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Costing the Earth: The lifestyle changes our followers are willing to make for sustainability

We have had better times than the past 18 months. But there has perhaps been one silver lining. A ban on non-essential travel and lockdowns enabled us to witness - for the first time ever - what happens to our environment when normal life grinds to a halt. According to Global Carbon Project global greenhouse emissions dropped by 7% in 2020. In the first few months of 2020 it seemed that there were more blue skies in several regions, leading to a new phenomenon: 'Blue Sky Thinking', in which several cities worldwide are

leading the way to ensure that air quality is improved permanently.

A global health crisis is not the answer to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the long run. Still, it gave us time to reflect on the impact of our activities on our planet – including the way we travel. When skies and borders fully reopen and safe & compliant travel resumes, are we ready to make more sustainable choices?

According to a 2017 study conducted by researchers at the Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies in Sweden (LUCSUS) the three personal choices we can make to cut greenhouse gas emissions are: reducing air travel, reducing car travel or reducing meat consumption.

Results of the poll

We polled our Linkedin followers to find out if they are prepared to make changes in their behavior for the sake of the environment. The results showed that 31% are ready to cut down on business travel but not leisure trips. People are even more keen on reducing their meat consumption (26%) instead of reducing their travel. Only a small minority would cut down on leisure travel (16%).

Another poll from YouGov pointed out that 34% of UK respondents stated that environmental sustainability affects their decisions around travel (moving up from 30% in the previous year).

The pandemic has clearly put sustainability at the top of the agenda for governments and businesses that are incorporating sustainability into their daily operations, resulting in robust targets. The UK government recently set one of the world's most ambitious climate change targets; to cut emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

Does this mean we have to stay at home if we want to travel in a more sustainable way? Certainly not. Travelers can choose more environmentally friendly travel options. On certain routes train travel is a viable option, and the airline industry is making great strides.

Several airlines, including American Airlines, Delta Airlines and United Airlines are at the forefront of carbon neutrality targets, investing in

sustainable aviation fuels. 'Developments in sustainable aviation fuel and aircraft are necessary in order to create long-term change', said Emily Weiss, global travel industry lead at Accenture. And she adds to that: "It will take cross-industry collaboration coupled with a more environmentally conscious consumer mindset to achieve a more sustainable future."

Traveling responsibly is all about careful planning of your trip and wise decision-making. When planning your next trip, start asking yourself if it is essential to travel, and what choices you can make around modes of transport and suppliers. We only have one planet to live on (at least for now).

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