel Foundation is really focused on.”



In fact, the concept of a broader overarching form of sustainability is widespread over diverse industries. In our previous Guide to Sustainable Investment, the links between taking sustainable policy seriously and increased profit became very apparent.

“If a company starts off on this journey because it perceives there will be cost savings down the line, that’s ok. As long as they are making a start—that’s the important thing”. Business benefits are great for the industry, but where does the average vacationer realise the advantages of sustainable tourism?

“The Travel Foundation is industry focused, but we are also attentive to the consumer. ‘Make Holidays Greener’ [[www.makeholidaysgreener.org](http://www.makeholidaysgreener.org)] is a consumer-facing campaign that endeavours to raise awareness of the different choices people can make, which is supported and delivered by the industry.

Importantly, the campaign focuses on the positive steps consumers can take to decrease their own impact. It’s about

sharing ideas and inspiring people to do things differently. “If you’re going on a ‘bucket & spade’ type holiday in Spain, for example, you might want to think about going out and trying one of the restaurants in the local village rather than reverting to chain restaurants. You might want to purchase souvenirs that are made locally from renewable materials”.

Going off the beaten track, it seems, is one way of creating a more sustainable experience and, most probably, a more enjoyable one.

It’s often the small, simple things you do as a tourist that make all the difference (see Tips for Sustainable Travellers, following page). “Learning a little about the destination beforehand and learning a few words of the language, so that you can say hello to local people, goes a long way. And very often they’re the things that will give you a much better holiday”.

“We can also vote with our wallets to a certain extent to help influence and shape the products and services that are being offered in destinations.

Ultimately, the tourism market is catering to us”.

The Travel Foundation is very vocal about its commendable objective of making all tourism sustainable, but as this transition is occurring, is there a risk of a confusing message for consumers?

Hurdle believes that through initiatives like ‘Make Holidays Greener’, which The Travel Foundation are running for the whole month of July this year, consumers can be engaged and, because the industry is involved and supportive, everyone can be on the same page. “Quite a number of the major tour operators have published their sustainability plans, which are available on websites and increasingly talked about these days.

“There is quite a lot of research we can do ourselves. And there have been a couple of television programmes that have covered the issue as well. So I think people are beginning to be more informed. And though consumers may not be asking for sustainability—and perhaps we shouldn’t expect people to

## TIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE TRAVELLERS

**W**e all know that re-using your hotel towels helps to protect the environment in tourist destinations, but what else can you do to make your holiday greener?

Sustainable tourism charity The Travel Foundation believes greener holidays are better holidays, and shares its practical tips on getting the most out of your next trip.

### TIPS

#### 1 **Buying locally**

Buying locally-made souvenirs and eating and drinking at local cafes and restaurants are great ways to get into the holiday spirit, and benefit the local community, too.

#### 2 **Respect local culture and traditions**

By dressing and acting appropriately for the place that you are visiting you'll be made to feel more welcome; do a little background reading before you go away, or ask your holiday rep or concierge for advice to avoid embarrassment.

#### 3 **Think local**

Book a local guide; their perspective will enrich your experience, and the money they earn will remain in and benefit the local economy. If you are going on safari, diving or wildlife watching trips, make sure your guide has received appropriate training and holds relevant licenses, so local flora and fauna will not be disturbed or threatened by your presence.

#### 4 **Park that thought**

Do you really need a hire car? If you're not planning on travelling far once you get to your destination, it is much more environmentally-friendly to use public transport, cycle or walk to explore the area, and you'll get a new perspective too.

#### 5 **Don't pack packaging**

Many countries are ill equipped to cope with high levels of waste, and do not have the recycling services we do in the UK. Before you depart, remove and recycle packaging from items you plan to take with you, to avoid it ending up in landfill or littering pristine beaches.

### TIPS

#### 6 **Switch and save**

By turning down/off heating and air-conditioning when not required, and switching off the TV rather than leaving it on standby, you will help to conserve energy and keep the cost of holidays down for the future.

#### 7 **Be careful with coral**

Whatever you do, do not step on, touch or remove any coral when snorkelling or diving – it is extremely fragile, takes decades to re-grow and entire ecosystems depend on it.

#### 8 **Help keep animals wild**

It's best to avoid having your photo taken with domesticated 'wild' animals. These animals are often taken from their natural environment when young, mistreated and eventually killed when they get too large or difficult to handle.

#### 9 **Souvenirs that don't cost the earth**

Gifts made from endangered or threatened species may look beautiful, but corals, shells, starfish, horns, teeth, animal skins and fur look so much better in their natural environment... vote with your wallet and don't support this type of trade

#### 10 **Experience wanted**

Turn your trip into an experience. Learn a few local words; enjoy haggling at the market (try not to get too carried away – a few pennies may mean a lot to a local person) and treat people you meet with respect. You will find a little effort goes a long way and can help turn a simple break into a holiday of a lifetime.

For more tips visit:  
[www.makeholidaysgreener.org](http://www.makeholidaysgreener.org)  
uk during Make  
Holidays Greener  
Month in July 2012.



Tips provided by The Travel Foundation ([www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk))—a UK charity that works with the travel industry to help protect and enhance the environment, and improve the well-being of communities in the countries we love to visit.

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come in and say ‘I want to book a sustainable holiday’ per se—when you actually look at what a sustainable holiday means, the sustainable elements are the things that make a holiday better”.

“Ask someone if they would like to book a sustainable package holiday and they might say ‘What does that mean?’ or ‘No, I just want a regular, good value holiday for my family’, but if offered the same option with a different spin—‘do you want a holiday where you’ll meet new people, see different things, stay in a beautiful environment that’s well-cared for, and be made to feel very welcome by the people there’—people, of course, react very positively.”

As with all things positive, there is the potential for a balancing negative force—the danger that some companies could overuse perhaps weak sustainability credentials to sell holidays. It’s a process known as ‘greenwashing’ and something that occurs in other industries, but what about tourism? Is the link between sustainability and a great holiday experience sufficient to counter such attempts?

“Claims of greenwash have been leveled at many industries, and I think it is a cross sector thing. Certainly, some of the smaller companies that I’ve spoken to are very fearful of being accused of greenwash and, for that reason, I don’t think we’re seeing many businesses out there that are claiming to be green.

“Rather, companies are describing what they’ve done to make things more sustainable. I think that’s why a number of companies are working with organisations like ours to make those improvements and to share what they’ve learnt”.

And that’s really what it’s all about—moving tourism forward; recognising that there are good

and bad impacts of tourism; and asking the important question “how can tourism be improved for all?” After all, a tourism industry without an eye on sustainability is not a viable long-term option.

“I see a lot of passion out there—a few key people are really championing sustainable tourism and acknowledging that it’s about the survival of the industry.”

Action must follow ideas, and

the Caribbean. Richard Branson is talking particularly about a marine protected areas project we’re working on together. His interest in sustainability is fairly well known and he has enabled his companies to pursue relevant interests in it. It’s been really terrific to have that level of support from the top”.

