

The Future of Sustainable Travel

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NEWS RELEASE BY ACRE

Northampton, MA | September 15, 2021 01:06 PM Eastern Daylight Time



If Covid-19 has taught us anything, it is that life is too short. And that we should stop and take stock of how to thrive more successfully.

A key component of this is being mindful about how to help repair the planet post-pandemic, in terms of lowering our individual carbon footprint, and being fully aware of urgent challenges such as climate change.

While foreign travel isn't fully back on the cards yet, more people are making greener decisions about how they will travel to lessen the impact on the environment.

As a result, travellers are more mindful according to Booking.com's 2021 Sustainable Travel Report, which revealed 61 per cent stated the pandemic has influenced them to travel more sustainably in the future.

We've looked at three sustainable methods of travel and hope that in the not-too-distant future, you will embark on the trip of your dreams, guilt-free.

1. Electric Camper Van

Wetsuits, check. Whistling kettle, check. Sat Nav, check. But have you genned up on your charging station locations to get your camper van from A to B? It will add confidence before you trundle off merrily in an electric camper van.

It may sound a bit futuristic but electric camper vans could be the norm over the next few years. It's happening with cars now so it's only a matter of time before automakers develop electrified leisure vehicles as standard too.

For the tree-hugging surfer dudes among you, this is a great mode of travel if you are a happy camper who wants to live off-grid during your summer sojourn, whether you enjoy a staycation or embark on something a little more far-flung (Covid laws permitting).

VW, keen to banish the dark cloud cast by the diesel emissions scandal, claims to be working tirelessly to electrify its whole range.

Keeping designs close to the retro style of the iconic VW campervan, the company is working on two models with an all-electric drivetrain: the I.D. Buzz and I.D. Buzz Cargo. And if this isn't enough, we can really blow your mind with the revelation that VW intends to introduce self-driving technology on these models. No squabbling over who has to take over the wheel, instead the focus will be on which card game to play and nap times for all.

Imagine everyone waking up once you've arrived. Can you think of a better (and more hip) way to put the fun in a journey while taking the CO2 emissions out? Neither can we.

2. Carbon-free Flights

Carbon rates plummeted temporarily last year as Covid-19 gripped the world and global CO2 emissions decreased by up to 17 per cent last April, compared to 2019 averages.

But with more planes taking to the skies again, the positive elements that arose from global lockdown are being unravelled. However, there are ways to mitigate this.

Airbus is designing the world's first zero-emission commercial aircraft which could be ready to fly by 2035, relying on hydrogen as a primary source of power.

In a bid to support the decarbonisation of the aviation industry, the company has unveiled a trio of hydrogen-based concepts for the aircraft, codenamed 'ZEROe', which have been designed using various technology.

The first climate neutral zero-emission commercial aircraft is certainly a promising prospect but airports will require significant hydrogen transport and refuelling infrastructure to meet operational needs.

There are other ways to ensure you are travelling more sustainably in the sky before carbon-free planes take off.

Finnair announced it will halve carbon emissions by the end of 2025, with more sustainable aviation fuels and more efficient aircraft to meet its goal to be carbon neutral by 2045.

Etihad Airways offers an eco-flight as part of its Greenliner programme, offering passengers a taste of what future air travel could look like.

It eliminates waste from every aspect of the eco-flight journey, incorporating touches such as bamboo toothbrushes and linen pouches rather than plastic wrapping. It also uses electric tractors for loading and a single engine for taxiing.

By 2022 Etihad aims to eliminate the majority of single waste plastic from its cabin on every flight.

3. Stay on Track

Don't go off the rails - while many people fancied inter-railing in their youth, this may gain more popularity among all ages.

Trains are a more sustainable mode of travel and according to the European Union, rail transport emits a mere 0.4 per cent of total transport emissions, compared to 70 per cent for road transport and 13 per cent for aviation.

On top of this, recent research has shown that rail travel will boost the economy this summer, supporting businesses that have struggled during the pandemic.

WPI Economics conducted a recent study for Rail Delivery Group which highlights that people travelling by train for holidays or day trips spend around £107 per trip by shopping, eating out, stopping at hotels or other activities.

This spending pattern will boost businesses who have struggled to survive the pandemic and it is crucial to their recovery this summer. Independent shops will be supported by those arriving by train on day trips or weekends away and it is the obvious step towards a cleaner environment.

A Eurostar journey from London to Paris emits 90 per cent less greenhouse gas (GHG) than the equivalent short-haul flight and less carbon per passenger than a journey from central London to Heathrow, which gives more reason to consider a weekend in Paris when the time feels right.

Rail travel will also be under the spotlight when the COP26 Climate Summit kicks off in Glasgow this November. A special 'Climate Train' will be used for European delegates, arranged by rail and sustainability groups, and they will be shown examples of the rail industry's efforts to build even greener trains, including two running on hydrogen in Glasgow.

Britain's first mainline hydrogen-powered train HydroFLEX will also be on display in Glasgow and selected guests will be invited to use an 'onboard boardroom' on the train.

Are you going on a much-deserved holiday this year that meets Covid-19 rules? If you've chosen a more sustainable route, we would love to hear from you.

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