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Sustainable Travel Guide



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Eco Rangers – Journeys of Impact is an Erasmus+ project funded by **Landskrifstofa Erasmus+ – Rannsóknamiðstöð Íslands** under contract number **2024-2-IS01-KA210-ADU-000265496**.

The project explores sustainable travel not only as a question of transport, accommodation, consumption, or carbon footprint, but as a wider learning process connected to personal well-being, community engagement, inclusion, and respectful relationships with the places we visit.

The project was developed by **CIRCA in Iceland** and **Slovak Eco Quality in Slovakia**. Through international training activities, practical travel experiences, workshops, and co-creation, participants contributed ideas, reflections, and real-life experiences that helped shape this Sustainable Travel Guide.

The guide is intended for adult travellers, educators, trainers, community facilitators, and organisations interested in promoting more mindful, responsible, and sustainable ways of travelling.

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INTRODUCTION

Travel with curiosity. Leave a lighter footprint.

Travel can open our minds, connect us with people, and help us understand places beyond what we see online.

It can also create pressure: rushed itineraries, unnecessary consumption, heavy luggage, crowded destinations, long journeys, and the feeling that we must see and do everything.
This guide offers another approach.

Sustainable travel is not about travelling perfectly. It is about paying attention—to how we move, what we consume, where we stay, how we treat people and nature, and how we take care of ourselves along the way.

Sometimes the more sustainable choice is taking a train. Sometimes it is sharing a car because there is no realistic alternative. It may mean carrying a reusable bottle, staying longer in one place, supporting a local business, cooking with what is already available, or simply deciding not to add another activity to an already exhausting day.

Small choices matter. But context matters too.

A traveller in a remote Icelandic landscape faces different possibilities from someone exploring Bratislava on foot. This guide does not offer one perfect formula. Instead, it provides practical ideas that can be adapted to different destinations, budgets, individuals, travel styles, and circumstances.

How this guide was created

The Sustainable Travel Guide was developed through **Eco Rangers – Journeys of Impact**, an Erasmus+ project implemented by CIRCA in Iceland and Slovak Eco Quality in Slovakia.
Adult educators, trainers, community facilitators, and sustainability enthusiasts took part in international training activities in Slovakia and Iceland. Together, they tested educational activities, discussed the connections between travel, well-being, and environmental responsibility, and then applied these ideas during their own journeys.

Their travel reports, reflections, mistakes, discoveries, and practical advice helped shape this guide.

Throughout the following pages, you will find:

- practical travel guidance;
- small challenges and reflection prompts;
- ideas for individual and group travel;
- real voices from Eco Rangers participants;
- travel tips based on experiences in Iceland and Slovakia;
- reminders that well-being, inclusion, and sustainability belong together.

How to use it

You do not need to read this guide from beginning to end. Open the chapter that matches where you are in your journey:

1. **Before You Go** – prepare without overpacking or overplanning;
2. **Getting There** – choose and manage the journey realistically;
3. **Where You Stay** – make accommodation part of responsible travel;
4. **Eat, Drink and Discover** – explore food, waste, and local culture;
5. **Explore and Connect** – experience places beyond the usual checklist;
6. **Take Care of Yourself** – travel with energy, boundaries, and awareness;
7. **Coming Home** – bring useful habits and reflections back with you.

Use what helps. Adapt what does not. Skip the tips that do not fit your situation.

The aim is not to complete every challenge or follow every recommendation.

The aim is to travel with greater awareness.

Before you begin

You will not always make the most sustainable choice. A train may not exist. A reusable bottle may be empty. The only available meal may come in packaging. A carefully planned route may disappear because of weather, tiredness, or a missed connection.

That does not make the journey a failure.

Responsible travel begins with noticing what is possible, making thoughtful decisions, and learning from what happens.

Travel lighter when you can.
Slow down when you need to.
Support the places you visit.
Respect the people who live there.
Take care of yourself and the people travelling with you.

And leave enough space for the journey to surprise you.

1. BEFORE YOU GO

Pack lightly, plan smart, travel calmly

A good trip starts before you leave home.

You do not need to plan every minute, but a little preparation can save money, reduce stress, and help you avoid unnecessary purchases along the way.

The goal is simple: bring what you need, know the basics, and leave some space for the unexpected.

Pack for the trip you are actually taking

A long summer weekend in Bratislava does not need the same luggage as two weeks in Iceland.

Before packing, check:

- how long you will be away;
- the weather;
- the activities you are planning;
- whether you can do your laundry;
- how much you can carry comfortably.

Choose clothes that work in different combinations. Comfortable layers are often more useful than one outfit for every possible situation.

FROM THE ROAD

"Checking in a suitcase gave me too much space—and I filled it with clothes I never used. Then I had to carry all that weight across the city. Never again."

— Javier, Eco Rangers trip in Slovakia

Eco Ranger challenge

Before putting something in your bag, sort each item in one of these four categories:

- **Must bring**
- **Good to have**
- **Not so important**
- **Do not bring**

Pack the first group. Think carefully about the second. Leave the rest at home.

Bring less, reuse more

A few reusable items can make travelling easier and reduce waste.

Consider bringing:

- a refillable water bottle;
- a reusable shopping bag;
- a food container or lunch box;
- reusable cutlery and a travel cup;
- small refillable bottles for toiletries;

- solid soap, solid shampoo, and toothpaste tablets or powder;
- any medicine or personal item/s that may be difficult to find at your destination.

Solid toiletries are practical because they usually last longer, create less packaging waste, and do not count as liquids at airport security. This means you are not limited to containers of 100 ml when travelling with hand luggage. Always check the rules of the airports on your route before flying.

You do not need to buy a complete collection of "eco travel products". Use what you already have.

Travel myth
"I need special travel products to travel sustainably."

Usually, you do not.

A new bamboo cup, travel organiser, or "eco" toiletry set is still a new product. Before buying anything, check what you already have, what you can borrow, and what you can reuse.

Weird things to pack that are incredibly useful
Some of the most useful travel items are not the ones you would normally find on a packing list. Choose only the ones that fit your trip:

- **A few clothes pegs** – for drying clothes, closing food bags, or keeping curtains shut in a shared hostel room.
- **A large scarf or sarong** – use it as a blanket, picnic mat, sunshade, towel, as a curtain for your bunkbed in the hostel, or respectful cover when visiting religious places.
- **An empty pillowcase** – fill it with clothes to make a travel pillow or use it as a laundry bag.
- **A reusable zip bag** – useful for snacks, leftovers, wet items, toiletries, cables, or documents.
- **A small roll of strong tape** – for temporarily repairing bags, shoes, cables, glasses, or other travel casualties.
- **A small padlock** – essential for securing lockers in hostels, stations, swimming pools, and shared accommodation. A tiny one is often enough.
- **A carabiner clip** – attach a bottle, jacket, shoes, or shopping bag to your luggage. Do not use it for climbing unless it is certified.
- **A few safety pins** – for quick repairs to clothes, bags, and broken straps.
- **A spoon or spork** – helpful when your food arrives without cutlery.
- **A tennis ball** – roll it under tired feet or use it to massage your back after a long journey.

The best strange travel item is small, reusable, and able to solve at least three challenges.

Check the boring—but important—things
Before leaving, make sure you know which documents and practical arrangements you need.

Check:

- whether you need an identity card, passport, visa, or electronic travel authorisation;
- whether you need a transit visa for a country where you are only changing flights;
- whether your documents are still valid;
- whether you have suitable travel insurance;

- whether vaccinations, medicines, or health precautions are required or recommended;
- what currency and payment methods are commonly used;
- whether your phone and internet connection will work.
- which electrical sockets and voltage are used at your destination, and whether you need a travel plug adapter or voltage converter.