And while the organisations like The Travel Foundation and the industry work together, the

## “ YOU MIGHT WANT TO GO OUT AND TRY ONE OF THE RESTAURANTS IN THE LOCAL VILLAGE RATHER THAN REVERTING TO A CHAIN RESTAURANTS ”

where The Travel Foundation really makes it’s mark on sustainable tourism is in the projects it works on with the industry and a diverse range of stakeholders (see sidebar 2).

Whether convincing hotels to purchase produce from local farmers or training local excursion operators to reduce hassle on the beachfront, the real benefit of the project work is the learning experience it provides. The Travel Foundation assesses the successes and failures of each project and uses that knowledge to create tools [LINK] for the industry so that sustainability initiatives can be replicated by all.

“Whatever we do, it’s always with one eye on taking what we’ve learnt and sharing it with the rest of the industry”.

Richard Branson takes current pride of place on The Travel Foundation’s website because of one particular project. “We’ve been working with Virgin Holidays for a number of years. They are one of the companies that have been a key partner in

consumer also has an important part to play. “Most industries are driven by customer demand, so if people do start asking questions like ‘what are you doing to make sure my holiday is as sustainable as it can be?’, ‘how is my hotel trying to save energy and are they putting unnecessary strain on the local water supply?’, then the industry will take note and change”.

Concluding, Hurdle says, “Holidays are very important to all of us, and we all want to make sure we get the most out of our time away. And thinking about how we can lessen the impact our holiday has on the environment and improve benefits for the people who live in the destination will help us have a better time ourselves”.

For more information on sustainable tourism and The Travel Foundation themselves, please visit the website

[www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk)



## PROJECTS FOR KEEPS

### *Energy savings*

In just one year, the Bougainvillea Hotel in Barbados saved €133,880 by switching to low energy bulbs, using solar power and ensuring laundry loads only ran when full, as part of the Travel Foundation, Switch Off Save Big programme.

### *Hotel Gardens*

The Travel Foundation is working with hotels in Cyprus to help them use less water in their gardens. Using less water can give a competitive advantage not only to the hotel, but also the wider destination. The immediate short term benefit may be driver enough; hotels can save costs in purchasing, pumping and treating water.

But there are other benefits. Redesigned gardens can cope with less water and keep their attractiveness, leading to increased customer satisfaction. There is high demand from wedding parties to have photographs taken in attractive gardens, so hotels with more water-efficient gardens may be able to offer a year-round product and justify a premium.

The risk of having to use more expensive sources of water or having no water at peak times is also reduced, which increases availability of water for local residents, agriculture, ecosystems and groundwater recharge – the viability of which are in the business interests of hotels, destination and UK tour operators, agents and, of course, holidaymakers.

### *Waste reduction*

In 2010, a pilot plastic reduction project was carried out in the resort of Paphos with the objective of reducing the use of plastic items. The reduction of plastic items with hotels achieved good results, was relatively easy to implement and was well received by hotel guests.

One hotel in particular achieved excellent results by replacing single use plastic cups with multi-use durable cups. As this hotel is part of a chain, the business benefits together with the impact on the environment were easily identified by the management team.

While the cost savings may in fact be small, the environmental impact was impressive – almost 800,000 plastic bottles were removed from the waste stream as 26 hotels replaced the use of bottled water for All Inclusive guests with drinking water supplied from dispensers.

In terms of business impacts, it was clear that tremendous customer good-will was generated by the project. Results of a customer survey revealed that more than half (56%) felt more positive as a result of the project, while half said that the project had a positive effect on their holiday.

Some 98% thought the project was a good idea and 93% said they would like to see such a project rolled out in other destinations.

Such positive feedback indicates that not only is it possible to introduce waste management measures without compromising the customer experience, but that customers respond positively to such initiatives and to participating companies.

### *Improving livelihoods and guest experience*

In some resorts in Sri Lanka, tourist complaints about hassle on beaches have grown to such levels that physical barriers have been erected by hotels, preventing access for local traders to tourists and creating conflict between hotel staff and the locals seeking to make money through selling excursions.

The Travel Foundation's LINC Project in Sri Lanka aims to reduce tourist hassle caused by 'beach boys' through training individuals to become licensed 'beach operators'. The key positive impacts of the project are the protection of the ability for the local community to derive economic and social benefits from tourism, improved holiday experiences for visitors and, for hotels, reduced customer complaints and associated negative publicity.

Financed by The Travel Foundation, and delivered locally by a trained sociologist, specially recruited as LINC project manager, and the Responsible Tourism Partnership (RTP) Sri Lanka, the LINC project delivers a three month training course to groups of beach operators linked to a specific hotel, covering a range of topics, including service standards, personal grooming, cultural differences, team work, health and safety and guiding techniques. The project has trained almost 250 beach operators.

An external evaluation carried out in 2011 found tourist complaints to be significantly reduced. Some of those interviewed were surprised not to have been hassled, as they had heard about the issue prior to their holiday.

Many reported that they had specifically sought out individual, named beach boys from recommendations they had read from previous hotels guests on Trip Advisor, which was seen as a very important marketing tool for beach operators.

Several of the tourists interviewed had previously been to Sri Lanka and stayed at the same hotel. These tourists claimed they had seen a huge difference on the beach over the last four years.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE TRAVEL FOUNDATION'S PROJECTS, VISIT [WWW.THETRAVELFOUNDATION.ORG.UK](http://WWW.THETRAVELFOUNDATION.ORG.UK).**

# AUTHENTIC TRAVEL

TOM BARBER, PROLIFIC TRAVEL WRITER AND COMPANY FOUNDER, GETS TO GRIPS WITH CHANGES IN THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM SPACE, AND LIFTS THE LID ON HIS TOP THREE DESTINATIONS: COSTA RICA, KENYA AND ROMANIA.

**F**irst, a confession: my name is Tom Barber and I own a travel company, but I was a late convert to the cause of sustainable tourism. There, I've said it. When I formed Original Travel in 2003 with two friends, both of whom were from a City background, the buzzword in top end travel was 'luxury'. Back in those heady days of relative boom time our clientele were looking for the slickest, the best; holidays with an element of 'boastability' to drop into dinner party conversation.

Then, slowly but surely, a new trend began to creep into the industry. It was an antidote to the demands for more glamour, more staff per guests, more exclusivity. Sustainable tourism became the catchphrase; travel companies were being asked to confirm that the destinations they were selling were not being exploited or ruined, and how we could justify travel by aeroplane.

This in turn spawned an industry within an industry, with the likes of Climate Care offering the seemingly simple solution of calculating the distance flown by clients, which we the tour operator could then carbon off-set into various tree-planting programmes around the world.

Journalists jumped on the bandwagon too, slavishly promoting the 'staycation' and calculating which destinations Brits could go to by train/boat, so avoiding the evils of flying.

