



# BRIGHTON PEACE & ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

## HOLIDAYS

Does the idea of mountain climbing and cycling for a holiday leave you chomping at the bit, or filled with despair? Would you rather lounge in the sun all day, or take in the sights and sounds of an ancient city for the weekend? There are a million different holidays for a million different tastes. Undoubtedly your taste will differ from the next person to reach this factsheet. But – probably! hopefully! – you'll both share a concern for the environmental impact of your holiday, as well as the fiscal.

As the world's largest industry and employer, the ill effects on the environment are well known. Air pollution; water shortages from swimming pools and golf courses; erosion of nature reserves. This is not to say, however, that tourism cannot be a force for good as well. Many nations rely on tourism for the stimulus it provides, creating jobs and drawing in currency (Britain included). Is it possible then to have your cake /and eat it? Read on...



Photo courtesy of D. Kilim

### Choosing a More Ethical Holiday

- Visit [www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk) for information on the key issues surrounding the social and environmental impact tourism has, for better or for worse.
- [www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com) has information on accommodation, family holidays, independent travel and short breaks - Tel: 01273 600030
- If you are booking through a tour operator, choose a member of the **Association of Independent Tour Operators** which has responsible tourism guidelines - [www.aito.co.uk](http://www.aito.co.uk) or Tel: 020 8744 9280
- **Travelife** has a sustainability system that was created by tour operators and is partially funded by the EU - see

[www.its4travel.com](http://www.its4travel.com) for more information

- Or how about a **BTCV Conservation Holiday**? They were nominated in the Best Volunteering Organisation category in the 2006 First Choice Responsible Tourism Awards - [www.btcv.org.uk](http://www.btcv.org.uk) or Tel: 01302 388 883

### Holiday Accommodation

The hotel sector is dominated by low wages, long hours and no contracts, both in Europe and outside it. Of the companies surveyed by *Ethical Consumer*, **Ibis** and **Novotel** hotels came out best due to the poorer environmental and social reporting of their competitors.

Hotels with the smallest carbon footprint are usually the simplest and cheapest.

- The **Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS)** is the leading sustainable tourism certification scheme in the UK - [www.green-business.co.uk](http://www.green-business.co.uk) or Tel: 01738 632162
- Other useful websites for the UK are:  
[www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)  
[www.visitbritain.com](http://www.visitbritain.com)  
[www.visitwales.com](http://www.visitwales.com)

### Before You Go

If going to a country with a different language, learn some basic words and expressions so that you can greet and thank shopkeepers, waiters, drivers, etc. Also, make the

effort to familiarise yourself with, and respect, the local people's dress codes. Keep your packing to a minimum and avoid disposable items.

### Getting There



Photo courtesy of caribb

Holidays are one of the biggest sources of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, mostly due to air travel. For many people, their carbon footprint from flying is bigger than for everything else they do and buy. For instance, a return flight to Lanzarote produces the same emissions as a household's yearly electricity use. Therefore the biggest single step we can make is to stop flying and take holidays in the UK, or to visit Europe by train and/or ferry.

For more information on different forms of travel, see our 'Motorvehicles' and 'Cycling, Public transport and Aviation' factsheets.

### Carbon Offsetting

Offsetting works in theory by allowing us to cancel the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions elsewhere. However, environmentalists argue that it provides an excuse to carry on emitting excessive amounts of CO<sub>2</sub>, and suggest that carbon offsetting should be a last resort.

If there is no alternative, then you could purchase **Gold Standard Credits**, generated from Gold Standard renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. Visit the Retailer list in the 'Marketplace' section at [www.cdmgoldstandard.org](http://www.cdmgoldstandard.org).

Also look at **Atmosfair**, the only offsetting company rated by *Ethical Consumer*. **Atmosfair** does not cover journeys of less than 700 km, as it is better to make these trips by land or sea - [www.atmosfair.de](http://www.atmosfair.de).

### Holiday Destination

- Respect local traditions and religious customs and help preserve the cultural heritage of the places you visit
- Do not buy souvenirs that exploit wildlife or endangered species. However, other local souvenirs help the local economy. If you haggle, remember what the equivalent is in your currency and take into account the time and workmanship involved in making the product

- Do not disturb wildlife or damage natural habitats, or pick wild plants. For instance don't touch coral reefs, don't feed animals or fish, and stay quiet when viewing animals
- Do not drop litter, and take a water bottle or filter for purifying the water - but remember that drink sales can play a vital part in the local economy
- Even though begging can be the only source of income for some, it is considered better to give to charities that offer more long-term help to more people. Avoid giving sweets or money to children as this encourages them to beg. However, you could interact and play with the children
- Politeness costs nothing, so ask permission before you take photographs of local people
- Use water sparingly
- If you have to wash in streams or rivers, use environmentally-friendly soaps, as it may be someone's drinking water further downstream

### Energy-Saving Tips at your Holiday Destination

- Use air-conditioning as little as possible
- Drink tap water where you can, not bottled water
- Reuse hotel towels instead of having them changed every day
- Don't wash your clothes unnecessarily
- Buy local food and drink, visit locally owned establishments, and avoid imported goods

### What you can do right now.....

Plan your free holiday volunteering and learning about organic production at [www.woof.org](http://www.woof.org).

### Resources & Further Information

Ethical Consumer, 104 Jan/Feb 2007

'Green Places to Stay', Alastair Sawday Publishing

'No-Nonsense Guide to Tourism',  
New Internationalist, 2007

'Organic Places to Stay'  
[www.whyorganic.org/involved\\_organicdirectory](http://www.whyorganic.org/involved_organicdirectory)

'The Ethical Travel Guide: Your Passport to Alternative Holidays' by Polly Pattullo with Orelly Minelli, Tourism Concern/Earthscan, 2006

'The Final Call: in search of the true cost of our holidays' by Leo Hickman, Eden Project Books, 2007

'The Green Holiday Guide: Great Britain & Ireland',  
John Elford (ed), Green Books