Do not check only the rules of your final destination. Entry or transit requirements may also apply in countries where you change flights, especially when you need to pass through border control, collect luggage, or change airports.

Keep important documents available both on your phone and offline. A screenshot can be very useful when the internet disappears at exactly the wrong moment.

Learn before you arrive

Every destination has its own rhythm, habits, and unwritten rules.

Take a few minutes to learn about:

- local customs;
- appropriate clothing;
- religious or cultural practices;
- public behaviour;
- tipping;
- photography;
- local language basics.

Simple words such as "hello", "please", and "thank you" can change the way people respond to you.

Do not rely only on travel influencers or general booking websites. Read local sources, ask someone who lives there, or contact people from your network.

Pause for a second

What might feel normal to me but disrespectful to others somewhere else?

There are millions of short videos made by residents and experienced travellers explaining what is considered normal, polite, strange, or inappropriate in different places. Watch a few before leaving, but compare different voices rather than trusting the first video you find.

Prepare for the journey itself

Travel days can be long, expensive, and unpredictable.

Before leaving:

- download your tickets;
- save offline maps;
- check connections and possible delays;
- prepare food and snacks;
- bring an empty water bottle where security rules allow it;

- share your basic itinerary with someone;
- leave some flexibility in your budget.

A small amount of preparation can prevent a last-minute taxi, an expensive airport meal, or a stressed purchase you did not need.

Set an intention

Ask yourself what kind of trip you want to have.

Do you want to rest? Learn? Meet people? Spend time in nature? Be more present? Try travelling more slowly?

You do not need a perfect answer. One simple intention can help you make better choices during the trip.

Try this

Finish this sentence:
On this trip, I want to pay more attention to…

Write down your answer and keep it with you.

Before closing your bag

Ask yourself:

- Do I need everything I packed?
- Can I carry it comfortably?
- Do I know the essential rules and requirements at my destination?
- Have I prepared for delays?
- Am I leaving enough space for rest and curiosity?

You are now ready.
Or at least ready enough.

The wind changes everything

Iceland · Eco Rangers trip

Bigad left Egypt in light clothes and temperatures of around 30°C. A few hours later, he stepped out into Icelandic cold and saw snow for the first time in his life.

It was a childhood dream suddenly made real. He could touch it, walk through it, and watch children playing as though snow were the most ordinary thing in the world.

But the temperature was not the biggest surprise.

It was the wind.

It crossed through his clothes and changed how every outdoor activity felt. Hiking demanded more strength than expected, and the landscape made it clear that visitors could not simply follow their original plans without paying attention to the conditions.

The experience changed the way he thought about preparation. Checking the temperature was not enough. He needed to understand the place, the weather, and his own physical limits.

"Nature does not adapt to you. You adapt to it."
Adapted from Bigad's travel report following the Eco Rangers trip in Iceland.

2. GETTING THERE

The journey is part of the trip

Getting somewhere is not just the annoying part before the holiday starts.
The route you choose, the way you prepare, and how you spend your travel time can affect your budget, your stress level, and the environmental impact of the whole journey.

The fastest option is not always the best one. And the cheapest ticket is not always the cheapest journey.

Look at the whole route

Before booking, compare the realistic options available to you:

- train;
- bus or coach;
- shared car;
- ferry;
- bicycle;
- walking;
- flight.

Do not compare only the ticket prices or the time shown on the booking page.

Think about:

- how you will reach the station or airport;
- luggage costs;
- seat reservations;
- food during the journey;
- transfers and waiting times;
- transport from your arrival point;
- the possibility of delays;
- how tired you may feel afterwards.

A train ticket may look more expensive than a flight until you add the airport bus, luggage fee, food, and three extra hours of waiting.

Travel myth

"Faster is always better."

Not always.

A journey with fewer changes, less waiting, and an easier arrival may be more comfortable and less stressful, even if it takes a little longer overall.

FROM THE ROAD

"Sustainable travel is much easier when you give yourself time. The moment you make the trip too short, you often need something faster."

— Bo, Eco Rangers trip in Slovakia

Book smart

Different types of transport have different rules.

Before paying, check:

- whether you need to book in advance;
- whether a seat reservation is included;
- whether the ticket can be changed or refunded;
- which luggage is allowed;
- whether bicycles or large equipment need a separate reservation;
- whether you need cash, a transport card, or a specific app;
- whether the ticket is valid only for one exact connection.

Save tickets on your phone, but also keep screenshots or PDF copies available offline.
Battery percentages have a strange habit of becoming dramatic exactly when the ticket inspector arrives.

Prepare for connections

A short connection may look perfectly reasonable on paper.

In reality, you may need to:

- find another platform;
- go through security or passport control;
- collect and check in your luggage again;
- change terminals;
- change stations;
- wait for a delayed bus or train.

Leave enough time between connections, especially when separate companies operate each part of the journey.

If one ticket covers the entire route, the transport provider may help when a connection is missed. With separate bookings, you may be responsible for finding and paying for a new connection yourself.

Pause for a second

Would I still choose this route if the first connection were 30 minutes late?

Travel light enough to move

Every extra bag becomes heavier when you are running for a train, climbing hostel stairs, or crossing a city with broken pavements.

Pack so that you can:

- carry your luggage without assistance;
- enter and leave transport quickly;
- keep important items close;
- move safely through stations;
- manage unexpected changes.

Pack strategically, not only lightly.

Keep the things you use most often easy to reach. Put travel documents, chargers, headphones, medication, and snacks somewhere accessible instead of burying them at the bottom of your bag. When flying, keep electronics and liquids together so you can take them out quickly at security.

Check whether you can wash clothes at your destination and pack some detergent with you. Packing for four days and doing laundry may be easier than carrying clothes for two weeks.

Your back is also part of the trip. Treat it kindly.

Bring your own travel food

Stations, airports, and roadside stops often offer expensive and/or unhealthy food with a lot of packaging.

Prepare something before leaving:

- sandwiches or wraps;
- fruit;
- nuts;
- biscuits;
- cut vegetables;
- food that needs to be eaten from your fridge;
- tea or coffee in a reusable thermos.

Bring a refillable bottle and fill it after airport security where drinking-water stations are available.

Check border, customs, and security rules before carrying food between countries. Some fresh products cannot be brought across certain borders.

Eco Ranger tip

Pack one emergency snack that you do not eat immediately.

Future you—delayed somewhere between two stations—may be extremely grateful.

Expect the unexpected

Delays happen. Connections disappear. Weather changes. Apps stop working.

Before departure:

- check official transport websites and apps;
- download offline maps;
- save the address of your accommodation;
- note the last available connection;
- keep emergency contacts accessible;
- carry a charging cable or power bank;
- keep some money available (cash or cards);
- tell someone your approximate route when travelling alone.

Avoid relying completely on one app, one payment card, or one internet connection.

A little backup planning creates more freedom, not less.

The beach we had not planned to visit

Iceland · Eco Rangers trip

The group was using Keflavík as a base to explore the Reykjanes Peninsula. There was no fixed itinerary waiting for them each morning. They checked the weather, opened the map, and decided what seemed possible.

One day, they chose a cliff as their destination.

The road had other ideas.

It became clear that the route was not suitable for their car, so they turned back. The planned destination disappeared from the day, and for a moment, it could have felt like a failure.

Instead, they stopped at a beach they had not intended to visit.

There was almost no wind. The beach was quiet, and the group walked without needing to reach anything. They met two Polish people who lived in Keflavík and were out with an enormously big and loving dog. It was a simple encounter—nothing they could have planned or found on a list of attractions.

The beach became one of the moments that stayed with them.