As you can imagine, there was limited uptake to this because—as with most things—it was not as simple as that. We humans are an itinerant bunch, hence our appearance in staggering numbers on every continent around the world bar Antarctica. Furthermore, you can't just uninvent the jumbo jet or Airbus 380, so a new approach was required.

Then the wheels came off. The financial crash of 2007–20? saw another change in attitudes. Like it or not, the parameters for a holiday shifted yet again – sustainability had to take a back seat to a more pressing requirement: value for money. Now, several years after the initial turmoil, but with uncertainty remaining, the desire for sustainable tourism is, I'm happy to report, re-emerging. People are still watching the pennies, but they have also reached the conclusion that getting away from a daily domestic diet of doom and gloom isn't a luxury—it's a necessity. With this has come yet another reboot: Sustainable Tourism 2.0, if you will. This time it is a more balanced—and frankly more realistic—version.

## INTRODUCING 'AUTHENTIC TRAVEL'

So, what exactly constitutes authenticity? My take is that it stems from one powerful consequence of the crash—a desire for simplification, for the way things used to be or how others do things, for less bluster and more honesty. I'm certainly not declaring the Anglo-Saxon economic model to be dead, but a whole bunch of other countries around the world either chose a different path, or weren't as far along the path of rampant debt-based

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consumerism that we were. We at Original Travel are finding people starting to gravitate to these sorts of destinations. That doesn't mean travelling without any creature comforts, but just that those comforts be in keeping with the surroundings, and not to their detriment.



For me, the balance is finally just about right. Gone is the short-lived and nonsensical call for people to stop travelling altogether. You simply can't ask someone from a Northern European country to ignore the allure of the sun and exotic southern cultures, but neither do you have to stay in a hotel that feels like a template replicated around the world regardless of destination, or which has, at best, questionable impact on its location. Hoteliers, guides and activity providers have heeded the messages and concerns of the likes of Original Travel and our clients, and chosen to embrace what's best about the culture of their



respective countries. This is true sustainability, because it encourages the use of local skills and the employment of local craftspeople and guides, and so keeps cultures alive for us to explore and appreciate. That's a true win-win in my book. So, the obvious next question: where are the places that best represent this trend for authenticity?

Here are my favourites:

## COSTA RICA

The teacher's pet of the sustainable tourism class, Costa Rica is the template against which all other countries have to match up. The most staggering statistic of all is that a whopping 27% of the country is set aside for national parks and reserves; it is a country that very much walks the sustainable walk, ie: in its most pristine (read: authentic) form. And where there's protected rainforest, there are the species that have inhabited this eco-system for millennia. Another killer statistic: Costa Rica represents less than 0.03% of the Earth's surface, but boasts nearly 5% of the planet's plant and animal species. That's quite a claim, and the Osa Peninsula in the southwest of the country was recently tagged as having the most intense biodiversity on Earth by *National Geographic*.

Even better, the wonderful lodges that are dotted around the country's finest landscapes, from the Monteverde cloudforests to the primary rainforests of the Osa Peninsula's Corcovado National Park, adhere to the best sustainable tourism principles—using locally sourced and renewable building materials, employing the locals and assisting with education programmes and generally thinking longer term than most.

## KENYA

Kenya is a country that has had a particularly rough ride of late, but it remains a true flag-bearer for sustainable travel in Africa. The concept that best fits the authentic bill is that of community lodges. These lodges have sprung up in the last decade as a solution to two particular issues: land rights and game conservancy. Originally, lodges were built by the large number of farmsteads, particularly in the Laikipia region, that decided to switch from livestock to wildlife conservation as a means of income. From the visitor's point of view this is fantastic because these new conservation areas offer superb game-viewing opportunities, but are less crowded than the classic national parks.

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They also allow for more exciting experiences such as walking and riding safaris. The problem was that local tribes such as the Maasai and Samburu were increasingly excluded from their traditional grazing grounds. There was also the issue of elephants and other big game that might represent a fabulous photo opportunity to you and I, but which constitutes a whole different scale of pest problem—somewhat beyond a few rabbits in the vegetable patch.

The solution? Community lodges, whereby the local community become stakeholders in the building of accommodation in these conservation areas. If done well, it means that wildlife conservation does not run contrary to the interests of the local community. In fact, a percentage of the profit goes directly to that same community. Plus, visitors get another completely new experience thrown into the bargain: that of enjoying authentic culture on visits to local villages. As with anything as complex as land rights and future prospects, there have been some teething problems, but we at Original Travel firmly believe that community lodges represent a key part of the future for Kenya's tourist industry.



## ROMANIA

A new favourite since I returned from a research trip a fortnight ago, Romania is somewhere that, for me, fits the authentic and sustainable travel theme to a tee. The country is blessed with some of the finest landscapes in Europe, from the brooding Carpathian Mountains and bucolic pasturelands of Transylvania to the delta of the mighty Danube, home to astonishing birdlife.

As you'd imagine, the vestiges of communism include some of the more hideous industrial areas

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and carbuncular three-star (at a push) hotels you could imagine, but one unintended consequence of Ceausescu's determination to industrialise and urbanise the country was to preserve vast tracts of ancient countryside.

The downside was that many beautiful centuries-old villages in places like Transylvania went into gradual decline, but now a nascent eco-tourism industry is blossoming. In a growing number of these villages, the houses and farmsteads are being saved from dereliction and the ancient peasant way of life nurtured. There have been accusations that encouraging a rural population to resist modernity amounts to 'poverty porn', designed for those wanting to dip a toe into a simpler way of life, but I would refer those cynics to the countless recent studies of 'happiness' where small agrarian societies time and time again score higher happiness ratings than their seemingly miserable urban counterparts.

Romania has also declared a number of national parks that are home to a third of Europe's remaining large carnivores, namely bears, wolves and even lynx. It doesn't get much more authentic than seeing boars and bears in a pristine forest like I did two weeks ago. Just to put this into perspective, the last British wolf was killed sometime in the 1680s.



**Tom  
Barber**

is a travel writer and  
one of the founders of  
Original Travel [[www.  
originaltravel.co.uk](http://www.originaltravel.co.uk)].

## Write for us....

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Journalism is changing rapidly through a digital and social media revolution. It is no longer the preserve of press barons and elite groups; journalism is now democratic and everyone has a voice.

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# THE MAJESTY OF AFRICA

**F**ounded in 1995, Cedarberg African Travel prides itself on tailor-made holidays and safaris across the deserts, hills and expansive plains of Africa. Its mission is to match each journey to the requirements of their discerning clients. Cedarberg African Travel believes that all aspects of tourism in Africa and other less developed countries should be of benefit to the visitor, the local community and the environment.

At the heart of the operation are two sisters: Kate Bergh, founder of Cedarberg African Travel, living in South Africa since 1993, and Ginny Russell in the UK. Kate's home looks over the beautiful Cedarberg mountains of the Western Cape. Kate loves this inspiring location as a base for sharing the delights and wonders of Southern Africa. The innovative company understands and has real involvement in its locality. It is situated on the family's old farm; it employs a significant number of local people, mainly women, and contributes to the community with its pre-school for the farm children. Its ethos of independent and small group tourism, using locally-owned accommodation and guides, supports communities and generates wealth and employment wherever it operates.

