Leave only your footprints

**Today’s travellers have a range of responsible holiday choices. Aoife O’Riordain reports**

With the increasing awareness of global warming and the overuse of Earth’s natural resources, it would seem that the travelling public has never been so conscious of the effects and impact that their holidays have, not just on the environment but also on local communities the world over.

That said, Justin Francis the co-founder of the website Responsible Travel, still feels there is a long way to go so far as the public’s awareness of green travel issues is concerned. Francis believes that although some consumers are now actively seeking out these types of holidays, the majority are still not aware of the growing number of choices. “I wish that people were springing out of bed in the mornings thinking that they must select a holiday that does a better job of protecting environments and communities. Sadly it does not happen, and the main factors are still the right experience, the right price and convenient departure schedules”, says Francis.

Despite a major airline’s recent announcement that it plans to fly jets on fuel made from rubbish to shrink their carbon footprint, most people are aware that air travel is a controversial issue in the environmentally friendly travel debate. While many insist that the only truly green option is not to fly or to stay at home, choices available to help them lessen the environmental impact and give more to their host community.

The Green Traveller website promotes holidays that can be reached by land, as well as offering plenty of tips about having a greener holiday wherever you decide to go. Its managing director, Richard Hammond, agrees that interest in this kind of travel has grown. “Very few holidays are 100 per cent green, so it’s really about having a greener holiday. The most basic choice is looking at low-pollution forms of transport, or, if you are going somewhere really distant, minimising your impact at the destination,” says Hammond.

While many of the properties it features already have certification from a growing range of international and national schemes, Green Traveller’s team of writers also personally assess each property and apply their own standards to the selection process, such as how waste is dealt with, to what extent local agricultural products are used, and whether visitors are encouraged to arrive by rail.

Older-established tour operators have also realised that a growing number of clients are beginning to include this new set of factors when making their decision on where to holiday. Last year, First Choice added a Greener Holidays brochure into its programme, and tour operators now often list accommodation-only or activity-only prices so people can choose their own means of transport, such as travelling by rail rather than by air.

Hotels are increasingly keen to talk up their ecological achievements. One of the biggest criticisms of international hotel chains is their overuse of Earth’s resources, and in response many have implemented measures they claim will reduce this. While these are no doubt based on good environmental principles, schemes like planting a tree for every five towels reused, for instance, are unlikely to make much difference overall.

Francis believes that consumers are becoming more aware of such tokenism from hotels and tour operators that may not have the best interests of the community or the planet true to their hearts. “My real hope is that we get much more curious and more questioning, and there are rebellious tourists who see through this and ask increasingly tough questions,” he says.

**Quickly read the text. What’s is the writer’s main purpose?**

A to explain how green the hotel industry is now

B to show there is no demand for green holidays

C to advertise particular travel organisations

D to encourage people to take greener holidays

**Make sure you choose one answer for every question**

1. What does Justin Francis say about attitudes to holidays?

A Everyone’s top priority these days is to have greener holidays

B Most people’s reasons for choosing holidays remain the same.

C Tourists are only interested in finding the cheapest travel deals

D Nowadays, more people who travel know about global warming

1. What does the writer say about going on holiday by plane?

A A lot of people believe that it is harmful for the environment

B Few people know there is discussion about the harm it may do

C There is no way of making it less harmful to the environment

D The public think that new technology is making it harmless

1. What does Richard Hammond suggest to people going a long way for their holiday?

A Take a train or a bus to get there instead of a plane

B Do as little environmental damage as you can there

C Make sure your holiday there is completely green

D Look elsewhere for advice on greener holidays

1. What does “it” in first line of paragraph 5 refer to?

A the destination

B the team of writers

C the selection process

D the website

1. Some firms believe that people are now more likely to choose a holiday

A which includes the cost of travel in the price

B in a place that serves food from that area

C somewhere that produces no waste material

D that is organised by a traditional travel company

1. What is meant by “tokenism” in paragraph 8?

A taking steps with the result that the problem is solved

B appearing to show concern but in practice doing very little

C setting a good example which others are now following

D doing as much as possible but without achieving success

**Find words and phrases in the text that mean the following**

1. people going somewhere
2. the days and times when particular flights leave
3. operate aircraft
4. go somewhere on holiday to have a rest
5. the place where you are going
6. firms that organise travel for people
7. thin book with photos that advertises something
8. transport not included
9. way of travelling