



The Responsible _____
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How to find, book and get the most from your holiday

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“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails.

Explore. Dream. Discover.”

Mark Twain

Acknowledgements: The information provided in this book is up to date to the best of the authors’ knowledge at the time of going to press. The advice provided is intended as guidance and it is responsibility of the traveller to thoroughly investigate their potential options before their trip. The authors are not responsible for services offered by a company highlighted here. Many thanks to Prof. Steve McCool and Dr Susan Snyman of the IUCN World Commission of Protected Areas (WCPA) Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group (TAPAS Group), Randy Durband of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, and the United Nations World Tourism Organization, for their valuable comments on an early version of this book. Also thanks to Mary-Anne van der Byl for the design and typesetting of the book.

Declaration: No fee has been charged to any organization to be included in this book and no preferential treatment is provided to those selected. We have chosen the organisations, which in our experience have a strong reputation in the industry for being responsible.

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Organisation's logos have hyper links inserted for easy access to websites. There is also a directory at the end of this booklet with all organisations and their website URLs.

About the authors

Andrew and Anna are a husband and wife team, living on the coast in South Africa, and operate their own sustainable tourism research and consultancy business: Spenceley Tourism and Development (STAND). They specialise in providing technical advice on sustainable tourism and conservation globally. They travel extensively, with their young daughter, Emma in tow, for work aiming to promote responsible tourism businesses that support income-generating opportunities for local communities and promote good conservation practice. STAND is a partner institution of the 10YFP Sustainable Tourism Program.

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Why travel responsibly?

Travelling responsibly can provide a richer holiday experience. It means that you're not just passing by, but are actively contributing to the places you visit, and the people who live there.

The purpose of this book is to give you the tools to make an informed decision about your holiday. It is designed to help you plan your trip, what to look out for, how and where to check feedback to make sure you are going to enjoy it, how to get the most out of your holiday and how and where to give others feedback on your experience.

We have spent many years conducting research on responsible tourism, trying to understand how to promote travel experiences that add value to destinations: by helping to protect nature and heritage, whilst creating opportunities for local communities. We have gathered many insights during this time, and now want to share them with you - the tourist - the responsible traveller.

You may not know whether you are a responsible traveller or not. That's OK, because hopefully there might be a few ideas that will help change that. We aim to help you create travel experiences that you will never forget and will be able to tell to others for years. At least, we hope it will - try reading this and then decide for yourself.

What is a Responsible Tourist?

The term responsible tourism is used in a lot of forms from 'eco-tourism' to 'sustainable tourism' and 'conscious tourism'. They all have their specific nuances, but in essence, responsible tourism:

- 1** **minimizes negative impacts on the economy, environment and society;**
- 2** **generates economic benefits for local people** and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- 3** **involves local people in decisions that affect their lives** and life changes;
- 4** **makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural, social and cultural heritage,** to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- 5** **provides more enjoyable experiences** for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- 6** **provides access** for people with disabilities and the disadvantaged; and
- 7** **is culturally sensitive,** engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

Put simply, by travelling responsibly, host communities and destinations will benefit from the money you spend there – and you will have a more meaningful travel experience than a standard holiday.

Essentially, you are responsible for how and where you spend your money; that you don't damage the place you visit; and that you have respectful interactions with local people and their customs.

People living and working in the places you visit are responsible for providing a great experience and making you feel welcome.

Beware of 'Green Washing'

An eco-resort is not 'eco' just because it is in a forest. Actually cutting down trees to make room for cabins is not very 'eco' at all!

There are some quick and easy ways to check whether your holiday destination really is 'eco' rather than just pretending to be. You can easily check if they are fully committed and behaving 'responsibly' before you spend your money there, by using this guide.

What does your perfect holiday destination look like?

Do things a bit differently: What makes a responsible holiday?

You will be glad to know that being a responsible tourist is not actually very difficult.

In fact, you probably do a number of 'responsible' things anyway. For example, ordering the local fish to eat, rather than just the type you usually eat at home, might just be an opportunity to try something new and tasty... and it may also have a lower carbon footprint, because local food will have travelled less to reach

your plate. Local food is more likely to be fresh, rather than having been kept in the freezer (using electricity) for long periods of time. The fish may have been caught by someone local, who benefits from you buying it.