Speaking with Ian Russell at Cedarberg, this close geographic relationship between the staff and the evolving

African travel landscape is the one that differentiates the company from many others.

*"What makes our operation unique is that we have a base in South Africa—a lot of companies tend to be based in the UK", says Ian. "We are very much in touch with what is happening now in Southern Africa. We also have consultants who live in Cape Town. So it is very much a business spread between the three places."*



Cedarberg's dedicated team in South Africa work very hard ensuring their knowledge of the regions is current. *"If we say that somewhere there is good for families, it means that one of our South African staff has been there with their family."*

Among the holiday options available are many that include sustainability by their very nature, such as safaris to Africa's premier wildlife regions, including the primates of Madagascar, Rwanda and Uganda; romantic honeymoon holidays in Mozambique and the Indian Ocean; unforgettable walking tours in the Cedarberg and Cape, self-drive in Namibia and South Africa, and many other exciting itineraries. Cedarberg Travel provides local knowledge, enthusiasm, personal service and professionalism. You will get *"honest and friendly service"* and comprehensive knowledge to minimise hassle and maximise value. Being a



member of both the Southern African Tourism Services Association (SATSA) and the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) ensures that Cedarberg provides the high standard of service required by their codes of conduct.

Additionally, the amount of advice and tips offered by the company and previous clients means that the Cedarberg website is a unique forum and database of journeys and recommendations that allow each customer to make a truly informed decision. Ian explained to *B&GT* the importance of being part of and having extensive knowledge of the African sub Saharan region. The travel landscape changes and evolves on a regular basis, but by being on the ground, Cedarberg Travel has up to date information of the best hotels, the best restaurants and the most celebrated regions. *"If the place stays the same but the people change, it's a different experience, so we keep on top of all that—having a base down there makes it much easier."*

For Cedarberg it is all about people and their environment.

**Cedarberg**  
AFRICAN TRAVEL

For more information about Cedarberg African Travel visit the website: [www.cedarberg-travel.com](http://www.cedarberg-travel.com), or, to speak with an expert, email [info@cedarberg-travel.com](mailto:info@cedarberg-travel.com) or call 020 8898 8533.



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# COME FLY WITH ME

CAN YOU TRAVEL BY AIR AND STILL CONSIDER YOUR HOLIDAY SUSTAINABLE? B&GT SPOKE WITH PAUL STEELE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE AIR TRAFFIC ACTION GROUP (ATAG) TO FIND OUT WHAT THE AVIATION INDUSTRY IS DOING TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE.

**P**aul Steele started out in a completely different industry—soft drinks, in fact—but lived and worked all over the world. He was then chief operating officer of WWF for seven years before joining the aviation industry in 2007.

“At the moment I wear two hats. I’m the Director of Environment for the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which represents about 86% of global civil aviation, and at the same time I’m the Executive Director of the Air Transport Action Group (ATAG)”.

Whereas IATA only represents the airlines, ATAG is a global, not-for-profit organisation that brings together all sectors of the aviation industry, including air traffic management, the world’s airports, manufacturers of aircraft and engines, and airlines—in fact, IATA is a member of ATAG.

Formed 21 years ago, ATAG was originally brought together to work on issues such as infrastructure and airport capacity, but over the last eight years has focused very heavily on moving the industry forward on environmental performance, particularly with respect to climate change.



In 2010, according to ATAG figures, airlines emitted 649,000,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide—a greenhouse gas that scientists have linked to climate change and global warming. It’s certainly a big number—but it represents just under 2% of all global human emissions (a whopping 34 billion tonnes). However, the carbon emitted by aviation is a result of having travelled 4.8 trillion kilometres with 2.7 billion passengers—very large numbers indeed.

And it's a growing industry. So, how can growth be managed with the need to address environmental factors?

"We are a growing industry and we want to make sure that we grow as sustainably as we possibly can. One of the biggest challenges right now is reducing our carbon footprint as an industry. And we've taken a lot of steps to address that over the last few years."

"Compared to any other industry sector, at a global level we have a much clearer picture of what we need to do, how we need to do it, and what support we need from governments to help us get there."

ATAG's efforts began in 2007 when they developed a four-pillar strategy.

"The first of the pillars is about technology. Each new generation of aircraft that comes into service has significant environmental benefits—the new aircraft coming into the fleets right now, particularly for long-haul flights (the Airbus A380, A350 and the Boeing 787) are all significantly more fuel efficient than the aircraft they are replacing.

"As an industry we have an enviable track record in fuel efficiency—we've improved 70% in the last four decades."

And Steele isn't shy about cost reduction being one of the big drivers for fuel efficiency improvements.

"We have every incentive to reduce our emissions because fuel is the single biggest operating cost of an airline. If you go back to 2003, it was around 13% of the operating cost and now it's 30%. However, for every tonne of fuel saved, 3.15 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions is cut. So it's a very direct relationship and one that benefits the environment."

As far as technology goes, fundamental changes are being made to aircraft, all with same objective: to improve efficiency. The addition of winglets—those drag-reducing wing tips seen on modern craft—gives a 3–5% fuel efficiency increase. And beyond that, the type of material used to build the planes themselves is shifting. The days of flying aluminium cigar tubes are gone, replaced by carbon-fibre structures. These changes, coupled with advances in engine technology, allow for solid improvements in efficiency.

Beyond improvements in efficiency, other technological advancements are also high on the agenda. A good example is the growing use of biofuels.

"If you go back five years, biofuels for aviation were a dream. There were many technical people in our industry that said it would never happen. But five years on and we've developed them, tested them, proven that they are safe for use and flown

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**YOUR FLIGHT IS NOT JUST ABOUT PASSENGERS WHO'VE BEEN ON HOLIDAY. YOU'VE GOT BUSINESS PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT PEOPLE, BUT ALSO, IMPORTANTLY, THE BELLY OF THAT PLANE IS FULL OF GOODS**

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well over 1,500 commercial flights using biofuel. When we burn biofuels in jet engines, if you take the full carbon lifecycle into account, we get savings of up to 80%. It's a huge prize that we are aiming for with biofuels."

That said, biofuels have suffered bad press from some environmental quarters. But Steele is well aware of the issues. "Historically, biofuels were developed for road transport, but they ran into a lot of issues because they were using fuels like bioethanol and biodiesel, which were largely produced from food crops. We've looked at the issues surrounding biofuels very carefully to make sure we don't make the same mistakes as predecessors in other sectors."

"I think the most exciting thing right now is that we are constantly identifying new sources of biomass that can be used to create jet fuel. There are a number of projects being developed around the world to use waste."