Sometimes a changed route does not take something away from the journey. It creates space for something else to appear.

"You define a direction, and then you adapt along the way."

Adapted from Marco's travel report following the Eco Rangers trip in Iceland.

Use your travel time

Travelling time does not have to be wasted time.

You can use it to:

- rest or sleep;
- read;
- write or draw;
- listen to music or a podcast;
- observe the landscape;
- talk with someone;
- reflect on the trip ahead;
- learn something new;
- do absolutely nothing.

You do not need to make every hour productive.

Sometimes watching the world pass by the window is the activity.

Try this

During one part of your journey, put your phone away for 20 minutes.

Look outside. Notice the landscape, the buildings, the people, and the changes between places.

Travelling together? Make the journey part of the adventure

Long journeys are easier when the group has something better to do than repeatedly asking, "How much longer?"

Try one of these:

- **The €10 Travel Challenge** – everyone invents the best possible day at the destination with only €10. The group votes for the most creative plan.
- **Mystery Passenger** – secretly choose someone unknown to you nearby and invent their destination, profession, and reason for travelling. Keep it kind and clearly imaginary.
- **The Worst Travel Agency** – design the most terrible holiday package possible: uncomfortable transport, strange food, impossible activities, and a completely useless souvenir.
- **Destination Roulette** – one person chooses a random place on the offline map. Together, invent a one-day sustainable trip there.
- **The No-Phone Photo** – look outside for one minute, then describe the best "photo" you saw without taking it.
- **Travel Superpowers** – choose the perfect travel superpower: never missing a connection, sleeping anywhere, understanding every language, or always finding free drinking water. Defend your choice.
- **One Bag, Five People** – imagine the whole group can bring only five objects. Agree on what stays and what gets left behind.
- **The Local Legend** – choose something visible from the window—a mountain, building, bridge, or forest—and invent the legend behind it.

- **Unexpected Tour Guide** – take turns giving a dramatic guided tour of ordinary things around you: the luggage rack, the service station, or platform number four.
- **Eco Ranger Mission** – give the group a small mission for the journey, such as spotting five reusable bottles, finding the quietest place, helping another traveller, or producing no food waste.

The best group travel game requires almost nothing: a little imagination, people willing to be silly, and eventually a delayed train.

Arrive fresh—or at least reasonably fresh

After twelve hours on trains, buses, or planes, nobody expects you to smell like a mountain meadow.

Still, a little preparation can make a long journey more comfortable for you—and everyone sitting nearby.

- **Drink enough water.** Long journeys, especially flights, can leave you dehydrated. Keep your bottle accessible and refill it whenever possible.
- **Wear breathable, comfortable layers.** Avoid tight clothes and fabrics that quickly trap heat and odours. Clothes that dry quickly are also useful if you need to wash them during the trip.
- **Keep a clean change of clothes nearby.** A fresh T-shirt, underwear, and socks can completely change how you feel after a night journey or a long connection.
- **Separate clean and used clothes.** Bring a reusable bag or an empty pillowcase so that one pair of adventurous socks does not contaminate your entire backpack.
- **Keep a small refresh kit in your hand luggage.** A toothbrush, toothpaste tablets, solid deodorant, small towel, tissues, and any personal hygiene items you need can save the day.
- **Use deodorant, not a cloud of perfume.** Strong perfume mixed with twelve hours of travel does not necessarily create the result you imagined.
- **Freshen up during a connection.** Washing your face, hands, teeth, and underarms and changing one layer of clothing can make you feel almost human again.

Travel truth

You may not arrive perfectly fresh.

That is normal. The goal is comfort, basic hygiene, and peaceful coexistence with your fellow passengers—not winning a perfume advertisement.

Share safely

When travelling alone or through unfamiliar places, let a trusted person know:

- your basic route;
- where you expect to stay;
- when you expect to arrive;
- how they can contact you.

You may also share your live location for a limited period.

Share this information only with people you trust, and stop location sharing when it is no longer needed.

Before you leave

Ask yourself:

- Have I compared the full journey, not only the ticket?
- Do I understand the luggage and connection rules?
- Are my tickets and maps available offline?
- Do I have food, water, and a backup payment option?
- Have I left enough time to travel without panicking?
- Can I carry everything comfortably?

The journey has already started. Enjoy it.

3. WHERE YOU STAY

Sleep well, stay local, leave lightly

Accommodation is more than a bed.

Where you stay can affect local jobs, neighbourhood life, housing prices, energy and water use, and how much transport you need during your trip.

You do not need to find the "perfect eco-hotel." A small, locally owned place with honest practices may be a better choice than a large hotel covered in green labels.

Look beyond the green leaf

Many booking pages use words such as eco, green, natural, or sustainable.

These words can mean something—or almost nothing.

Look for practical signs:

- renewable energy;
- efficient heating;
- water-saving systems;
- waste separation;
- refill stations;
- reduced single-use plastics;
- local or seasonal food;
- environmentally friendly cleaning products;
- clear information about sustainability practices.

If the information is vague, ask.

A simple message such as, "What do you do to reduce energy, water use, and waste?" can tell you more than a green badge.

Discover the EU Ecolabel

The EU Ecolabel can help you identify accommodation that meets recognised environmental standards.

Use it as one useful sign—not as the only one.

Travel myth

"An eco-label automatically makes accommodation sustainable."

A label can be helpful, but it is not the whole story.

Small guesthouses, family businesses, farms, hostels, and community accommodation may follow excellent practices without having the time or money to obtain official certification.

Stay where your trip happens

Central accommodation can be convenient, but the city centre is not automatically the most interesting—or the most sustainable—place to stay.

Before booking, check:

- distance from the station or airport;
- public transport connections;
- walking and cycling routes;
- distance from your event or planned activities;
- supermarkets, cafés, parks, and services nearby;
- the safety of the area, especially at night.

A room outside the centre may be a good choice when it is well connected and allows you to discover a different side of the destination.

Consider staying in:

- a residential neighbourhood;
- a smaller town near a famous city;
- a less visited region;
- a village connected by public transport;
- an area outside the usual tourist routes.

This can reduce pressure on overcrowded places, distribute visitor spending more widely, and create a more personal travel experience.

Do not follow a destination only because it is trending. Popular places are not always the places you will remember most.

Eco Ranger challenge

Open the map and look beyond the famous centre.
What smaller town, neighbourhood, or region could you explore instead?

Pause for a second

Am I choosing this place because it interests me—or because everyone online is going there?

Sometimes the best way to discover a destination is to stop following the usual route.

Support local hosts

When possible, consider accommodation owned or managed by local people.

This may include:

- family-run guesthouses;
- small hostels;
- local hotels;
- farm stays;
- cooperatives;

- community tourism initiatives;
- eco-villages;
- locally managed campsites.

Booking locally can help keep more money in the destination and create more personal connections.

It also gives you the chance to ask for recommendations that do not appear in every travel guide.

The person who showed her the door

Bratislava · Eco Rangers trip in Slovakia

Kleio stayed in an apartment in a residential building in central Bratislava.

The location allowed her to experience something close to ordinary city life. She visited the supermarket, bought local products, and spoke with residents when she needed directions. Gradually, the building and neighbourhood began to feel less anonymous.

Then, one evening, she found the main entrance unexpectedly locked.

She did not know how to get inside.

A resident was at home with his family when he noticed that she needed help. He left the gathering, came outside, and walked with her to show her another entrance.

He could have pointed from the doorway. Instead, he accompanied her.

It was a small action, but it changed the feeling of the stay. Far from home, in an unfamiliar building, she felt welcomed and safe.

The apartment had given her a place to sleep. The person who helped her gave her a connection to the place.

