Eco-friendly

Have Planet, Will Travel



Thanks to the spread of awareness of global environmental issues, as well as the growth of the social enterprise movement, one may easily encounter terms such as “eco-tours” or “voluntouring” while looking up that next long weekend getaway. Indeed, travel is increasingly becoming more environmentally conscientious as the world keeps opening its proverbial doors to more and more wandering souls.

It can be argued that the best way to appreciate the world and all its wonders is simply to go and get out there. Travel and take it all in.



(FPE/Jason Marges)

In this case, Filipinos surely have it made. While the attraction of foreign lands will always be there, a meaningful travel experience doesn't necessarily mean having to cross international borders for the regular Juan and Maria. This country is made up of over 7,000 islands, after all -- islands which are home to some of the world's most unique sights and experiences, both natural and man-made alike. (Of course, the natural attractions are simply more astonishing, more often than not.)

It's so easy to get bitten by the travel bug these days, too, what with so many unique and attractive destinations being made available and accessible through affordable travel-and-tour packages.

Hand-in-hand with this growing trend of budget-friendly options is the expansion of variety, which is beginning to favor the growing ecological cause. Thanks to the spread of awareness to global environmental issues, as well as the growth of the social enterprise movement, one may encounter terms such as "eco-tours" or "voluntouring" while looking up that next long weekend getaway. Indeed, travel is increasingly becoming more environmentally conscientious as the world keeps opening its proverbial doors to more and more wandering souls.

Looking to experience eco-friendly travel yourself? Here are some ways for you to do so:

Support local tourism



(FPE/Jason Marges)

Apart from getting great opportunities to discover more about your natural heritage before you do so with those of other countries, making local travel a priority also benefits the local communities and their livelihood. Such support can help them gain the financial headway to further fund protection and management programs, not to mention help preserve the local culture and identity.

Look for worthwhile travel itineraries

The options are growing. From established eco-tours that take travelers to the heart of nature, so to speak, to more cause-oriented travel itineraries such as coastal cleanup and wildlife conservation and/or research "voluntourist" trips, there is plenty of opportunities that travelers can enjoy -- and even help make a difference with, while they're at it.

Be conscious of your actions

It is in your and your destination's best interests that you be wary of the repercussions of your actions whenever traveling, especially when you're "out there" communing directly with nature. Sometimes, even simple acts like feeding wildlife with foreign food can have serious long-term consequences (e.g. dietary or behavioral problems).

Learn and be sensitive of the culture of the local communities



(FPE/Jason Marges)

The communities of some places that you visit have their own cultural characteristics that must be respected. What may be perfectly fine where you come from may be offensive -- without you even knowing it -- according to the locals' beliefs. This sometimes extends to how local communities, such as those of indigenous peoples, interact with their natural surroundings, so it should pay to exercise due discretion.

Clean up after yourself

Going on a hike or taking a splash at sea? As much as possible, avoid becoming part of the problem by making sure not to litter wherever you go. Those little candy wrappers can stay in your pockets and in your bag until you reach a proper trash bin, for example. Also, bring extra bags whenever possible so you can say no to plastic bags when shopping for souvenirs.

Bring home memories, take only pictures



(FPE/Jason Marges)

The best way to admire the beauty of the place is to leave it intact. That way, you and so many more people after you can come back to appreciate it again and again for ages to come. This is especially true for precious small wildlife, which may be tempting to bring home. (Leave the non-living stuff alone, too; they might look like really unique souvenirs, but they could also be somebody's home!)

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As our quick list above suggests, responsible travel isn't just about the itinerary: It's actually more of an attitude that every traveler must take to heart. In fact, keeping that in mind, responsible travel can happen not only when you go out of town, but also on your day-to-day activities, such as going to work or school (maybe try commuting, biking, or walking to get from place to place, for example). Just imagine the difference people can make when that kind of mindset is adapted on a larger scale.

Foundation for the Philippine Environment
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