As an example, Steele gives the Solena project in London, which will take urban waste from households, which would otherwise be sent to

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landfill, to create and supply fuel to London City airport. In Brazil, waste from the sugar industry that would normally be discarded is being used—essentially getting a second benefit from the same crop. At Madrid airport, a pilot plant is growing algae and turning it into jet fuel. In China, gases from steel manufacturing are being fed to microbes that use it to produce alcohol, which can also be converted.

Biofuels are certainly an innovative and exciting prospect, but there are no single silver-bullet solutions in the drive for sustainability—a fact that takes us back to the four pillars.

“The second pillar is about how you operate those new aircraft. And for flight operations it’s all about collaboration across the industry; the airlines are working with the air navigation people and the airports to perform ‘clean air speed departures’, which basically means that you get the aircraft off the ground and at its optimal cruising altitude as quickly as possible.”

Landing can also benefit from increased cooperation. The ‘continuous descent approach’, or ‘green landing’ allows the plane to glide down, rather than using engine thrusts to perform the more typical stepped approach.

“The biggest challenge we face is with our third pillar—infrastructure, which includes airport capacity, but more importantly airspace capacity. The planes we are flying today are equipped with the most modern satellite navigation technology, but because governments have not invested in upgrades to air traffic management systems on the ground, you’ve got sophisticated aircraft flying according to radio beacon technology that was developed in the 1940s and ‘50s.”

“We’re constantly pushing for governments to play their part. It’s estimated that, in Europe alone, about 12% of emissions are caused unnecessarily by air traffic management. Not just delays, but the fact that you can’t fly in a straight line from A to B and get directed through different air traffic management zones, there’s also the fact that you can’t always fly at the optimum altitude to minimise emissions.”

“Governments have to step up to the plate to do their bit to address these problems”.

And though many governments recognise the

issue and are supportive of the efforts, it’s about the speed at which change can occur. Having the political will to break down sovereignty issues in Europe when trying to bring together a single European sky is a good example of what is likely to be slow progress.

“I spend a huge amount of my time talking to governments around the world about these issues”.

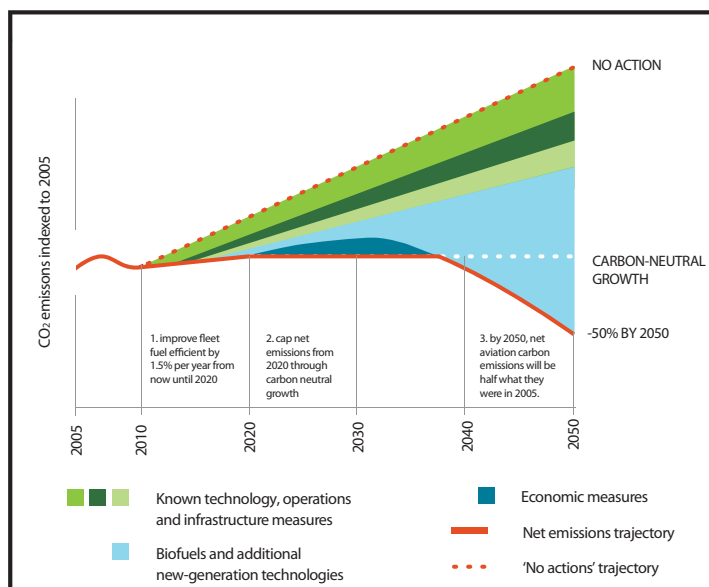
## FLIGHTS OF FANCY

How does ATAG respond to pressure from some environmentalists who demand that flights should be reduced to those that are of absolute necessity?

“The desire to fly isn’t going to go away. In Europe we have a very different perspective on this to Asia-Pacific or Latin America, for example, where aviation is seen as an aspirational thing; where individual mobility is still something that is very desirable. So, our focus is on making all aviation more sustainable.”

“And we’ve set ourselves some pretty aggressive targets. We are going to continue to push our fuel efficiency by 1.5% per annum between now and 2020. And that may not sound a lot, but that’s

### AVIATION CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS TARGETS 2005–2050



SOURCE: <http://www.aviationbenefitsbeyondborders.org/>

another 17% improvement, and I would challenge the automotive sector to come up with numbers like that.

“From 2020, we are committed to what we call ‘carbon neutral growth’. Even though we expect aviation to continue to grow in traffic terms, we want to stabilise our emissions at the 2020 level

and then gradually reduce them down to half of what they were in 2005 by 2050.”

“That’s the pathway we’ve laid out for ourselves, and now we’re doing everything we can to try and achieve that. But we can’t do it all on our own—we need governmental help. Post 2020, we will need some form of economic measures or, more simply, the ability to offset some of our emissions via other industries through carbon offsetting or emissions trading”.

It is these economic measures that make up the fourth pillar.

“The challenge we’ve currently got is that a lot of states currently see aviation as a cash cow and so the propensity is to tax rather than encourage more activity to reduce emissions. And in a way, that has a negative effect, particularly for tourism and trade, because all it does is add to the cost.”

Steele brings up the example of UK air passenger duty, the proceeds of which go straight into the central treasury. “It has nothing to do with improving the environmental footprint of aviation in the UK. And yet it’s \$4.5 billion a year.”

“We are working very closely with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the UN body that governs aviation around the world, to try and develop a global framework and system to manage economic measures.”

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

The aviation has very clear objectives for reducing its carbon emissions, but passengers are also stakeholders in the aviation industry. The idea of carbon offsetting has been made ever complex and is a confusing subject for many. So, should tourists consider carbon offsetting?

“The whole picture has been clouded by issues surrounding the European Emissions Trading Scheme, which has caused a political storm. Not because of the trading scheme itself, but because of the way the Europeans are seeking to implement it—on all flights to and from Europe. It’s an issue of sovereignty of airspace.”

“If Air China is flying from Beijing to Helsinki, the minute it turns on its engines in Beijing it is accountable to the European Union for all of the emissions on that flight, even though the last 2 or 3% of that flight is actually in European airspace. To comply with that, the airlines have to go to auction to buy permits for a percentage of the carbon that is emitted on that flight. However, the European auctioning is on a Member State basis, and some of those Member States have said very

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## THE DESIRE TO FLY ISN’T GOING TO GO AWAY”

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clearly that they will not earmark auction revenue for environmental purposes. So, the Chinese clearly view it as a tax.”

“If the Europeans had followed their original intentions of implementing the scheme within Europe, I don’t think anyone would have had any issues. The fact that they’ve tried to impose it onto the rest of the world has become a huge distraction and is certainly getting in the way of the political negotiations I mentioned with ICAO.”

“From a passenger point of view, or a traveller perspective, it has clouded the picture. But yes, we would thoroughly encourage passengers to offset their emissions with quality offsets. As you said, there are number of companies offering offsetting schemes and the price per tonne of carbon can vary dramatically. So it’s really a case of identifying quality offset providers and making sure that the offset that you’re purchasing are delivering real emissions reductions.”

“IATA run an offset programme for a number of airlines, such as TAP Portugal, Kenya Airways and Thai Airways, where passengers buy offsets and we purchase the top grade credits, which are UN certified to guarantee that those emission reductions are actually happening.”