"His kindness made me feel welcome and safe in a place far from home."

Adapted from Kleio's travel report following the Eco Rangers trip in Slovakia.

Eco Ranger tip

Ask your host where they eat, take a walk, shop, or relax.

The answer may lead you somewhere much more interesting than the usual "Top 10" list.

Coming back? Book directly

Had a good stay and planning to return?

Ask the host whether you can book directly next time.

Ask the host whether you can book directly next time.

Direct booking may:
- reduce platform fees;
- allow more of your payment to reach the host;
- make communication easier;
- sometimes result in a better price for both sides.

Before confirming, agree clearly on the total price, payment method, cancellation conditions, dates, and what is included.

Eco Ranger tip
A good stay can become a relationship—not just another anonymous reservation.

You also make the accommodation sustainable

A place does not need to be a perfect eco-hotel for you to stay responsibly.

Your behaviour matters too.

You can reduce the impact of almost any stay by:
- switching off lights and devices;
- using heating and air conditioning carefully;
- keeping windows closed when heating or cooling is running;
- taking reasonable showers;
- reusing towels when possible;
- separating waste correctly;
- using refill points;
- bringing reusable items;
- cooking without unnecessary waste;
- leaving shared spaces clean.

Sustainability is not only something the accommodation provides. It is also something the guest brings.

Small actions matter even more when hundreds of guests repeat them.

Check what is already there

Before going shopping, look around the kitchen.

Apartments, hostels, and shared accommodation often have useful food left behind by previous guests, such as:
- salt, sugar, tea, or coffee;
- oil and spices;
- rice or pasta;
- unopened sauces;

- packaged dry food;
- fruit or vegetables;
- reusable bags and containers.

These items may be free to use. They can save you money and prevent perfectly good food from being thrown away.

Before using anything, check:
- Is it clearly available for guests?
- Is it sealed or stored properly?
- Is it within a safe date?
- Does it look and smell normal?
- Should it have been refrigerated?
- Could it contain allergens?

When in doubt, ask the host or hostel staff.

Before leaving, you can do the same for the next traveller. Leave only food that is safe, clearly labelled, and permitted by the accommodation.

FROM THE ROAD

"The apartment was full of pasta, oil and food left by previous travellers. We used what was already there instead of buying everything again. Sustainability, but real."
— Marco, Eco Rangers trip in Iceland

Travel treasure hunt

Before buying breakfast, check the shared kitchen.

You may find enough ingredients for a slightly strange—but completely free—meal.

Be a responsible guest

Even sustainable accommodation becomes less sustainable when guests behave carelessly.

During your stay:
- avoid taking more food than you can eat;
- respect quiet hours;
- keep kitchens and bathrooms clean;
- do not occupy shared spaces with all your belongings;
- follow local waste management rules;
- avoid damaging furniture or shared equipment;
- leave the room ready for the next guest;
- tell staff about leaks, broken equipment, or unnecessary energy use.

Being a responsible guest is not complicated.

Mostly, it means remembering that someone else will use the place after you.

Hostels: share space, not everything

Hostels can be affordable, social, and efficient because facilities are shared.

They can also involve noise, disappearing chargers, and someone switching on the light at 4:30 in the morning.

Bring:

- a small padlock for lockers;
- earplugs;
- an eye mask;
- a reusable bag for shower items;
- quiet shoes or slippers;
- a small light;
- patience.

Keep your belongings organised and avoid spreading them across the room.

The unwritten hostel rule

Prepare your bag before everyone goes to sleep—not while six people are trying to remain asleep.

Accommodation survival: tiny problems, dramatic consequences

Some accommodation problems are not serious.

They only feel serious at 2:17 in the morning.

- **The mysterious snorer** – earplugs may save your sleep and your opinion of humanity.
- **The disappearing charger** – label yours or keep it close. Shared rooms create accidental adoption.
- **The shower expedition** – bring everything in one reusable bag. Three separate trips usually mean forgetting something important.
- **The top-bunk adventure** – place your water, glasses, and phone nearby before climbing up.
- **The curtain problem** – a clothes peg can stop one aggressive line of sunrise.
- **The midnight suitcase concert** – prepare tomorrow's clothes before sleeping. Plastic bags are surprisingly loud in a silent dormitory.
- **The unknown locker** – bring a small padlock. The hostel may provide the locker, but not the lock.
- **The freezing-versus-boiling debate** – layers are often more useful than arguing with strangers about the window.

A good guest leaves no mess, creates no midnight orchestra, and knows where the bathroom is before the lights go out.

Try a different kind of stay

Hotels are not the only option.

Depending on the trip, you could consider:

- camping;
- staying with friends living at your destination;
- hospitality exchanges like "couchsurfing";
- home-sharing;
- house and/or pet-sitting;
- monasteries;
- mountain huts;
- farm stays;
- eco-villages;
- home exchange;
- work away or volunteering arrangements.

These options can be affordable and memorable, but always check:

- safety;
- privacy;
- reviews;
- cancellation rules;
- accessibility;
- transport connections;
- what is expected from the guest;
- what is provided by the host.

Alternative does not automatically mean sustainable.

A remote cabin requiring a private car and heavy heating may have a greater impact than a simple room in town.

Respect the neighbourhood

Your accommodation is part of someone else's community.

Local people may be:

- sleeping;
- working;
- raising children;
- commuting;
- sharing the same building;
- dealing with pressure from large numbers of visitors.

Keep noise under control, follow waste management rules, avoid blocking entrances, and respect private spaces.

Do not treat apartment buildings, streets, or villages as extensions of the tourism industry.

Try this
During your first walk, notice what the neighbourhood needs from you.
More quiet? Less waste? Respect for private spaces? Support for a small shop?

Before you book

Ask yourself:

- Is this place locally owned or locally connected?
- Can I reach it without depending on taxis or a private car?
- Are its sustainability claims clear and believable?
- Will my stay support—or put pressure on—the neighbourhood?
- Does it meet my needs for safety, accessibility, comfort, and rest?
- Can I behave responsibly there?
- Is there anything already available that I do not need to buy or bring (e.g., towels, coffee)?

The best place to stay is not always the most impressive one.

It is the place that allows you to rest well, move easily, waste less, and be a good guest.

4. EAT, DRINK AND DISCOVER

Taste the place, waste less, support local

Food is one of the easiest ways to understand a destination.

It tells you about the climate, the landscape, local traditions, family habits, migration, farming, and everyday life.

You do not need to eat somewhere expensive to have a meaningful food experience. A market, bakery, street-food stall, small café, or shared kitchen can tell you much more than a restaurant designed only for tourists.

Eat what belongs there

When possible, choose food that is:

- local;
- seasonal;
- typical of the region;
- prepared by local people;
- connected to local farms, producers, or traditions;
- lower-impact where possible, with more plant-based options, less packaging, and minimal food waste.

Seasonal food often travels less, tastes better, and supports producers working in the area.

Food choices also shape your environmental footprint more than you might expect, especially when it comes to transport, packaging, and animal-based products. Small shifts—like choosing local vegetables or asking about sourcing—can make a meaningful difference.

Ask what is typical right now—not only what is famous all year round.

Eco Ranger tip

Instead of asking, "What is the most famous dish?", ask:
"What do people here actually eat?"
The answer may be much more interesting.

Choose local over familiar

International chains can feel easy, especially when you are tired.

But local restaurants, bakeries, cafés, markets, and small shops usually offer a stronger connection to the place and keep more money in the local economy.

Look for:

- family-run restaurants;
- neighbourhood cafés;
- local bakeries;
- food markets;

- farm shops;
- cooperatives;
- street-food sellers;
- small independent grocery stores.

