

This Vacation, Show the Planet a little Love

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If you ask me, the vacations of 2022 are the most well-deserved vacations *ever*. The whole world has been through the mill these past two years and we all deserve a big ol' dose of TLC. That includes our lovely host, the planet itself. So, whether you're hitting the road or the rails or the airways this summer, here are a few tips on how to show the planet a little love while you're on vacation.

First off, how you get there and back matters. Taking the train or piling as many as you can into one car is *way* more earth-friendly than flying. But, in the unfortunate event that your vacation destination refuses to reposition itself to within a drivable distance from your home, flying might be your only option. Don't despair. You can still get your green on once you land. Rather than driving to all the hot spots in town, consider walking or biking or one of those hop-on hop-off bus tours. If you're taking a less urban route, you could even fold in a few planet-friendly activities like snorkeling or paddleboarding or kayaking or hiking or horseback riding. Just remember to "take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints," so the wildlife and ecosystems you're enjoying this year will still be preserved and beautiful when your children want to recreate the amazing memories you made with their children.

Packing light will definitely help you walk more gently on the earth (lighter luggage = less carbon footprint). Leave things you don't really need at home. Plan your clothes and shoes thoughtfully, with an eye to minimalism. If you can, buy your vacation reads on vacation rather than bringing them from home. Instead of bringing full bottles of soaps, shampoos or conditioners, consider picking up a few refillable silicone bottles and just bringing what you need. One thing you're very likely to need: sunscreen. Did you know that traditional sunscreens wash off easily, leaving harmful ingredients that threaten delicate coral reefs as well as our marine wildlife and ecosystems? Biodegradable sunscreen is so much more marine friendly. Some places even require it.

No matter your destination, being a responsible and gracious guest makes everyone, including the earth, happy. Reuse towels and sheets at your hotel and turn off lights, ACs, TVs, and whatnot when you leave your room or rental. Take full advantage of trash cans and recycling bins. Bring your own water bottles and re-usable utensils and be sure to clean up carefully after a picnic on the beach or evening around the campfire. Eat at the local restaurants and have a go at their local specialties. Maybe choose a vegan option now and again, an homage to your own well-being as much as the world's. Instead of drinking your same old same old adult beverage, try a "near beer" – a locally made brew or cocktail not only reduces your carbon footprint, it might just become this vacation's signature drink. Oh, and watch what you pick up as souvenirs.

Buying gifts made of tortoise shell, ivory or coral not only rewards environmentally harmful activity, it could be illegal.

There's a lot more options out there (like choosing environmentally friendly hotel chains and offsetting your own carbon footprint), but I thought we'd keep it simple. It's been a heck of a couple of years, and you deserve a relaxed and an amazing vacation. My hope is that while you're away enjoying and exploring this beautiful planet of ours you decide to show her some love. She certainly deserves it.