“There are a number of organisations out there that offer similar programmes. Essentially, there are two types of offset credits: UN certified CERs and voluntary standards, the best of which is called the Gold Standard”.

ClimateCare [[www.climatecare.org/home.aspx](http://www.climatecare.org/home.aspx)] is one such ‘profit for purpose’ organisation—partners include IATA themselves, as well as The Co-operative and the Eden Project (see Carbon Offsetting - following page).

## AN ICONIC INDUSTRY

Aviation is historically linked with affluence and high society and therefore receives a good deal of



bad press for its carbon emissions compared with agriculture, for example, which accounts for just below 14% of global human emissions.

“Some NGOs are still stuck in a time warp where they think that aviation is the purview of the rich. Now, if you go to many parts of the world, that is absolutely not the case. Communities depend on aviation for their external connectivity in terms of access to markets and access to tourism. Without that tourism, you don’t get economic development.

“The whole issue of sustainable tourism is absolutely crucial, and getting it in balance is absolutely crucial. Even though I would agree that I think aviation gets more than its fair share of attention, we don’t let that distract us. Even though it’s 2% [of global human carbon emissions], we still believe that it’s 2% that needs to be addressed especially during times of growth. And that’s what we are focused on.”

An interesting fact from ATAG’s Benefits Beyond Borders report is that 80% of aviation carbon dioxide is emitted by flights over 1,500km, a distance it could be argued for which there is no real practical alternative. And very few long-distance flights are solely for the purpose of tourism.

“People often forget that if you’re flying on vacation to Thailand or from Bangkok back to London, your plane is not just about passengers who’ve been on holiday. You’ve got business people, government people, but also, importantly, the belly of that plane is full of goods. The aviation industry transports 35% of the value of the world’s goods.

Those aircraft aren’t just flying for the tourists, they are also flying to fulfill a whole range of different needs; not least of which is the transport of goods”.

“The aviation industry is committed to sustainable development. I believe we have an enviable position in the way that we are trying to address the issues involved. I’m not saying that we’ve got all the answers or that we’ve solved all the problems. But we know what we want to do and we have a very clear idea of how we are going to achieve it”.

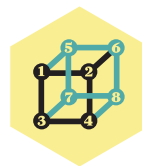
“From a sustainable tourism point of view, I would say that, though a holiday may not be a necessity, we need to think about it holistically; by taking that holiday—yes, you may have an environmental impact, but at the same time you are providing jobs and wealth to people in the places that you’re visiting.

“It’s a bit like the famous discussion of food miles in the UK a couple of years ago, where people were too quick to jump on the bandwagon to say ‘it’s ridiculous that we’re flying in flowers from West Africa and lamb from New Zealand’. And subsequent studies have shown that flowers in Africa can be produced and transported with a lower carbon footprint than growing them in hot houses in the Netherlands”.

“People shouldn’t feel guilty about taking a holiday, they should be responsible about it. And if they are able to, they should offset it. But at the end of the day, you’ve got to look at the full picture and not just focus on one or two small elements.”

## CARBON — KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Keoni Cabral via Flickr



As Paul Steele notes, there are a number of carbon offsetting organisations available. The key is to find one that offers quality offsets—either UN certified or Gold Standard—so that you can be sure your money is actually directly benefitting the environment.

ClimateCare [[www.climatecare.org/home.aspx](http://www.climatecare.org/home.aspx)] offers one such service and includes an easy to use calculator. Simply type in your airport of departure and destination, and ClimateCare works out the distance of the flight, the amount of carbon emitted and the cost of offsetting.

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# Offsetting air travel is a lot cheaper than you might think:

For more information about the projects ClimateCare supports, please visit the website  
[WWW.CLIMATECARE.ORG](http://WWW.CLIMATECARE.ORG)



ORIGIN	DESTINATION	DISTANCE (MILES)	TONNES OF CO2	COST TO OFFSET
London Heath row	Tokyo Narita	11,919	2.79	£20.96
Aberdeen	London Gatwick	851	0.17	£1.30
Nottingham East Midlands	Dublin	417	0.1	£0.78
Manchester International	Sydney	21,131	5.61	£42.09

From the calculator, you can add the carbon offset straight into your 'shopping basket', just like any other regular Internet purchase.

Beyond carbon offsetting flights, the calculator also acknowledges the pressures road transport places on the environment (right); input the number of miles you travel by road each year, the type of fuel you use and the fuel efficiency (MPG or gCO2/km) for your vehicle to find out the offset cost.

You can also work out the amount you would need to offset for your home or business. So, if you are concerned about your carbon footprint, and want to make a difference, there is no better place to start.

## OTHER RESOURCES

**CARBON OFFSETTING** <http://bit.ly/auhhe1>

**CARBON CALCULATOR** <http://bit.ly/ieP38M>

FUEL TYPE	TONNES OF CO2	COST TO OFFSET
Petrol	5.32	£39.93
Diesel	6.19	£46.45
LPG	3.27	£24.53

## Offsetting road transport

Based on 15,000 miles per year, with an average fuel efficiency of 35MPG



JUAN PABLO MORELOS, FFI



# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

B&GT SPOKE WITH GAVIN SHELTON, HEAD OF ENTERPRISE & INNOVATION AT FAUNA & FLORA INTERNATIONAL, ABOUT COMBINING ECO-TOURISM WITH GENUINE CONSERVATION IN ITS UPCOMING GORILLA TREK TO AFRICA.

## What makes your trek to Uganda and Rwanda in 2013 so important?

If a picture tells a thousand words, then an experience like this could surely fill a novel! As a global conservation organisation, one of the key challenges we face is in meaningfully engaging the committed supporters of our work. We can tell them about the work we do; we can show them brochures of photos; and pinpoint locations on maps, but until they've been to visit our projects first hand, we can't fully ignite the passion. By enabling some of our key supporters to get out

into the field and directly experience our work, we can help them develop a deeper understanding of the region and the complex challenges that conservationists face in saving mountain gorillas. People who spend time in the company of gorillas are often quite deeply moved by the experience. We anticipate that participants will share their experiences and stories to leverage further support through wider social networks upon returning home.

## How is the trip organised and what are participants likely to experience?

We have put together a bespoke ten-day itinerary that is focused on highlighting the work of the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP), which FFI co-founded in 1991 with the support of Sir David Attenborough. Participants will have several opportunities to spend time with gorillas in their natural habitat—getting 'up close and personal' with the great apes under the guidance and instruction of specially trained rangers and trackers.

Spending time with the world's foremost gorilla experts—including Augustin Basabose, Director

of IGCP, who has worked with gorillas for over 20 years, and Programme Officer Stephen Asuma—is in itself a once in a lifetime opportunity. These are people who dedicate their lives to ensuring a sustainable future for gorillas. Our group will stay in high-end accommodation, designed and established by IGCP to enable local people to develop sustainable livelihoods that are not based on depletion of natural resources in gorilla habitats.