Being responsible simply means being a conscious traveller. Sometimes you are on holiday to avoid making tough decisions... but this is not supposed to be a chore. It often includes simple, sensible actions:

- Buying locally made craft that does not have a "Made in Vietnam" sticker (unless, of course you are visiting Vietnam!)
- Spreading your money around by using a number of different locally run shops and restaurants. Try not to spend all your money at one business.
- Turning off lights and air conditioning when you are not in your room.
- Re-using your towel rather than getting it replaced after every wash.
- Disposing of your waste in an appropriate way – and not leaving it for someone to pick up, or an animal to eat.

By simply selecting and enjoying a holiday responsibly you are actually contributing to a bigger overall change.

Just think about the economics of it... the future supply of tourism products and services responds to current demands of travellers like you. So tourism businesses adapt depending on the requests of their customers. If more travellers choose the local and sustainably harvested fish, the restaurants will buy more from local

fishermen, and need fewer imported ones. Similarly, if you choose a holiday that is certified as 'sustainable' or 'responsible,' other businesses will want to be followed in order to get more customers - and to be recognized for their good practices.

So, as you see, you have a lot of influence within your two-week vacation!



PART ONE

Things to do before you travel

Planning a trip that will be environmentally friendly, and that benefits the local destination, can be done very easily. You may want sun, sea and sand – or a wildlife tour – a city break – or a cultural experience in a remote location.

So whether you're heading to Norway, New York, or Nepal – you can make travel decisions that help make the destination better. Once you have decided where you want to go visit, then you'll start to look for places to stay, and for things to do there.

Here are 3 easy steps to finding that perfect holiday.



1

Deciding where to go.



2

Booking a hotel or tour using an online booking platform, organised by an agent that list a range of sustainable holidays, tour companies, and places to stay



3

Booking directly with a hotel that promotes its sustainable credentials.



Travel is a social contract, a mutually beneficial relationship based on respect.

1 Deciding where to go

When looking for a place to visit, you may want to look for places that have worked to promote good practices in the area as a whole. These four websites provide a list of sustainable destinations that have either received a certification or an award for best practice.



travel forever

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) hosts a list and map of travel destinations that have undertaken an assessment to understand their good practices, vulnerabilities, and priority areas for improvement towards sustainability, using the GSTC Criteria for Destinations.



Green Destinations® compiles a list of the top 100 sustainable destinations, using open calls on social media and a selection process guided by 30 international sustainable tourism experts. It is an initiative of TravelMole.com, VISION on Sustainable Tourism, Totem Tourism and Green Destinations.

bookdifferent

BookDifferent have a Green Destinations Rating program that has assessed around 1000 destinations against 40 indicators aligned with the GSTC Criteria for Destinations. They say that they, "...focus on making travelling more sustainable and socially responsible.."



The National Geographic World Legacy Awards have a "Destination Leadership" award. You can search their site for winners each year. The link above takes you to all of the 2015 winners.

Criteria Systems

Each of these websites will have their own specific criteria systems, so there may be variations in results.

We do not favour any particular one of these. They all have good search engines and are relatively well trusted by the industry.

2 Booking a hotel or tour using an online booking platform

More and more online booking platforms are promoting sustainable holidays. Some link you with travel agents and tour operators who will give you travel information, organize your trip, and make your bookings. Most of them also advertise responsible hotels and tour companies that you can book with directly, if you prefer.

bookdifferent

BookDifferent say that they, “started this ‘different’ hotel booking website where you can easily find green hotels and support a charity every time you book.”



Go Barefoot is, “...driven by a social and environmental ethos working in partnership with NGOs, co-operatives and social enterprises to provide more immersive cultural discoveries and enriching ecotourism adventures, away from the conventional and commercial tourist circuits.”

Responsible travel

Responsibletravel.com say, “Our idea is really quite simple: treat local people and places well, and they’ll often offer you experiences and insights into their ways of life that you wouldn’t otherwise get.”



