



# World of good

This year sees a shift to travel that's good for *you* and travel that's *doing* good. **Karen Edwards** reflects on how we can change our perspective (as well as our holiday habits) to become more responsible travellers, while **Anna Hart** reports on the evolution of wellness travel

Photographs: Tom Heggen; Alamy

## RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

*Karen Edwards*

For many discerning travellers, the last 12 months of border closures, grounded flights and docked cruise ships have opened up an important discussion about how travel can impact the planet. With a changing climate, over-tourism and the survival of thousands of small businesses to consider, this downtime has provided the perfect opportunity to re-evaluate our holiday habits.

Responsible travel puts consideration towards the people and places we visit at the forefront of our minds. It requires making an effort to research and understand the background and environment of a destination before we go – so we can be respectful while visiting. It also means booking through operators who proudly adopt sustainable practices; perhaps by offering donations or practical assistance towards the communities and environments that may be impacted by tourism.

The concepts of responsible and sustainable travel aren't new – and were widely recognised before the pandemic struck. A survey in 2019 reported that 50 per cent of holidaymakers understood and valued the need for sustainable travel practices. During the same investigation, many consumers said they were already planning holidays with sustainability in mind – with 73 per cent of people surveyed stating they have actively sought eco-certified accommodation where possible, and 68 per cent hoping their expenditure would go to the local community.

So how do we become these more conscious travellers? Visiting destinations that already encourage sustainable practices is the best method. Supporting countries that are striving for good will inspire other governments to do the same. As individual travellers, simple acts such as observing customs when visiting help to preserve culture and tradition – while eating at local restaurants or shopping at markets and family-run stores ensures the community directly benefit from your spending. Ethical operators who specialise in wildlife experiences tend to invest in well-trained guides to ensure the safety of the animals, and also that your experience is as informed as possible. These guides, who put the welfare of wildlife over getting the best photograph, will help to conserve nature for generations to come.

While mucking in with the community is a great way to learn more about a culture, 'voluntourism' can, in some cases, do more harm than good. For example, tourists often pay large sums of money to assist at Cambodian orphanages set up during the Khmer Rouge regime in the late 1970s. However, today, local families are paid minimal amounts to send children into care to keep these now lucrative projects running. Research is key.

For those of us who fly regularly, offsetting the carbon footprint for each flight is a positive way of contributing towards nature and environmental projects. Considering small actions will help the worldwide travel industry move forward. If there was ever a silver lining to be found from the pandemic, perhaps it is the better ways in which we will explore the world.

### WELL PLACED

Preak Piphot river, Cambodia.  
Left: the Sossusvlei desert, Namibia



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