

Key aspects briefly summarized

- By adopting responsible behavior, travelers can reduce the negative environmental and social impacts of tourism.
- The most effective way to reduce the carbon footprint of tourism is to limit air travel and choose the most environmentally friendly means of transportation possible to get around.
- It is also important to choose accommodations, activities and souvenirs that respect the environment and local populations.
- Favoring vegetarian food not only limits the impact on the climate, but also ensures that local populations have access to enough agricultural land, and therefore food, as well as to more fresh water.
- To limit soil and water pollution linked to plastic bottles, there are several effective ways to disinfect water, including boiling, disinfecting tablets and portable UV light devices.

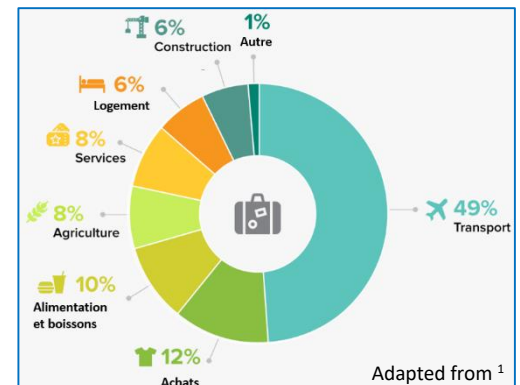
Although tourism contributes to the economic development of certain regions, it can have negative environmental and social consequences. In fact, the tourism industry generates greenhouse gases. The exploitation of natural resources (forests, soils, building materials, water) and the production of waste contribute to the destruction of ecosystems and biodiversity. Tourism can also increase inequalities among local populations. By adopting responsible behavior, travelers can minimize these negative impacts and promote respect for local populations and environmental conservation.

Carbon footprint of tourism

The tourism industry is responsible for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Nearly 50% of these emissions are due to transportation. For some trips, such as a 2-week vacation to Mexico from Europe, transportation accounts for 88% of the total carbon footprint of the trip.

On-site purchases (souvenirs), food and beverages are also responsible for nearly 25% of these emissions.



Responsible Travel Tips



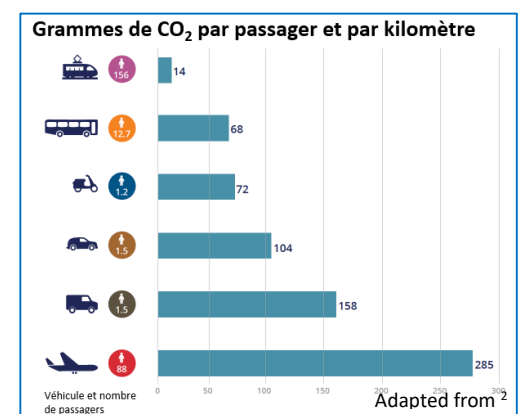
Transportation

One of the most effective ways to reduce your carbon footprint is to travel within your region to avoid having to take a plane, and instead take the train, bike or walk.

For airplanes and cars, the footprint depends on the number of passengers, the size of the vehicle and the distance traveled. In general, the car is preferable to the plane for distances of less than 1000 km, as well as for longer trips if there are at least 2 passengers. If you take the plane, direct flights are to be preferred for flights longer than 6 hours.

Several carbon footprint calculators for transportation exist and can help you choose the best option.

If flying or driving cannot be avoided, carbon emissions can be offset by investing financially in carbon capture initiatives. Choose certified labels that guarantee quality carbon offsets.





Food and drink

Choose locally owned restaurants to eat locally produced food and contribute to the circular economy. Limit the purchase of imported products. Choose vegetarian food to limit CO₂ emissions from livestock. This choice is also essential to ensure that local populations have access to enough agricultural land, and therefore food, as livestock requires more land than cereals to produce an equivalent amount of food. Livestock production also requires a lot of fresh water³.

In many countries, running water is not potable. To limit the waste produced by buying plastic bottles, you can opt for other methods of water purification:

- Boil the water for at least one minute
- Treat the water with a disinfectant (such as Micropur®). Make sure this disinfectant also kills *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium* parasites.
- Use ultraviolet water purifiers for a few seconds/minutes depending on the model. Be careful, these devices are only reliable if the water is clear.

Filters can be a good option in case of prolonged stay. Note that they are generally not effective against viruses.



Accommodation

Avoid mass tourism, i.e. destinations with a large volume of tourists in large hotels. Choose accommodations that respect nature and local populations and that have an ecotourism or sustainable tourism label. In order to save water and electricity, limit the change of towels and sheets to what is strictly necessary and limit the use of air conditioning (e.g. by turning it off every time you leave the room). You can also favor locally owned accommodations to contribute to the regional economy.



Souvenir shopping and activities

When purchasing souvenirs, favor locally made products. Be careful not to buy products made from endangered plants or animals. In water-stressed areas, avoid activities involving swimming pools or golf courses. To protect the seabed, use mineral sunscreens and be careful not to damage coral with your fins when diving or snorkeling. When walking or hiking, follow the marked trails and do not feed wild animals.

Further Information

- ¹ <https://sustainabletravel.org/> et Lenzen M, Sun YY, Faturay F, et al. The Carbon Footprint of Global Tourism. Nat Clim Chang 2018;8:522-8
- ² European Environment Agency: https://www.eea.europa.eu/media/infographics/co2-emissions-from-passenger-transport/image/image_view_fullscreen
- ³ Marlow HJ, Hayes WK, Soret S, Carter RL, Schwab ER, Sabaté J. Diet and the environment: does what you eat matter? Am J Clin Nutr. 2009 May;89(5):1699S-1703S
- Tan R, et al. Voyager écolo : quelles recommandations ? [Eco-tourism: what recommendations?]. Rev Med Suisse. 2022 May 4;18(780):886-889. French.
- Carbon footprint calculator for transportation: <https://co2.myclimate.org/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, A Guide to Drinking Water Treatment and Sanitation for Backcountry and Travel Use: https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/travel/backcountry_water_treatment.html