



## Travel trends'

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# Practical guide to responsible travel – without compromising on comfort!

It's trendy, everyone's talking about it, and more important, it's responsible: sustainable tourism is the new way of traveling. But it doesn't necessarily mean camping out under the stars – responsible travel can be comfortable and, even better, affordable. Here are a few tips for getting it right!

### Carpe diem?

More and more people throughout the world are adopting responsible practices: eating organic food and purchasing fair trade products for some, waste sorting for others, while an increasing number of people are attracted by the idea of responsible travel. But perhaps not everyone is ready for a "back-to-nature" vacation with nothing but a sleeping bag and a tent. Don't worry! **There's more than one way of traveling responsibly.** It's a question of philosophy!

When the Roman poet Horace talked of Carpe Diem, he meant taking advantage of everything life had to offer today because no-one could predict what would happen tomorrow. This philosophy must be tempered by the concept of sustainable tourism, which means satisfying the needs of today's tourists while at the same time contributing to the economic development of host communities and **preserving the planet for future generations.**

According to the PLANET 21 Research\* tracking study, one out of every three hotel customers believes that citizens have the most important role to play in sustainable development. But when it comes to travel, we have to make sure that the tourist industry itself is committed to playing the – green – game!

This is not just an empty phrase. At a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development meeting in April 2012 (UNCTAD XIII), **tourism was considered to be one of the economic sectors most likely to generate green growth.**

Put briefly, sustainable tourism guarantees the comfort of the traveler while also taking care of the planet and contributing to the economic and social development of local communities, at every stage of the trip!



### Getting there ...

The first stage is **transportation** – the most polluting aspect, of course. While tourist activity accounts for 5% of greenhouse gas emissions, air travel alone is responsible for 3% (source: Good Planet Info). Over the longer term, however, and for the same distance, the plane pollutes less than the car. But the prize for "Guaranteed Green Transportation" goes to the high-speed train!

Next, where to go? Would-be "green" tourists can choose destinations that have already implemented responsible measures. To take this path, don't hesitate to question travel companies or do your own research, on the web for instance.

### Where to sleep (well)?

For 36% of the people polled in a survey conducted by CMIGreen, the most important element contributing to green tourism is **the eco-responsibility of hotel operators**, way ahead of using public transport and/or renewable-energy vehicles (12%). The Accor study shows that one out of every two customers takes sustainable development into account when choosing their hotel. Tourists and hotel operators therefore need to work together to drive responsible travel.

And to find the right place, just ask the right question: what does this hotel do to guarantee me an eco-friendly night's sleep? And how can I make a personal contribution?

With its **PLANET 1 program**, Accor invites its guests, but also its partners and employees, to work with it to reinvent hotels - sustainably. A

pioneer in sustainable development, today the Group is moving into a new phase of ambition and conquest. Challenge accepted! PLANET 21 – the name refers to the Agenda 21 action plan adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 – consists of 21 commitments based around seven important pillars: health, nature, carbon, innovation, local action, employment and dialogue. Looking to 2015, the Group has defined a series of objectives aimed at ensuring the wellbeing of customers, but also of employees, the local community and the environment. Three years from now, 85% of hotels will be using eco-label products; the child-protection program will have been extended to 70 countries, and owned hotels will have cut water consumption by 15% and energy consumption by 10%. Everything you need to sleep peacefully, in tandem with your hotel! And for tourists who'd like a little taste of adventure, it's now possible to find comfortable yurts or sleep in a tree hut! A childhood dream?



#### **Once there: it's up to you!**

When traveling in a so-called developing country, small **eco-friendly gestures** are imperative. For instance, you can opt for local transport rather than a 4 x 4 and meet interesting people, try out the local cuisine (a pleasure not to be missed!), make sure any packaging you bring with you is biodegradable and avoid leaving behind any waste that won't decompose naturally.

You should also avoid wasteful practices and not take baths, for instance, in a country where water is scarce. Another good practice is to leave behind you no trace of your passage other than objects you won't need after your vacation but that could be useful to local people, e.g. a reusable water bottle or an LED light bulb.

#### **Tradition and modernity**

Modern travel is responsible travel. And what makes it modern is that it advocates respect: respect for the environment of course, but also for local people and particularly their traditions. For this reason, before you do anything else, you should find out about the culture of the country – it will also help you avoid embarrassing situations!

**Every culture has its own codes.** In some countries, patting a child on the head or a man shaking a woman's hand is considered inappropriate; in others, offering a gift could be interpreted as condescending or even be harmful to the recipient – for instance, a child who earns too much money from services rendered to tourists could be tempted to drop out of school.

The moral of this little guide is that one responsible tourist is worth more than two who are not! For more information on eco-responsible travel, don't hesitate to visit the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) website

[www.unep.fr/greenpassport](http://www.unep.fr/greenpassport) (choose your language on the homepage)

And **bon voyage!**

*\* study conducted by Accor with IFOP in 2010, involving 7000 hotel customers in six countries*

NB: Article on hotel industry trends drafted by the Accor Group's communication department