

How to ...

Gemma Hall Journalist

Be a responsible tourist

These days many hotels and lodges are jumping on the 'eco' bandwagon, but how can you tell if your accommodation is truly green? Here are a few steps to ensure your holiday isn't ruining the environment.

Much depends on where you want to go and what you want to do, and there are transport issues that we will deal with next month. But there are arguments in favour of taking trips to far-flung destinations, especially if you stay in places that take environmental responsibilities seriously.

Before you book

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the lodge support the local community by employing local guides, working with schools or investing in conservation projects?
- Is food purchased locally? Local people benefit more if it is, and the further food travels to reach your plate, the greater the impact.
- Does the lodge use compost toilets or renewable energy?

● Who owns and runs the accommodation? Many places in developing countries have been set up by foreign investors, so your money doesn't stay in the local economy. If communities genuinely benefit from your stay, there is an incentive for them to protect the wildlife and habitats you come to see.

Once you are there

- At your lodge, look for things such as recycling bins and biodegradable soaps.
- Remember the organic garden advertised on their website? Ask to see it.
- Are you advised on minimising your impact and responsible wildlife-watching?
- Talk to your guide and other staff about how their villages benefit from tourism.

After you leave

- So, your green retreat was more eco-spin than eco-friendly – what can you do?
- Don't just complain – tell your lodge what you would like to see.
 - If your hotel is a member of an association, such as the Green Tourism Business Scheme, contact the awarding body.



Chumbe Island Lodge, Zanzibar, has won awards for its commitment to sustainable tourism (www.chumbeisland.com).

- Post comments on the Responsible Tourism and Lonely Planet websites (see below).
- Operators with green policies will have feedback forms – use them.

Suggested places to stay

- **Lockton YHA, North Yorks Moors**
This hostel uses rainwater to flush the loos and solar panels to heat shower water: ☎ 01751 460376; www.yha.org.uk
- **Whitepod eco-camp, Swiss Alps**
Semi-permanent tents that have minimal physical impact on the mountain environment and use locally grown food. ☎ 00 41 797 446219; www.whitepod.com
- **Santa Lucia, Ecuador**
A community-owned cloud-forest lodge and reserve. Projects include reforestation, environmental education and organic food production. www.santaluciaecuador.com
- **Nkwichi Lodge, Mozambique**
Has worked in partnership with neighbouring communities to create a nature reserve. www.mandawilderness.org

Useful websites

www.responsibletravel.com; www.lonelyplanet.com; www.green-business.co.uk

Dan Eatherley Wildlife film-maker

Be an elephant scientist

Kate Evans is writing up her PhD on male elephant behaviour after three years in the Okavango Delta, Botswana.

Why study elephants?

Ever since visiting an elephant orphanage as a child, I wanted to work with elephants. Their lives are similar to our own and we can learn a lot about ourselves from learning about them.

Describe a typical day

I get up at dawn and drive off in search of elephants. Animals are photographed and identified by their ear markings, scars and tusks. If they're males, I observe and record their behaviour and social interactions.

What's your greatest discovery so far?

When male elephants reach adolescence, they leave the herd. I am investigating whether adult bulls have a role in mentoring them. Delinquency in adolescent male humans is higher in communities where fathers and uncles are absent. It seems to be true for elephants, too.

Studying elephants can tell us something about ourselves.

Kate Evans

All in a day's work

I spent 18 months looking through lion poo – some people see that as a little odd.

Tips for readers?

I studied zoology at university and then worked in a factory to pay for a trip to Africa to gain experience, which is key. Extra qualifications are important, too.

Further information

Kate Evans: Kate.Evans@bristol.ac.uk
www.elephantresearch.co.uk

Kate's days are spent finding and watching elephants, particularly adolescent bulls.



Ian McCallum