Travelife lists “...partner tour operators that are committed to providing holidays with more sustainable hotels, increasing your choice of accommodations that protect and respect their local environment, the people who work for them and the local communities where they operate.”



World Hotel Link’s mission is to offer “...a unique online booking service to both travellers and travel service providers by marrying the best of what can be done locally...with best practices in global marketing, technology and information systems that are appropriate for use in all countries.”

3 Booking directly with a hotel

If you want to book directly with the accommodation or tour company, but company, you'll first want to know if they can independently verify their sustainability claims. There are 100s of certification schemes and numerous awards programs across the world (which can be a bit confusing). Here are some suggestions to get you started.

Finding certified enterprises

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) is an international body for establishing and managing standards for sustainable tourism. The GSTC recognizes, approves and accredits sustainable tourism certification bodies that meet or surpass the GSTC Criteria. The GSTC also lists hotels that have been certified under GSTC approved or recognized standards.



Currently there are 23 certification bodies internationally that are approved or recognized by the GSTC (see below). One way of finding your responsible hotel is to visit their websites, and browse the hotels and tour operators they have certified.



(Austrian Ecolable for Tourism)



BIOSPHERE RESPONSIBLE TOURISM



EARTHCHECK



European Ecotourism Network



(Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) for hotels)



(Great Green Deal)



(Sistema de Distincion en Turismo Sustentable)



Finding international award winners

You can also look for places to stay that have won international awards for their responsible practices. Some of the most prestigious international awards are listed below.

World Responsible Tourism Awards

The World Responsible Tourism Awards state that they, “want to celebrate the shining stars of responsible tourism - the individuals, organisations and destinations working innovatively with local cultures, communities and biodiversity.”

WORLD TRAVEL & TOURISM COUNCIL

Tourism for Tomorrow
AWARDS

The World Travel and Tourism Council's Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, “...focus on five key categories that have been carefully selected to exemplify how Travel & Tourism can create significant economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits on local people and places.”



National Geographic's World Legacy Awards “honor the companies, organizations, and destinations that are driving the positive transformation of the tourism industry, showcasing leaders and visionaries in sustainable tourism best practices, and sharing their stories with millions of today's travelers”



The UNWTO Annual Awards celebrate UNWTO Awards celebrate excellence and innovation in the tourism sector, recognizing exceptional leaders in the categories including Enterprises and Non-governmental Organizations. The contribution of the awardees is in line with UNWTO's policies, priorities and programme of work, including the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

TOP TIPS

for preparing to travel

There are a number of things you can do before you travel to make your trip as responsible as possible, and which don't require a huge amount of effort:



Find out as much as possible.

The more you know about a place you're visiting before arriving, the more that it will come alive during your trip. Look into the site's history, culture, natural environment, customs, stories, advisory notices using books, the internet, and experiences of other travellers (e.g. TripAdvisor).



Pack light and for a purpose.

It is tempting to pack everything you think you might need, but remember to be smart about your necessities. Packaging like the plastic wrapping of your new toothbrush uses up space in your bag and can create excess waste for the destination to deal with. 'Pack for a Purpose' also provides guidance on how to pack supplies needed by community projects, in your holiday destination



Learn a few words in the local language

Making an effort to speak the local language allows you to interact with the people who know the site best, and also shows respect. People really do appreciate your efforts. Simple words like "Hello," "Please," and "Thank you," can go a long way. If you make an attempt, local people will appreciate your efforts and are more likely to reciprocate.



Explore transport options

Remember that traveling affects the environment. Wherever possible, try to minimize your pollution and impact on the environment by looking to alternative transportation (e.g. walking, bicycle, horse, sailing boat), or by visiting places close to home that can be reached by train or coach. Where you do need a plane or other motorized transport, consider compensating for your carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions.

PART TWO

On your holiday

So you have decided where you want to go, and booked your trip and have checked that the facilities meet with your principles. Well done!

This action has already contributed to the demand for responsible tourism globally, which will encourage more businesses to offer and operators to sell sustainable products and experiences. You are all ready to go!

