



Travel Features



Travel Green

by Duane Wells, Special to 365gay

They say charity begins at home, but we all know that is most certainly not where the practice is meant to end.

Despite the doubt that some politicians have expressed about whether there is an environmental crisis, more and more people are becoming interested in taking precautions now to protect the earth's natural resources in the future. And I'm not just talking about changing a light bulb here and there or purchasing an electric car, either.

I'm talking about an increasing number of environmentally conscious citizens whose concern for saving the planet extends even to the manner in which they travel around the globe.

For this new breed of green globe trotter, there are fresh means of combining fun and adventure with a more planet friendly consciousness popping up every day.

First, there is the method used to pay for travel. New credit cards like the ReDirect Guide Visa donate a percentage of every purchase to carbon offset programs designed to help fund renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable development programs around the world. Pay for your next vacation with one of these cards and you will have already made a small contribution to fighting climate change.

Next comes how you go about making greener travel plans. Last year, popular travel portal Orbitz launched an eco-travel microsite that serves as a comprehensive resource for travelers who want to find everything from eco-friendly hotels to environmental volunteer opportunities. Extending its commitment, Orbitz has also partnered with the not-for-profit organization, Carbonfund.org to offset travelers' CO2 emissions by supporting viable renewable energy, making the site a great start point for booking more eco-friendly travel.

Similarly www.BnBFinder.com, an online bed and breakfast directory, is also helping travelers find more environmentally friendly B&B alternatives by publishing regular lists of "green" picks that highlight intimate accommodations known for everything from utilizing solar power and wind turbine energy to procuring only locally-grown organic food.

Finally, there is the question of choosing an eco-friendly destinations to visit, another area in which there has been explosive growth in recent years. Eco-tourism is fast moving to the head of the class in destinations ranging from Reykjavik and Singapore to Hawaii and the Philippines. Some locales like progressive Wales even offer retreats that are both environmentally conscious and overtly gay-friendly like Cerrig Llwyddion where accommodations run on ecological principles are set against the rustic English countryside.

That said, two standout favorites among eco-tourists are Belize and Costa Rica. On the luxury side of things, the new world class Machaca Hill Lodge opened just last year in Belize. An eco-chic lodge nestled in the landscape of the Toledo District in Southern Belize, the property sits on a private 11,000 acre reserve bordered by densely forested limestone hills and the Rio Grande River which also happens to be home to many of Belize's jaguars. Translation -- you don't have sacrifice creature comforts to convene with nature in a healthy way.

Meanwhile the Republic of Costa Rica attracts more than 1.7 million adventure minded tourists a year with its unspoiled beaches, volcanoes, rainforests and plentiful hiking opportunities.

Put simply, today's fast-growing eco-tourism market offers everything from world class luxury to rustic authenticity along with a plethora of options to help stem the carbon footprints we leave on the planet . So if you want to have a greener holiday this year, there is absolutely no reason you can't have one and not miss out on a bit of joy in the process. How's that for a win-win?

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