

Sustainable Traveler Criteria

Sustainable travel does not mean giving up luxury resorts, it means conserving natural resources, supporting local community and making a positive impact on the places we visit. Some steps are big and others are small, but all can make a difference. Some simple changes can result in cost savings, for both you and the planet. Hereby China Luxury Travel Network provides the following guideline for you to enjoy a more sustainable travel experience.

PLANNING

Homework

Educate yourself

Foster a true understanding of the natural and cultural environments visited, before, during, and after the visit. Choose destinations that are not overcrowded or overdeveloped. Read up local history and culture, local customs, food and anything related ahead of time therefore you will have more topics while chatting with the locals. Try to learn some simple words of local language is a good start.

Unplug Your Home

Responsible traveling begins at home. Before you head out, unplug any appliance that won't be in use while you're away such as computers, chargers, televisions, video game players, and microwaves.

Go Paperless

Use online resources to plan and book your trip, and then, when only necessary, print out maps and other materials at home on recycled paper.

Guidebooks

Remember that your guidebook is just a starting point; it is not your travel bible which does not always feature the best experiences of your trip. Take the trip as a discovery adventure, head off-the-beaten-path a bit and visit the places where locals spend their leisure time. You will truly know how the local lives and you can write your own travel guidebooks, like a blog.

Buy Secondhand

Unless you have hobby of collecting guidebooks, buy them from a secondhand book store or join some book exchange clubs.

Reservation

Choose Travel Dates Carefully

Avoid high season or public holidays; Traveling to some destinations during the market-induced high season can increase your overall negative impact and save your pennies as well.

Support Sustainable Tourism Practices

Choose tour operators who have sustainable travel management systems. It is hard to find a sustainable tour operator like ten years ago, but not now. Even in China, there are a lot of travel companies and organizations are benchmarking best practices in sustainable tourism. Ask what their sustainable travel policy before booking is.

Book Responsibly

Seek out hotels, lodges and resorts that use environmentally sensitive, renewable energy, water and waste disposal systems as well as recycled building materials or those that are harvested in a sustainable manner. Let hotel operators know that environmentally sound management and stewardship programs matter to you by staying at certified, eco-friendly properties. Before you make a reservation, ask about any environmental certifications.

Try New

New hotel construction is more likely to feature state-of-the-art energy saving features. So, particularly in areas where no property shines as an obvious green star, look for locations that have been built in the last few years. New appliances and heating and cooling systems operate more efficiently than older models, providing maximum energy and cost savings.

Stay Simple

When looking for a place to stay, choose the smallest, simplest option. Smaller properties with fewer amenities consume less energy, and typically provide more personal, and authentically local, service.

Stay Local-featured

Responsible travel is not just about recycling garbage and turning the light switch off when you leave your room, it is also about supporting hotels, lodges, and resorts that enhance sense of place and help protect the character and authenticity of a destination. Choose the hotel with authentic local features.

BEFORE TRIP

Packing

Packing Lightly

Packing lightly will make it easier to get where you're going, while also reducing your negative impact on the environment. So leave the extra shoes and clothes at home, and stick with durable, fast-dry and neutral-colored clothing that can be easily mixed and matched to create different looks over several days of travel.

Bring Your Own Water Bottle

Can you imagine how many plastic water bottles are thrown away each day? In US, the number is 60 million. Travelers can help by recycling and reusing existing water bottles, and refusing to purchase or accept new bottles; instead refilling a single bottle or other dishwasher-safe, reusable bottle with filtered water. If you don't have access to filtered water, use a portable filtered water bottle or a reusable filter designed to fit in standard sport and water bottles.

Pack a Battery Charger

Remember to bring rechargeable batteries and your battery charger. This reduces toxic waste, saves the environment and your pocketbook. Check your destination's power supply to see if you will also need a power converter.

Get a Green Map

Whether you're visiting a distant city or traveling somewhere closer to home, a locally designed [Green Map](#) can be a great tool for exploring a new place with a fresh, eco-friendly perspective.

Downloadable and interactive maps contributed by Green Mapmakers from over 50 countries are available for more than 400 cities, villages, and neighborhoods worldwide at www.GreenMap.org. Each map highlights local natural and cultural resources (parks, bike paths, farmers markets, and so on) making it easy for visitors to access green and authentic products, services, and activities. In China, Friends of Nature, a grass-root NGO in China provides local green map as well.

Bring a Reusable Shopping Bag

In China, free disposable plastic bags are no longer available at supermarket or shopping center. Packing a basic canvas tote, or other similar sturdy, washable bag, in your luggage is an easy way to help keep trash out of landfills and off roadsides, conserve energy, and protect marine life. Use the bag—instead of the paper or plastic bags provided by stores—to carry souvenirs and other purchases made during your trip.

Reading

Reading books in advance

Learn about history and culture by reading books especially the ones write by locals.

ON THE TRIP

Do not try to cover large distances

If you are planning a trip to a large country such as China, do not try to see the whole country in one trip. By hopping around so much, you would have to fly and that constitutes the largest impact of travel on the environment. Besides, you will gain a very superficial view of the country if you are constantly moving; better is to stay within one region and experience it well, then leave other regions within the same country for other future visits.

Minimize Your Waste

While traveling avoids buying disposable items for which there are reusable alternatives, such as chopsticks. A lot of local restaurants use disposable chopsticks unless you ask for alternatives. Pack a pair of dishware on the trip just in case the restaurants do not have alternatives.