Here are some suggestions on making your travel experience better:

- **Water is precious in every holiday destination** so use it carefully. Don't leave taps running, take showers rather than baths and re-use your towels.
- **Save energy and cut CO₂** by switching off lights, fans and air conditioning when you are out of your room. Make sure your appliances are fully turned off and don't leave any chargers plugged in when not in use - this will also protect against damage from power surges.
- **Don't buy souvenirs made from shells, turtle shell, coral, or any other wildlife** - you'll be contributing to their exploitation and some of it will be illegal to bring home. Think carefully before buying hardwood souvenirs, and whether you can be sure that are from sustainably harvested forests, and not from protected or endangered species.
- **Never go near or feed wildlife** you encounter on your trip. It may not be safe for you, or the animal.
- **Think before you throw.** No-one wants to see your old plastic bags, bottles and cigarette butts hanging around for the next 50 years! Take your rubbish to a bin or back to your hotel (or home) with you.
- **In natural areas, stay on marked trails,** to avoid damaging plants or wildlife.
- **Be gentle with sales people.** It is easy to feel pestered by over enthusiastic sales people, especially if you're not in the mood for shopping. Decline politely, or with a sense of humour. Please don't be rude - everyone's trying to make a living after all!
- **Get out and explore beyond your hotel!** Support the local economy by sampling regional dishes at locally owned restaurants, buying locally produced food and drinks and buying souvenirs that are genuinely made in the area.
- **Respect local customs** such as covering up away from the beach and especially in towns, shops and religious places. You'll find you get stared at a lot less and treated more respectfully by locals.
- **Relax - you're on holiday!** Don't get annoyed if service isn't quite as efficient as at home. It's all part of the experience.



Get involved in local projects



Make holidays greener is a campaign from the Travel Foundation and Travelife to raise awareness about the importance of cleaner beaches and how to reduce plastic waste.



PADI's Project Aware coordinates a Dive against Debris events, to collect waste during dives, and feedback information on what is found. They also have a Dive into Action program, where you can make your dive count for conservation. Check out the maps and events on their site.

Responsible travel

Responsibletravel.com lists volunteering holidays that provide ethical and worthwhile placement options. You might book these before you leave home, but if you arrive somewhere and want to contribute, there are many options listed on their site.

PACK for a PURPOSE

Small Space. Little Effort. Big Impact.

Pack for a Purpose is an initiative that helps you find your accommodation or tour operator, and a project that it supports. You can choose supplies you want to take from a list requested, and drop the supplies off with the company. The company then delivers them to the project.



Top Tips for Divers

- Choose a **certified dive operation** with a good local reputation
- **Do not disrupt the seabed** – it will disturb small animals and you will see less
- **Avoid handling, standing on, or knocking coral** by controlling your buoyancy
- Actively **encourage responsible behaviour** of other divers
- **Don't chase the fish** – you won't catch them, and you'll use up all your air resulting in a shorter dive
- **Protect underwater life** by supporting marine protected areas and community managed areas
- **Take photos responsibly** without harassing wildlife for a better picture, or by blinding them with your flash. Leave the ocean the way you found it: No collecting!
- **Take action** – report irresponsible behavior by other divers or operators
- **Do not buy corals**, shells, fish teeth from shops, it only encourages further harvesting
- If you had a great time and dived with a responsible operation **encourage others** to use the same company. Use your own social media, or comment on the company's.



Top Tips for Hikers

Adapted from TreadLightly!

- **Walk on designated roads and trails**, and walk in single file, to avoid widening trails
- **Pay attention to signs**, and respect barriers and fences. Leave gates as you find them
- **Avoid walking on sensitive areas**, like meadows, lakeshores, wetlands or streams
- Please **don't disturb** historical, archaeological, paleontological or other cultural sites
- **Pack your rubbish out with you** – and pick up litter left by others
- **Avoid walking near seasonal nesting or breeding areas** for birds and other wildlife. Also avoid disturbing livestock.
- **Use toilets where they are provided**, or bury your waste in a hole 15-20 cm deep, and at least 60 m from water, camps or trails
- Before you hike, wash your shoes and other gear to **avoid spreading invasive species**
- **Swim and wash only in designated areas**, to avoid contaminating sensitive waterways



Tread lightly! promotes responsible recreation through stewardship, communication and education. From shops, it only encourages further harvesting. They aim to protect and enhance recreational access and opportunities, by promoting outdoor ethics to heighten people's sense of stewardship.