Although the focus is on gorillas and the work of the International Gorilla Conservation Programme, the group will also have opportunities to see other species such as golden monkeys, spend time exploring the artisan communities in and around the National Parks, and visit community enterprises founded by IGCP, which support communities and gorilla conservation.

#### Who are the lucky travellers?

There are only 12 places available on the trip and we expect places will go quickly. We had an excellent response amongst our supporter base when discussing the idea for a trip at a recent reception at the Athenaeum Club in London. The event was to provide an update on progress and say thank you to all those who have supported our work conserving the four gorilla subspecies across their ranges in Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda & Uganda; we were overwhelmed by the number of people keen to trek out to see gorillas in Africa. This trip is being implemented as a direct response to the enthusiasm shown by our supporters that night, and we will be marketing places initially to all of those who have supported our work in these regions.

However, we would be very happy to hear from anyone with whom we do not already have a relationship—anyone who would like to know more about the trip, make a provisional booking or register to receive details of other FFI journeys. We would urge them to do so promptly, though, as the limited places are expected to fill quickly once the final itinerary is published and bookings officially open.

Our Africa programme coordinator, Bruce Liggitt, will accompany the trip and share his knowledge, experience and passion for conserving gorillas and their habitat with the group throughout their time in Rwanda and Uganda. Also joining us will be multi-award winning conservation photographer, Robin Moore, who will be on hand to coach participants in getting the most out of their camera equipment to capture great images. Robin will also be putting together a book of images from the trip for all participants, which can be individually tailored.

#### What can individuals do to aid your cause?

Individuals can support our work in a number of different ways, for example, by joining FFI as a member—our packages start at just £36 per year. We also regularly launch public appeals for donations to support specific conservation projects that urgently require funds. This is how many of the supporters of our gorilla conservation work originally found out about us. We also have a charitable bond scheme—an innovative funding mechanism by which investors purchase bonds



JUAN CARLO MORENO/FFI

to support FFI and choose the return (up to a maximum of 10%) they would like to receive on their sustainable investment after five years when it is due for repayment. FFI benefits from as much as 15% of the total value of the investment.

For those who wish to support FFI in a very significant way, we also have two very active high-value donor programmes—Friends Against Extinction and The Conservation Circle—and an increasing number of our supporters are also choosing to support our work by pledging us a gift in their will. Many of our supporters also encourage their employers to consider whether a corporate partnership with FFI may be mutually beneficial for both the company and for conservation. Please contact the Development Office at FFI for details of any of these ways to help. We'd be delighted to hear from you on 01223 431 954.

#### What sets Fauna & Flora International apart?

As the world's longest running conservation organisation (next year we celebrate our 110th birthday) FFI are known for concentrating on



sustainable, lasting solutions to save wildlife and their habitat. All of our conservation is based on sound science, puts people at the heart of all solutions and tackles the wider causes of biodiversity loss.

FFI are different in that we possess impeccable scientific credentials, respond quickly to changes on the ground, and build up skills and capacity within each country to ensure the long-term sustainability of each of our projects. Constantly innovating, the sustainable conservation models developed by FFI are frequently replicated throughout the world.

We are also lean, with minimal overheads (95% of our income goes directly to delivery of conservation activities) and we enable our donor investments to work hard by leveraging further funds through collaboration.

**From an ecotourism point of view, why are gorilla treks so popular?**

A large part of the popularity of gorilla trekking is down to the iconic nature of the species. They really are extraordinary animals and anyone who has gazed into the big brown eyes of a gorilla will never feel the same again about either their own origins or the desperate need to safeguard the gorilla's future. This connection is not hard to fathom when you consider the fact that they share 98.3% of their DNA with us.

Another factor is that IGCP has been very proactive in building the capacity of the tourism sector to provide well-managed tourism activities that provide economic incentives for communities to protect gorillas rather than to hunt or trap them. Though, of course, preventing the latter is a constant battle.

It is probably worth noting here that there are a great many commercial trips advertised to see gorillas, many of which might bill their offerings

as 'eco-tourism'. The extent to which each trip is directly or indirectly benefiting gorillas, their habitat and the communities who share it with them differs wildly.

**"A sustainable future for the planet, where biodiversity is effectively conserved by the people who live closest to it, supported by the global community" – What is needed to realise this vision?**

Our vision is bold and aspirational, as a vision should be. However, the 2013 gorilla trip and others planned to the different countries in which we operate are all tangible examples of how we can work towards our vision. The 2013 gorilla

trip uses accommodation set up and approved by IGCP to deliver maximum social and economic benefits to communities who previously relied on the unsustainable use of the natural resources around them. The income for gorilla conservation from gorilla trekking licenses and the employment associated with tourism brings additional economic benefits that make living gorillas much more valuable to local communities.

Bringing the people with the resources to make a significant difference to conservation into direct contact with these communities in the hope that they will in turn gain the support of their friends and peers is just one step we are taking towards enlisting the support of the wider global community.

To fully realise our vision, we need a massive injection of resources—both financial and human—as the scale of the challenges facing future generations is considerable. However, we are optimists or we would not be engaged in this work. As Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."



To find out more about the trip to Rwanda & Uganda in 2013, and receive a copy of the latest Fauna & Flora Magazine (with a cover feature on gorillas) contact Gavin Shelton on 01223 431 954 or email [GAVIN.SHELTON@FAUNA-FLORA.ORG](mailto:GAVIN.SHELTON@FAUNA-FLORA.ORG)

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# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM HEADLINES

## GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL SEEK STAKEHOLDER INPUT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 2, 2012

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) requested input from travel and tourism stakeholders for its Destination Criteria.

With sustainable tourism on the rise, GSTC has laid out its Destination Criteria as part of a consultancy led by Sustainable Travel International. It wants stakeholders and other interested parties to ensure that diverse feedback is collected as the project progresses.

The criteria are designed to lead destination managers, communities, and businesses on a path to sustainability and include guiding principles and performance indicators to take advantage of social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits whilst reducing negative impacts.

Specifically, the Destination Criteria clearly outline 45 specific actions that a destination can take to make their cultural and natural attractions a source of entertainment and a source of employment for generations to come.

Luigi Cabrini, Director of Sustainable Development of Tourism at UNWTO said, "The UN World Tourism Organisation is pleased to see how the GTSC has built on instruments like the UNWTO's Guidebook on Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations, by establishing a methodology for the application of global standards for destinations".

### FULL STORY:

<http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/2012/05/02/global-sustainable-tourism-council-look-for-stakeholder-input/>

## UN CONFERENCE UNDERScores THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

MONDAY, APRIL 30, 2012

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) April 21–26, 2012, set out the foundations and objectives for improving the livelihoods of those most in need and noted that tourism has a big part to play.

The theme of this year's UNCTAD was *Development-Centred Globalisation: Towards*

*Inclusive and Sustainable Growth and Development*. It focused on how the global economy can spread its benefits more widely, creating jobs and raising living standards for the poorest people and nations.