You do not need to avoid every familiar place. Just make sure the whole trip does not become a search for the same coffee, sandwich, or burger you could have at home.

Travel myth
"Local food is always expensive."

Not necessarily.

Markets, lunch menus, bakeries, street food, and small neighbourhood places can be cheaper than restaurants in the main tourist area.

Drink the tap water—when it is safe

Before buying bottled water, check whether tap water is safe to drink.

Ask:
- your host;
- accommodation staff;
- local residents;
- official local sources.

If tap water is safe, refill your bottle.

If it is not, consider:
- a suitable filter bottle;
- larger refillable water containers;
- water refill stations;
- buying one large bottle instead of several small ones.

Do not assume that clear water is automatically safe—or that bottled water is always necessary.

Eco Ranger habit
Refill before leaving your accommodation.

Future you may otherwise pay even €4 for a very ordinary bottle of water.

Bring your own tools
A few reusable items can reduce waste and make spontaneous meals easier.

Useful items include:

- a water bottle;
- reusable cutlery;
- a cup or tumbler;
- a food container;
- a cloth napkin;
- a reusable shopping bag;
- a small knife (e.g., multi-tooled pocketknife), where transport and security rules allow it.

These are especially useful for markets, picnics, takeaway food, overnight trains, and group trips. Foldable cups and food containers are useful and take a very small amount of space.

Use what you already own. You do not need a matching "sustainable travel dining set."

Check the local recycling rules

Food often comes with packaging, even when we try to avoid it.

Recycling rules might be different in every destination. Colours, symbols, and accepted materials may not be the same as at home.

Before throwing something away:

- check the labels on the bins;
- ask your host or accommodation staff;
- separate glass, paper, metal, plastic, and organic waste correctly;
- rinse packaging when local rules require it;
- do not place dirty or unsuitable materials in the recycling bin;
- look for special collection points for batteries and other unusual waste (e.g., light bulbs).

Some countries and regions have deposit-return systems for bottles and cans. You pay a small deposit when buying the drink and receive it back when you return the empty container to a shop or collection machine.

When this option is available, use it. Alternatively you can leave the collected items to locals and they will take care of it with pleasure.

You reduce litter, help materials return to circulation, and may recover enough money for your next snack.

Eco Ranger mission

Before throwing away your first bottle or can, check whether it has a deposit symbol.

It may not be rubbish yet. It may still be worth money.

Cook together

Shared cooking can be one of the best parts of a group trip.

It can:

- reduce costs;
- prevent food waste;
- help people share traditions;
- make use of leftovers;
- turn dinner into a shared activity;
- create a break from restaurants.

Give everyone a role:

- one person checks what is already available;
- one buys missing ingredients;
- one prepares and cuts the ingredients;
- one cooks;
- one cleans;
- everyone eats.

Try this

Each person chooses one ingredient connected to their home country.
Then cook one completely new meal together.
It may be delicious.
It may become a story.
Both outcomes are acceptable.

FROM THE ROAD

"We planned our shopping carefully, cooked together, and chose food everyone could eat. The meals became some of the best moments of the trip."

— Carlos
Eco Rangers trip in Slovakia

Check what needs to be eaten first

Before buying food, look in:

- the shared kitchen;
- the fridge;
- the free shelf;
- the community pantry;
- the "take me/eat me" basket;
- the reduced-price section of a shop.

Hostels, apartments, guesthouses, and supermarkets often have food that should be used soon.

You may find:
- bread;
- fruits;
- vegetables;
- yoghurt;
- cheese;
- rice or pasta;
- unopened sauces;
- tea, coffee, oil, or spices.

Always check whether the food is stored correctly, still safe, and clearly available to use.

Food rescue challenge
Build one snack or meal from food that would otherwise be forgotten.

Bonus points if nobody needs to go shopping.

Explore street food
Street food can be affordable, local, social, and full of character.

Before ordering, notice:
- whether local people are eating there;
- whether food is cooked or stored safely;
- how much packaging is used;
- whether reusable plates or cups are available;
- whether the place appears locally owned;
- whether allergens are clearly indicated, if not ask for them;
- whether the food is freshly prepared.

Eat with curiosity, but not with blind bravery.
A memorable travel story is good.
Food poisoning is not the kind of memory you need.

Order realistically
Travel excitement can make people order too much food.

Before ordering:
- check portion sizes;
- ask whether dishes can be shared;
- choose a smaller portion first;
- avoid taking more buffet food than you can eat;
- bring a container for leftovers;
- ask whether takeaway packaging can be avoided.

If you are not sure how large a dish is, look at what is being served nearby or ask.

The buffet rule

Your plate is not a storage facility.
Take a little. Go back if you are still hungry.

Save food, save money

Some shops, bakeries, cafés, and restaurants sell food at reduced prices near closing time or before its expiry date.

Look for:

- reduced-price shelves;
- end-of-day bakery offers;
- food-rescue applications;
- community fridges;
- shared-food shelves;
- local donation points.

This can help you eat well while reducing waste and travel costs.

If you have food left at the end of your stay, ask whether you can:

- leave it safely for the next guest;
- give it to your host;
- place it on a free shelf;
- donate it;
- share it with fellow travellers.

Do not leave open, unsafe, or unlabelled food behind and call it generosity.

Food can start a conversation

Ask someone:

- What dish reminds you of home?
- What should I try in this season?
- Where do locals buy bread?
- Which meals are connected to celebrations?
- What is disappearing from local cuisine?
- What do tourists usually misunderstand about the food here?

Food becomes more meaningful when you know the story behind it.

Try this

Learn the name of one ingredient in the local language.
Use it at a market, shop, or restaurant.
Pronunciation does not need to be perfect. Good intentions usually survive an accent.

Before you eat

Ask yourself:

- Is this food local or connected to the place?
- Am I supporting a local business?
- Can I avoid unnecessary packaging?
- Can the packaging be reused, recycled, or returned?
- Am I ordering an amount I can finish?
- Is there food already available that should be used first?
- Can this meal become part of the experience, not just "fuel"?

The best travel meal is not always the most expensive or most photographed one.

Sometimes it is the one shared around a small table, made from what was already there.

5. EXPLORE AND CONNECT

Go beyond the checklist

It is easy to arrive somewhere with a list of attractions that must be visited, photographed, and reviewed.

But travelling is not a race to collect places.

Leave space for small streets, unexpected conversations, local events, quiet parks, and places that do not appear in every "Top 10" video.

Sometimes the best part of a trip is the thing you did not plan.

FROM THE ROAD

"It is not worth rushing to visit five places because you liked the pictures online. Visit one place—and discover four."

— Javier, Eco Rangers trip in Slovakia

Explore what is nearby

Before travelling across the whole destination, look around where you are staying.

You may find:

- neighbourhood markets;
- parks and walking routes;
- small museums and galleries;
- community centres;
- local swimming pools;
- libraries;
- second-hand shops;
- public gardens;
- neighbourhood cafés;
- free cultural events.

Choosing nearby activities can reduce unnecessary transport and help you experience everyday local life.

The city after the tourists disappeared

Bratislava · Eco Rangers trip in Slovakia

Bigad stayed in a hostel in central Bratislava and spent much of his time exploring the city on foot.

During the day, he saw the familiar version of the centre: visitors moving between landmarks, busy streets, cafés, and people taking photographs.

But he was curious about what the city felt like after that rhythm faded.

So he went walking at night.

He was not looking for nightlife. He wanted to notice the people who were still there when most visitors had gone: couples walking together, workers finishing late shifts, people without homes, and residents simply moving through their ordinary evening.

The streets felt quieter, but not empty. Without rushing between attractions, he began to notice another side of Bratislava—less polished, more human, and closer to the daily life of the city.