When you get home

- **Distribute your responsible travel tips.** In addition to telling family and friends about the wonderful memories you made, also consider sharing tips on how they too can positively impact the World while having an amazing journey.
- **Share your photos.** Photos can say a thousand words. Use your social media or blog
- **Explore more.** Traveling is just the start of learning. Once you return home continue exploring and being involved with the issues or region that captured your attention. Build upon your knowledge and also learn about another fascinating place.
- **Give back.** Traveling often opens your eyes and heart to something new. You can continue to preserve our inspirational destinations for generations to come by making a donation to a local charity.



Planning your next trip

The worst feeling about a great holiday is getting home, unpacking, and realizing that you have to go back to work. But that doesn't mean you can't start planning your next trip!



Final thoughts... the way we travel is changing

Two important factors are influencing how we travel. Firstly, we are becoming increasingly aware of how our over-consumption is impacting on the environment. Secondly, the working environment is becoming even more demanding. Working hours increase and pressures to perform intensifies. We are becoming more conscious of how precious our leisure time is as well as the need to extract the greatest value from our holidays whilst minimising our environmental impact.

If your holiday time is your one big opportunity for the year to relax, unwind, see the world, experience something new then it deserves your time and attention to get it right.

- **See** something new, break from the norm, explore, live
- **Develop** a connection with a destination and its people
- **Learn** through conversations with others and observations
- **Show** your children, family and friends the wonder of the natural and cultural world and why its important to respect it

Most importantly, take a deep breathe, relax and simply be. By choosing a responsible holiday you have spent your leisure time making a long-term positive contribution to the world.

“We wander for
distraction, but we
travel for fulfillment”

Hilaire Belloc

DIRECTORY

Organisation	Website url
Austrian Ecolable for Tourism	www.umweltzeichen.at
Biosphere Responsible Tourism	www.biospheretourism.com
BookDifferent	www.bookdifferent.com
Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) for hotels	www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr/en
Earthcheck	www.earthcheck.org
Eco-certification Malta	www.mta.com.mt/eco-certification
EcoTourism Australia -Ecotourism standard	www.ecotourism.org.au
EcoTourism Ireland	www.ecotourismireland.ie
European Ecotourism Network	www.ecotourism-network.eu/en-about-us/en-ecolnet
Fair Trade Tourism	www.fairtrade.travel
Global Ecosphere Retreats	www.thelongrun.com
Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)	http://www.gstccouncil.org
Go Barefoot	http://gobarefoot.travel
GREAT Green Deal	www.sellosverdes.com
Green Destinations	http://greendestinations.info/top100
Green Globe	http://greenglobe.com
Green Growth 2050	www.greengrowth2050.travel
Green Key Global	http://greenkeyglobal.com/about
Green Star Hotel	www.greenstarhotel.org
Hoteles Verdes	http://www.hotelesmasverdes.com.ar
Japan Ecolodge Association	www.japan-ecolodge.org
National Geographic World Legacy Awards	www.nationalgeographic.com/worldlegacyawards
Rainforest Alliance	www.rainforest-alliance.org
Responsibletravel.com	www.responsibletravel.com
Sistema de Distincion en Toruismo Sustentable (SERNATUR)	http://www.sernatur.cl/turismo-sustentable/distincion-en-sustentabilidad-turistica
Sustainable Tourism Eco-certification program (STEP)	http://sustainabletravel.org
10YFP Sustainable Tourism Programme	http://sdt.unwto.org/sustainable-tourism-10yfp www.unep.org/10yfp/tourism
TOFTigers PUG Eco-rating certification	www.toftigers.org
TourCert	www.tourcert.org
Travelife	http://www.travelife.org
UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism	http://know.unwto.org/content/unwto-awards-excellence-and-innovation-tourism
World Hotel Link	http://www.whl.travel
World Travel and Tourism Council - Tourism for Tomorrow Awards	http://www.wttc.org/tourism-for-tomorrow-awards



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