Tourism is one of the top three export sectors for nearly half of the world's least developed countries and it has emerged that it is the sector best able to address concerns regarding global development.

*"Tourism has its place in the green growth agenda, as an important economic sector for many developed and developing countries and an extremely promising development perspective for the coming decades, contributing to a sustainable planet, a growing economy and a better life for all"*, said Márcio Favilla, executive director for competitiveness, external relations and partnerships at the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

### FULL STORY:

<http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/2012/04/30/un-conference-underscores-the-importance-of-sustainable-tourism/>

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# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM HEADLINES

## GREEN GLOBE LAUNCH NEW SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL SITE

TUESDAY, MAY 1, 2012

The Green Globe Certification has moved forward in the tourism sector by providing consumers with the latest destinations and locations of sustainable businesses on its new website.

The website <http://greenglobe.travel/> features the locations of sustainable hotels, cruise ships, meeting facilities, tour operators and attractions. All of the businesses featured are members of Green Globe and are either certified or in the process of being certified for their achievements in sustainability.

Green Globe Certification's CEO, Guido Bauer said, "*Sustainable tourism is becoming more and more important for travellers and our website caters exactly to those needs. We want to make sure that travellers, meeting planners and travel agents can easily and quickly find 'green' accommodation, conference centres and other travel options.*

*"All businesses featured on the site actively protect the environment and preserve local culture, contribute to a healthy community, create positive work*

*conditions, and use resources in a responsible way. They meet the highest level of sustainable operations."*

Green Globe also recently launched both Apple and Android apps giving users access to all the information on the go.

**FULL STORY:** <http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/2012/05/01/green-globe-launch-new-sustainable-travel-site/>

## PATA FOCUSED ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

MONDAY, APRIL 30, 2012

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has vowed to make sustainable tourism a priority in talks at its annual conference.

At the closing of the conference in Kuala Lumpur in April 2012, PATA CEO Martin J Craigs said, "The world must have a sustainable tourism industry and the PATA would take steps to make that a reality.

"I am pleased to take the challenge of Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin to make the tourism industry grow in tandem, without forgetting the environment elements."

Whilst addressing over 600 tourism professionals from numerous travel industry sectors, he suggested that "various plans during the conference this year were likely to give a new focus to environmental-friendly tourism in the tourism industry".

Later this year, from September 17–19, the annual Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference 2012 (ESTC12) will be held in Monterey, California. Hosted by Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau as well as Visit California, the conference will highlight global challenges and local opportunities, support sustainable development of tourism and promote solutions that balance conservation, communities and sustainable travel.

**FULL STORY:** <http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/2012/04/30/pata-focused-on-sustainable-tourism/>

# FURTHER READING

IF THE GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM HAS WHETTED YOUR APPETITE FOR ESSENTIAL INTELLIGENCE, CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING EXCELLENT BOOKS.

## The Guardian Green Travel Guide



**By Liane Katz and Alastair Sawday**

A good book for beginners, the Guardian Green Travel Guide helps cut through the jargon of sustainable travel by focusing on the truly important aspects. It includes information about carbon neutral hotels and locally-sourced produce, and introduces over 100 hand-picked destinations.



**Clean Breaks: 500 New Ways to See the World**

**By Richard Hammond and Jeremy Smith**

This Rough Guides gem by Guardian green travel correspondent Richard Hammond and Jeremy Smith, former editor of the Ecologist, reveals "500 unique experiences and new ways to travel that make a real difference to the lives of local people and the planet". From Kerala houseboats to zebra migration in Botswana to train-hotels from Paris to Madrid, Clean Breaks has something for us all. The book's title says it all; being able to see the world in a new light is a great gift.

All books are  
available at [www.  
blueandgreen  
tomorrow.com/  
culture](http://www.blueandgreen.com/tomorrow.com/culture)



## Green Places to Stay



**By Alastair Sawday**

Alastair Sawday has been publishing the Special Places to Stay guides since 1994, and this addition, edited by Richard Hammond, delves beyond skin-deep descriptions of 'eco' or 'green' to uncover special places that really live up to the label. To feature in this guide, all places must offer tangible benefits to local communities whilst

minimising impact on the environment.

## Organic Places to Stay in the UK

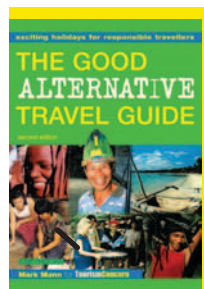


**By Linda Moss**

The ongoing economic downturn has given many people cause to opt for holidays in the UK, visiting our own excellent coastal towns instead of flying abroad. *Organic Places to Stay in the UK* features hotels and B&B's that use organic produce or their

own home-grown products to add a sustainable slant to the British holiday. It also sets the spotlight on fantastic areas in Britain that are often overlooked in favour of jetting off to foreign climes.

## The Good Alternative Travel Guide: Exciting Holidays for Responsible Travellers



**By Mark Mann and Zainem Ibrahim**

The Good Alternative Guide covers a number of issues that may not have crossed the casual traveller's mind. At the same time, it offers listings of trips that take advantage of beautiful places whilst also retaining the reality of developing countries.

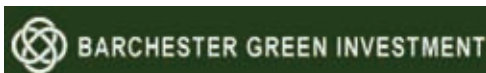
[THE GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM]

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## stewart investment planning

**Firm:** Stewart Investment Planning  
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## SMYTHE & WALTER Chartered Financial Planners

**Firm:** Smythe & Walter chartered  
 financial planners  
**Coverage:** London & Kent  
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**Address:** 2nd Floor Berkeley Square House  
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**Phone:** 020 7887 1989  
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# APPENDIX A

TABLE 1: COUNTRIES FEATURED ON THE ETHICAL  
TRAVELER TOP 10 ETHICAL DESTINATIONS LIST, 2010-12

Country	Years Featured	GDP	Distance from London (km)	Distance from New York (km)
Argentina	3	\$ 17,376	11102	8492
Bahamas, The	1	\$ 30,961	7001	1764
Barbados	1	\$ 23,624	7001	3366
Belize	1	\$ 8,275	8434	2962
Chile	3	\$ 16,171	11649	8216
Costa Rica	2	\$ 11,562	8734	3551
Dominica	2	\$ 13,664	6710	3070
Ghana	1	\$ 3,081	5095	8246
Latvia	2	\$ 15,448	1679	6779
Lithuania	2	\$ 18,789	1730	6974
Mauritius	1	\$ 15,015	9712	14918
Namibia	1	\$ 7,276	8375	11701
Palau	2	\$ 13,877	12177	13920
Poland	2	\$ 20,136	1452	6872
Serbia	1	\$ 10,661	1694	7281
Seychelles	1	\$ 24,724	8142	13600
South Africa	1	\$ 10,977	11021	12814
Suriname	1	\$ 9,492	7142	4297
Uruguay	2	\$ 15,569	8991	8567



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