

Travel without a footprint



Sustainability is the need of the hour, and more so when it comes to travel

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SUSTAINABILITY IS NOW critical for any industry's future, especially travel. While the world of aviation is slowly recovering with boosted baseline recovery in air travel, there is public awareness in a growing number of populations to choose their means of travel.

In recent years, 'flight shame' or flygskam, an anti-flying social movement, with the aim of reducing the environmental impact of aviation, earned popularity when Swedish teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg crossed the Atlantic in a racing yacht to avoid travelling by air to take part in the UN Summit in 2019. Thunberg, who has not flown on a plane since 2015 and made the 15-day voyage, gained recognition when she went on strike from school to protest her government's inaction on climate change. 'Train bragging' called 'tagskryt' encourages people to travel by train. Worldwide data as estimated by the Air Transport Action Group suggest flights produced 915 million tonnes of CO2 in 2019 with the global aviation industry being responsible for 12% of CO2 emissions, compared to 74% from road transport.

Sustainable travel and transportation can enhance economic growth and improve accessibility. As new fuels are needed to comply with limits on sulphur/carbon emissions and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, there is use of zero emission vehicle technologies, which include plug-in hybrids, liquid nitrogen vehicles, hydrogen vehicles (utilising fuel cells or converted internal combustion engines), and compressed air vehicles typically recharged by slow

(home) or fast (road station) electric compressors, flywheel energy storage vehicles and solar powered cars on land.

Adding to this is Air France, which has launched its new carbon emissions reduction programme, 'Air France ACT' to release a strategy with interim targets to hit net-zero emissions by 2050. The carrier is focusing its efforts on reducing emissions from operations and indirect emissions from upstream factors and supporting projects that absorb CO2 from the atmosphere.

If flying across the world is an individual's need or interest, the challenge is to enforce and implement the goals, and win over the sentiment of a portion of the flying public by 'doing the right things.' So does this mean the world urgently needs a transport system that allows people to travel around the planet without leaving carbon footprints behind? A better way to

avoid carbon emissions is to travel via walking, bicycle, or train. A bike can reduce travel emissions by almost 70%, while a train instead of a flight could reduce emissions by nearly 84%. But the change in travel sentiments is quite evident.

Booking.com released its 2022 Sustainable Travel Research Report with insights gathered from more than 30,000 travellers across 32 countries and territories. It highlights that the impact of their trips remains top of mind, with 91% of Indian travellers saying they want to travel more sustainably in the coming 12 months. With 94% of Indian travellers confirming that sustainable travel is important, 68% cited that recent news about climate change has influenced them to make more sustainable travel choices. To that end, 64% of Indian travellers say the sustainabil-

ity efforts of accommodations and transport providers play a strong role in their property and transport decisions, respectively. In fact, 88% of Indian travellers say they would be more likely to choose a sustainable accommodation, whether they were looking specifically for one or not.

Data also suggests how Indian travellers are mindful of how far they travel, how they get there. As many as 31% Indian travellers say they chose to travel to a destination closer to home to reduce their carbon footprint and 31% indicated that they researched public transport and/or options to rent a bicycle in their chosen destination. As many as 39% also chose to travel by train instead of the car for longer distances and 43% say they feel ashamed to fly because of its impact on the environment. When it comes to booking transportation for their trips, 73% actively look for sustainability information.

As Glenn Fogel, CEO of Booking.com, says, "Travel should remain a powerful force for good, bringing enhanced cultural understanding, socio-economic opportunities for countless communities and the potential to help rejuvenate and protect our planet for the long term."

The Russia-Ukraine war and ongoing Covid-19 lockdowns have dampened the longer-term outlook for global air travel. According to Bain & Company, baseline recovery scenario for 2022 rose from 65% to 73% of 2019 levels due to the strong first quarter, with projected revenues for the year up from \$432 billion to \$488 billion. But air traffic levels may not return to pre-pandemic levels until the second quarter of 2025. Travel projections between Europe and Asia have taken a significant hit, dropping from 70% to 56% of 2019 levels, not because of environmental awareness but reflecting the impact of China's lockdowns, soaring operation costs due to bans on flights over Russian airspace.

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