Walking without a strict destination also became a kind of digital detox. He used his phone less, observed more, and allowed the city to reveal itself gradually.

> **"You see a different city when you stop looking only at what visitors are expected to see."**

Adapted from Bigad's travel report following the Eco Rangers trip in Slovakia.

Eco Ranger challenge: Sustainability Treasure Hunt

Explore the area through a sustainability lens.

Choose at least five missions:

- find a repair shop;
- visit a second-hand shop or flea market;
- find a green roof or community garden;
- discover a local sustainability initiative;
- enjoy a plant-based snack;
- find a library or bookshop with a sustainability-related book;
- sit quietly in the most natural place you can find;
- find a refill point, recycling station, or deposit-return machine;
- support a small local café;
- identify one place where nature and the city meet.

You can take pictures, write notes, draw a map, or simply remember what you found.

The aim is not to finish quickly. It is to notice things you would normally walk past.

This is directly inspired by the Sustainability Treasure Hunt developed by SEQ, which invites participants to explore repair businesses, second-hand shops, green spaces, local cafés, bodies of water, books, and other sustainability-related places.

Support the people who live there

Your spending is part of your impact.

Whenever possible, choose:

- local guides;
- independent artists;

- community organisations;
- small activity providers;
- craftspeople;
- locally owned rental services;
- neighbourhood businesses;
- social enterprises and cooperatives.

Ask who owns the activity and where the money goes.

A local-looking experience is not necessarily locally owned.

Let a local show you around

A local guide can help you notice stories, neighbourhoods, traditions, and details that are easy to miss.

Look for:

- independent guides;
- community-led tours;
- walking tours organised by local residents;
- social enterprises;
- thematic tours;
- free walking tours with a voluntary contribution at the end.

Some guides do not charge a fixed fee and instead invite participants to give what they consider fair after the tour.

This can make tours more accessible, but remember that "free" does not mean the guide worked for free. Give a fair contribution when you can.

Choose guides who respect residents, avoid stereotypes, and work responsibly with local communities.

Eco Ranger tip

Ask your guide:
"What do visitors usually misunderstand or overlook about this city?"

The answer may be more valuable than the list of monuments.

Pause for a second

Who benefits from the activity after I leave?

Create your own route

You do not need to follow the same route as everyone else.

Instead, build your journey around something outstanding, personal, or unexpected.

For example:

- follow the story of a famous traveller, writer, artist, or historical figure;
- create a cheese route, bread route, coffee route, or pastry route;
- visit places connected to a local legend;
- follow a river through the city;
- search for unusual architecture;
- find the oldest trees in the area;
- explore local murals;
- visit every second-hand shop you can find;
- create a route based on one colour;
- follow the tram line to its final stop and explore there

A themed route can turn an ordinary walk into an adventure.

Travel myth

"The best itinerary is the one everyone recommends."

Not necessarily.

The best itinerary may be the one that makes sense only to you.

> A cheese-based journey is still a journey.

Choose the slower route

You do not always need to move from one attraction to another.

Try:

- walking without a strict destination;
- renting a bicycle;
- using a local bus or tram;
- following a river;
- sitting in a public square;
- spending several hours in one neighbourhood;
- returning to the same café or market;
- taking a local train or bus to a smaller town.

Slow travel is not about moving as slowly as possible.

It is about giving yourself enough time to understand where you are.

Try this
Choose one day—or half a day—with only one planned activity.

See what develops around it.

FROM THE ROAD
"Sustainable travel means consciously choosing to see less, but experience and feel more. It is about exploring one place on a deeper level."
— Kamila, Eco Rangers trip in Slovakia

Treat nature as a home, not a playground

Natural places may look wild and empty, but they are living ecosystems.

When visiting forests, mountains, beaches, lakes, glaciers, caves, or protected areas:

- stay on marked paths where required;
- carry your waste out;
- avoid picking plants or removing stones;
- do not disturb nests or animal habitats;
- follow fire restrictions;
- keep noise low;
- use toilets or designated facilities;
- respect seasonal closures;
- avoid damaging fragile ground for a photograph.

Leave natural objects where they belong.

The shell, flower, stone, or piece of wood may be more useful to the ecosystem than it is on your shelf.

Leave it cleaner than you found it

Sometimes the simplest activity is also one of the most useful.

Bring:

- a small rubbish bag;
- reusable or protective gloves;
- hand sanitiser.

During a walk, beach visit, picnic, or hike, collect safe litter that you find along the way.

Focus on items such as:

- bottles;
- cans;
- wrappers;
- paper;
- small plastic waste.

Do not touch sharp objects, medical waste, unknown chemicals, or anything unsafe. Report these to the relevant local service instead.

Sort and recycle the collected waste where possible.

Eco Ranger mission

Collect ten pieces of litter during your walk.

It may take five minutes.

The place will be visibly better because you were there.

Sustainable travel is not only about leaving no trace. Sometimes it means leaving a positive one.

Give wildlife space

An encounter with an animal can become a powerful travel memory.

Make sure it is not a bad memory for the animal.

Avoid activities that involve:

- touching or holding wild animals;
- feeding wildlife;
- animal performances;
- forced interactions;
- disturbing animals for photographs;
- riding animals kept in poor conditions;
- making useless loud noise while in the nature;
- entering breeding or nesting areas.

Choose operators that observe animals from a respectful distance and clearly explain their welfare and conservation practices.

The wildlife rule

If the animal cannot leave the interaction, it is probably not a fair interaction.

Respect people before taking photographs

A person, home, workplace, ceremony, or religious practice is not automatically a tourist attraction.

Before taking a photograph:

- notice whether photography is permitted;
- ask the person when possible;
- respect a refusal;
- avoid photographing children without permission from a responsible adult;
- do not interrupt ceremonies or daily work;
- avoid sharing someone's location or personal information without consent.

Learning a simple local phrase for "May I take a photo?" can be useful.
But remember: asking politely does not mean the person must agree.

Pause for a second
Am I capturing a memory—or treating someone else's life as scenery?

Join local activities
Check what is happening while you are there.

You might find:
- festivals;
- neighbourhood celebrations;
- exhibitions;
- concerts;
- workshops;
- repair cafés;
- clean-up events;
- food markets;
- craft sessions;
- community walks;
- volunteer activities.

Local events can offer a stronger connection than a standard tourism package.

Participate respectfully. Do not expect every community activity to be translated, adapted, or performed for visitors.

Sometimes observing, listening, and following the group is enough.

Learn a little language
You do not need to speak fluently.

A few words can make everyday interactions warmer and easier:
- hello;
- please;
- thank you;
- excuse me;
- yes and no;
- goodbye;
- help;
- where;
- how much;
- I don't understand or I don't speak ____
- delicious.

Do not be afraid of imperfect pronunciation.

Most people recognise the difference between making an effort and expecting everyone else to adapt.

Eco Ranger mission

Learn five useful words before arriving.
Use at least three of them during the trip.
Awkward pronunciation still counts.

Volunteer and connect

Volunteering can be one of the most meaningful ways to connect with a place. It can help you meet local people, learn new skills, support useful initiatives, and experience the destination beyond the usual tourist route.

Look for opportunities such as:

- community events;
- public clean-ups;
- environmental activities;
- local festivals;
- repair cafés;
- food-sharing initiatives;
- practical support for trusted local organisations.

Before joining, take a moment to check:

- Is the activity organised or supported by local people?
- Is the organisation clear about its purpose?
- Are the tasks suitable for short-term volunteers?
- Do you have the skills or preparation needed?
- Are children or vulnerable people properly protected?
- Will the activity still be useful after you leave?

Good volunteering is based on respect, transparency, and local leadership.