Benefit Local Community

Make a positive impact on any community you visit by giving back in some way, like picking up the trash you see when you climb up a hill, join organized community serving programs or support NGOs and other organizations specialized in community-led initiatives. It really doesn't take a lot to make a difference. Service opportunities include working at orphanages, hospitals, and child care centers; teaching English; and sharing professional skills such as engineering, photography, or management.

Shut Off the Lights

In China, some of the hotels will cut the light automatically while clients are leaving, but some do not. When you leave your hotel room, turn off the lights, television, and radio to save electricity. In the summer, close the blinds and/or curtains to reduce heat gain in the room. In the winter, open the blinds and/or curtains on sunny days to let in the sun's warmth.

Wash Your Own Clothes

Cleaning your clothes through a hotel laundry service is pricey and wastes water. Hotels wash each guest room's clothes separately because they can't throw everyone's laundry in together and then pull them apart which wasted extra energy and water.

There are some family run laundry services that washing by hands in China. Check around your hotel if there are any or wait until you get home to wash your clothes if possible.

Eating

Say NO to Disposable Dishware

A lot of local restaurants use disposable chopsticks unless you ask for alternatives. Pack a pair of dishware on the trip just in case the restaurants do not have alternatives. Say NO if the waiter gives you one pair of disposable chopsticks.

Choose Local Restaurant and Eat Local Food

Eat dishes prepared from ingredients sourced locally. It does not really matter the kind of food so long as ingredients are sourced locally—hence ensuring the ingredients have not been transported across great distances. At the same time, be mindful of what you are eating—you might unwittingly order an animal or fish that is endangered and illegally caught—and you should also avoid exotic ingredients that require intensive farming to be cultivated locally because they are outside their optimal climate.

Shopping

Be mindful of what products are made of

Some products appear harmful at face value—for example: carvings made from dead wood trees, wind chimes made from sea shells or bits of dead coral. But these are not harmful; dead coral is a medium for certain organisms to thrive on, and so are empty shells and deadwood—in natural forests, up to forty percent of the biomass is found in dead wood. Buying things made of these products removes an important medium from the natural process; by scavenging these products, the artisans would be disrupting the ecosystem.

Send E-Postcards

Instead of sending paper postcards, use the power of technology and make a phone call, or send an email, or send an e-postcard.

Forget souvenirs

Do not shop for souvenirs on the impulse, or out of excitement aroused in your exotic locale, before thinking of whether you will really make use of the souvenir in the long-term. Most souvenirs end up in a store-room, and you should strive to buy only things that you will really use when you return home and their novelty wears off.

Buy from Local Artisans

Support and celebrate the local culture by purchasing hand-crafted artwork directly from the artisan whenever possible. By buying the cheapest souvenirs you can find you are unintentionally supporting

the mass-market, cheap product and moving people in the area away from their traditional culture. By buying works by local artisans are helping to maintain their living cultures.

Transportation

Fly Nonstop

Jets produce an average of almost 0.4 tons of CO₂ per passenger per flight, and burn the most fuel at takeoff. Reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associate with flying by choosing non-stop flights whenever possible.

Use Your Body Power

Having a car leads to using a car, even for very short trips. So instead of renting a car or driving your own car, come up with creative, car-less ways to get where you need to go, such as biking and walking paths.

Before traveling, research the car-less transportation options offered at your destination. Many cities are launching free or inexpensive bike rental and public transportation programs designed to ease traffic congestion and reduce carbon emissions.

Go Public

Public transportation is inexpensive, generally efficient, and comes in many shapes and sizes around the world. Wherever you are going, plan ahead to see if you can get there—or move around when you arrive—via bus, subway, trolley, light rail, commuter train, streetcar, cable car, water taxi, monorail, tramway, and/or van pool service.

Share a Car

If you absolutely have to rent a car for long distant travel, look for available shared car options in the place you're visiting. Check the bulletin board at local International Youth hostels or guesthouse. Don't be share to ask other travelers.

Pack Light

There's no need to pack a month's worth of clothes and supplies if you're going away for just the weekend. Extra clothes, toiletries, food, and so on take up extra space in your car and add extra weight, which will reduce your vehicle's gas mileage.

Touring

Go Where the Wild Things Are

It is wrong to think traveling itself is damage to the wild; actually ecotourism is one of the few ways to protect rare and endangered plant and animal species and their vanishing habitat. The issue is not to stop traveling, but to make travel more sustainable."

Stay on the Trail

We all know the universal visitor's adage: "Take only memories, leave only footprints," but it can be tempting to venture off the beaten path to save time, avoid crowds, explore pristine territory, or experience the thrill of riding a snowmobile through forested backcountry or four-wheel-drive vehicle across an open beach. Unfortunately, if we all took the road less traveled by—whether on foot or on

an auto—we'd end up destroying the very natural or historic sites we came to see. Responsible travelers should follow designated trails and do not remove archaeological or biological treasures from sites.

Respect Local Cultures

Treating others the way you wish to be treated is the basic premise of responsible travel. It sounds simple, because it is simple: When we travel, we are visiting the homes of our global neighbors, getting to know them, and experiencing how they live:

1. Choose local guides
2. Stay in locally owned accommodations
3. Eat locally produced food
4. Respect local customs and traditions

AFTER THE TRIP

Write Thank You Letters

Write Thank You letters to your guide, tour operator, hotel manager and others who make your trip a pleasant one, including some kind suggestions as well. Your letters will encourage them doing better the in the future.

Share Your Trip

After the trip, do not forget to share your trip pictures, tips and any other things you would like to share with your family and friends. You can be a good example of a sustainable traveler!