Eco Ranger tip

Choose activities where you can contribute without taking over.

Sometimes the most useful role is to listen, follow instructions, and help with what is genuinely needed.

Volunteering is not only about giving your time. It is also about learning how to be useful in someone else's community.

Collect moments, not everything

Souvenir shops can make it seem as though every trip needs an object.

Instead, you might bring home:

- a recipe;
- a drawing;
- a local story;
- a second-hand book;
- a photograph taken respectfully;
- a song recommendation;
- a small locally made object;
- a habit you discovered;
- a new friendship.

Avoid souvenirs made from protected plants, animals, shells, coral, ancient objects, or materials of unclear origin.

The best souvenir is one whose story you can remember without checking the receipt.

The unofficial local challenge

Ask a local person for one recommendation—but make the question interesting.

Instead of:
"What should I see?"

Try:

- Where do you go when you need some peace?
- What place deserves more attention?
- Where would you take a visiting friend?
- What is your favourite ordinary place?
- What should visitors understand about this town?
- What do tourists usually miss?

You may receive a better answer.
You may also receive a very long story.

Both are useful.

Before choosing an activity

Ask yourself:

- Does this activity support local people?
- Could it harm wildlife, nature, or cultural heritage?
- Is there a similar experience closer to where I am staying?

- Am I following genuine curiosity or simply following a trend?
- Is the activity respectful, accessible, and fairly organised?
- Could I spend more time experiencing the place and less time moving between attractions?
- Will local people and the environment still benefit after I leave?

A memorable trip does not need the longest list of activities.
It needs enough attention to notice where you actually are.

6. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Travel with energy, curiosity, and limits

A sustainable trip should not leave you completely exhausted.

Travelling can be exciting, but it can also mean unfamiliar places, disrupted routines, delayed transport, constant decisions, social pressure, and very little rest.

Taking care of yourself is not separate from sustainable travel. When you are rested, hydrated, and calm, you usually make better decisions—for yourself, for others, and for the environment.

Set an intention

Before the trip, ask yourself what you need from it.

Maybe you want to:

- rest;
- learn;
- spend time in nature;
- meet people;
- try something new;
- slow down;
- feel more independent;
- reconnect with yourself.

You do not need a perfect plan. One simple intention can help you notice when the trip is becoming something completely different.

Try this

Finish the sentence:

"On this trip, I want to make more space for…"

Keep the answer somewhere you can find it later.

Know your limits

Being adventurous does not mean ignoring your needs.

Before travelling, be honest about:

- your energy;
- your health;
- your mobility;
- your budget;
- your need for privacy;
- your tolerance for noise;
- your comfort with uncertainty;
- how much social contact feels good.

Some people enjoy packed schedules.
Others need long breaks between activities.
Both are valid.

The hike that was longer than the map

Little Carpathians · Eco Rangers trip in Slovakia

Monika planned to hike alone through the Little Carpathians, from the forested area around Piesok towards Plavecký Mikuláš and the nearby castle ruins.

On the map, the route looked possible.

But the map did not show how much time she would spend stopping, observing, breathing, and taking in the autumn forest. It did not fully communicate the terrain, the physical effort, or how quickly daylight disappears at that time of year.

After four hours of walking, she reached Rohožník.

The original destination was still ahead, but continuing would have meant more pressure and a greater risk of being outside after dark. She decided to stop.

She ate a traditional meal in a local restaurant, caught a bus to another village, and eventually shared part of the return journey with local residents.

She did not reach the castle. Still, the day gave her solitude, contact with nature, unexpected conversations, and a clearer understanding of her own limits.

The unfinished route was not an unsuccessful journey.

"Proper preparation is essential—not only for safety, but also for enjoyment."
Adapted from Monika's travel report following the Eco Rangers trip in Slovakia.

Travel myth
"A good traveller says yes to everything."
Not true.

A good traveller also knows when to rest, leave early, skip something, or say no.

Keep the routines that help

Travel changes your routine, but you do not need to abandon everything that keeps you well.

Where possible, maintain:

- regular meals;
- enough sleep;
- hydration;
- medication;

- movement;
- quiet time;
- contact with people you trust;
- any small practice that helps you feel grounded.

Your routine does not need to look exactly the same as at home.

Even one familiar habit can make an unfamiliar place feel easier and cozier.

Eco Ranger tip

Choose one "anchor habit" for the trip.

It could be morning tea, a short walk, stretching, writing three lines in your journal, or calling someone in the evening.

Eat, rest, move, drink water

This sounds obvious.
It is also surprisingly easy to forget.

Long journeys, changing time zones, exciting activities, and irregular meals can affect your body quickly.

Remember to:

- drink water regularly;
- eat before you become exhausted;
- take breaks;
- move after sitting for a long time (e.g. in a bus);
- protect yourself from sun, cold, wind, or heat;
- sleep enough to enjoy the next day.

Do not wait until your body starts organising a protest.

Leave empty space

Not every hour needs an activity.

Leave time for:

- rest;
- wandering;
- a slow breakfast;
- doing laundry;
- sitting in a park;
- reading;
- doing nothing;
- changing your plans.

Empty space is not wasted travel time.

It is often where the trip becomes memorable.

Pause for a second
Is this plan exciting—or just crowded?

Have some "me time"
Group travel can be wonderful.

It can also be intense.

You are allowed to:
- take a walk alone;
- skip one shared activity;
- sit somewhere quietly;
- eat separately;
- spend time without talking;
- go to sleep earlier;
- meet the group again later.

Taking time alone does not mean rejecting the group.

It may help you return with more energy and patience.

Group travel rule
You do not need to do everything together to be travelling together.

FROM THE ROAD
"Sustainable travel is not only about environmental choices. It is also about how you manage yourself and how you relate to others during the journey."
— Marco, Eco Rangers trip in Iceland

Bring something that feels like you
A small familiar activity can help you relax in an unfamiliar place.
Bring something connected to a hobby:
- a book;
- a sketchbook;
- knitting;
- cards;
- a small musical instrument;
- a journal;
- a camera;
- a puzzle;
- a playlist;
- running shoes.

Choose something you already enjoy—not another travel task you feel obliged to complete.

Give your phone a holiday too

Phones are useful for maps, tickets, translation, photographs, and communication.

They can also take you away from the place you travelled to see.

Try:

- putting your phone away during meals;
- using an offline map;
- taking fewer photographs;
- turning off unnecessary notifications;
- choosing one part of the day without a screen;
- looking at the view before looking at how to post it.

You do not need to disappear completely.

Just make sure the trip is happening around you, not only on your screen.

Eco Ranger challenge

Take one "mental" picture every day.

Stop for a few seconds and notice the light, sounds, smells, people, and atmosphere.

Do not use your phone.

Stay connected without being constantly available

Before leaving, agree with the people close to you on how you will stay in touch.

You might decide to:

- send one message each day;
- call every few days;
- share your itinerary;
- tell someone when you arrive;
- use location sharing only during certain journeys;
- explain that you may reply slowly.

This can reduce worry at home and pressure during the trip.
Do not disappear without explanation.
But do not spend the whole journey reporting every movement either.

Prepare for difficult moments

Feeling anxious, lonely, overwhelmed, homesick, or irritated during a trip is normal.

When this happens, try something simple:

- breathe slowly;

- drink water;
- eat;
- rest;
- step outside;
- find a quieter place;
- write down what you are feeling;
- call someone you trust;
- reduce the plan for the day;
- remind yourself that the feeling may pass.

You do not need to solve your entire life in a bus station.

Sometimes you need food, sleep, and a less ambitious afternoon.

Carry a personal first-aid kit

Bring what is suitable for your health and destination.

This may include:

- prescribed medicines;
- basic pain relief;
- plasters/bandages;
- disinfectant;
- allergy medication;
- sunscreen/aftersun cream;
- insect repellent;
- menstrual products;
- rehydration salts;
- any personal medical information you may need.

Keep essential medicines in your hand luggage and in their original packaging where possible.
Do not rely on finding the exact product you use at home.

Connect before you arrive

A little contact before visiting a new place can reduce uncertainty.

You could:

- message your host;
- speak with another participant (if it's a group travel);
- ask someone from your network;
- join a local event group;
- contact a community organisation;
- arrange a short meeting with a resident or guide.

One familiar name can make a new destination feel much less unknown.

Treat yourself—consciously

Well-being can include pleasure.

Maybe you want:

- a sauna;
- a massage;
- a slow coffee;
- a swim;
- a long bath;
- an afternoon nap;
- a quiet meal;
- time in nature.

Choose what genuinely helps you recover.
Well-being does not need to be expensive, luxurious, or photographed.
Sometimes it is simply going to bed.

Before planning another activity

Ask yourself:

- Have I eaten and had enough water?
- Am I tired or genuinely interested?
- Do I need people—or some time alone?
- Am I saying yes because I want to?
- Is there enough space in the day?
- What would make the next few hours feel good?

You do not need to return home needing a holiday from your holiday.
A good trip gives you memories.
A better one also leaves you some energy.

7. COMING HOME

Bring back more than photos

A trip does not end when you arrive home.

Sometimes you return full of energy. Sometimes you feel tired, strange, emotional, or disappointed that everyday life has started again.

Give yourself time to land.

The journey may be over, but what you experienced and learned can continue.

Leave time to return

When possible, avoid arriving home late at night and returning immediately to a full day of work, study, or responsibilities.

Leave some space for:

- sleep;
- unpacking;
- laundry;
- buying food;
- answering messages;
- reviewing expenses;
- doing absolutely nothing.

Even one quiet day can make the return much easier.

Eco Ranger tip

Do not plan your return as though delays, tiredness, and dirty clothes do not exist.
They usually do.

Expect the return to feel strange

After an intense journey, home may feel unusually quiet, repetitive, or disconnected from what you have just experienced.

You may miss:

- the people;
- the freedom;
- the routine of travelling;
- the destination;
- the person you felt like during the trip.

This does not mean that something is wrong.
Your travelling personality and your everyday personality can feel different. Both belong to you.

Travel myth

"Coming home should immediately feel comfortable."
Not always.
Sometimes your body arrives before your mind does.

Do not redesign your entire life immediately

A powerful trip can make everything feel possible.

You may want to:

- move abroad;
- leave your job;
- change your studies;
- begin a completely new lifestyle;
- book another trip immediately;
- become a goat farmer in a mountain village.

Some ideas may be excellent.
Give them a little time.

Wait at least a few days before making major decisions. Sleep, return to your routines, and see which ideas remain important once the travel intensity has settled.

> Inspiration deserves attention. It does not always require immediate action.

Record what happened

Memories change quickly.

Take time to write, draw, record, or organise what you experienced.

You could reflect on:

- where you went;
- who you met;
- what surprised you;
- what challenged you;
- what made you laugh;
- what you learned;
- what you would do differently;
- which moment you do not want to forget.

This does not need to become a perfect travel diary.
A few honest sentences are enough.

Try this

Complete these three sentences:
I expected…
I discovered…
I am bringing home…

Keep one new habit

A trip can inspire many ideas.
Trying to change everything usually means changing nothing.
Choose one realistic habit to bring into everyday life.

It might be:

- walking more;
- using public transport;
- carrying a reusable bottle;
- cooking a dish you discovered;
- taking regular screen breaks;
- buying from a local shop;
- leaving more empty time in your schedule;
- learning a language;
- spending more time outdoors;
- wasting less food.

Make it small enough to continue.

Eco Ranger challenge

Choose one habit from your journey and practise it for the next seven days.
At the end of the week, decide whether it deserves a permanent place in your life.

FROM THE ROAD

"After returning home, I started carrying a reusable bottle and coffee cup and choosing to buy in bulks more often. The trip became an impulse for lasting change."
— Karolina, Eco Rangers trip in Slovakia

Share stories, not only highlights

When people ask about your trip, it is tempting to show only the most beautiful pictures.

Share something more:

- a mistake;
- an unexpected conversation;
- a difficult moment;
- something you misunderstood;
- a small act of kindness;
- a sustainable choice that worked;
- a sustainable choice that did not work;
- something local people taught you.

Honest stories are often more useful than perfect travel content.
They may also help someone else travel more thoughtfully.

Thank the people who helped

Think about the people who made the journey easier, safer, or more meaningful.

This may include:

- a host;
- a guide;
- another traveller;
- a driver;
- an organiser;
- a local resident;
- someone who gave directions;
- someone who checked that you arrived safely.

Send a short message, leave a thoughtful review, recommend their work, or simply say thank you.

Be specific. A good review can genuinely support a small local business.

Pause for a second

Who/what made this journey better without being part of the original plan?

Review your impact

Think about the choices you made during the journey.

Ask yourself:

- Which transport choices worked well?
- Did I support local people and businesses?
- Where did I create unnecessary waste?
- Did I respect local culture and daily life?
- Did I leave enough time for rest?
- Did I visit places because I cared about them—or because they were popular?
- What could I improve next time?

This is not an examination.
The aim is not to prove that you travelled perfectly. It is to make the next journey a little better.

Deal with what is left

After unpacking, you may find:

- foreign currency;
- unused food;
- travel-size products;
- maps and brochures;
- tickets;
- clothes you bought;
- items you no longer need.

Try to use, share, store, or recycle them responsibly.

You could:

- keep currency for another trip;
- exchange it with another traveller;
- donate unopened food;
- refill travel containers (for example the shower gel or shampoo);
- reuse maps for crafts or notes;
- pass travel equipment to someone else;
- repair damaged items rather than replacing them.

Do not let the end of the trip become the beginning of a new pile of waste.

Choose souvenirs with a story

A souvenir does not need the destination's name printed across it.

A meaningful object might be:

- locally made;
- useful;
- second-hand;
- connected to someone you met;
- produced from local materials and by locals;
- linked to a tradition;
- small enough to carry without buying another suitcase.

Avoid products made from protected animals, plants, coral, shells, archaeological objects, or materials of uncertain origin.

Souvenir test

Before buying, ask:
Will I still value this when I no longer remember the price?

Bring the destination into everyday life

A journey can continue without becoming another flight.

You might:

- cook a local recipe;
- read a book from the destination;
- listen to local music;
- stay in contact with someone you met;
- support a local organisation;
- learn more about the region;
- share responsible recommendations;
- return more slowly and thoughtfully another time.

The purpose is not to copy another culture.

It is to stay curious and remember what the journey opened in you.

Find something to be grateful for

Not every trip is perfect.

There may have been delays, uncomfortable accommodation, bad weather, misunderstandings, tiredness, or plans that failed completely.

Still, look for one thing worth appreciating.

It might be:

- a person;
- a meal;
- a view;
- a lesson;
- a safe arrival;
- a moment of laughter/a memorable moment;
- something you learned about yourself.

Try this

Write one sentence beginning with:
"I am grateful that/for..."

One honest sentence is enough.

Before planning the next journey

Ask yourself:

- What did this trip teach me?
- What would I repeat?
- What would I change?
- Which habit will I keep?
- Who deserves my gratitude?
- Did the destination benefit from my visit?
- What kind of traveller do I want to be next time?

You do not need to return as a completely different person.

Come home with one good story, one useful lesson, and one small change.

That is already a journey of impact.