

# Flying less



This is the fifth in a series on taking larger steps toward sustainability. You know yourself best. What would it take to get yourself to fly less?

## Can flying be that bad?

Absolutely. A single round trip flight from New York to Europe or San Francisco creates a warming **impact equivalent to 2 to 3 tons of carbon dioxide per person**. Keep in mind the average American generates 19 tons of carbon dioxide and the average European produces 10 over an entire year.

The impact is this high because all airplane emissions combined (which also includes sulfates and particulates) have a significantly greater impact than CO<sub>2</sub> alone. In addition, the contrails have been found to contribute to the formation of cirrus clouds which trap heat.

Also keep in mind that analysts expect global aviation to grow by 5% per year for the next two decades (as it has for the last 30 years). If things continue at this rate, the size of the industry will double in 15 years and triple in about 23.

All in all, reducing or eliminating flying can make a significant impact on your carbon footprint.

## Motivating yourself

**What is going to motivate you to fly less?** (Besides the thought of avoiding the early arrival at the airport requirement, the security hassle, and the recycled air.)

**Perhaps looking at travel guides on less distant areas would inspire you to visit them.** Think of the money you could save vacationing closer to home.

**Does the idea of actually seeing the countryside you travel through appeal?** On a train you can do that or read, watch movies, or even (shudder) work. And you don't have to deal with traffic!



**Do you respond to the idea of helping others?** It has been estimated from data that about 8,000 deaths a year result from the particulate pollution of planes at cruising altitude—about 35,000 feet—and another 2,000 deaths result from pollution emitted during takeoffs and landings. By flying less, you can do your part to save lives.

## Carrying out the plan

**For business, consider telecommuting with Skype instead of flying.**

**Think about what speaks to you.**

**If you like culture**, consider a train ride to New York. See the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, opera, maybe a Broadway show. You could stay at one of the more reasonably priced hotels (they do exist) near Penn Station and a convenient subway stop.

**If nature is more your thing**, check out the Smoky Mountain Field School (<http://www.smfs.utk.edu/>). You can participate in modestly priced field trips on birding, bears, salamanders, nature photography, and other themes in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

### **Want to be the only tourists**

frolicking in Lake James, getting a personal tour of Somerset Place, or enjoying a quarter mile of beach on Bear Island? Those without children may experience these things traveling around North Carolina in the first week of September or the first week of June while kids are in school. VisitNC (<http://www.visitnc.com/>) can give you other ideas.



There are more great places you can reach without a plane than you could possibly visit in a lifetime. **Go ahead: build your own dream trip!**

## References

Boeing. (2015). Traffic and market outlook. Retrieved from <http://www.boeing.com/commercial/market/long-term-market/traffic-and-market-outlook/>

Flying Clean Alliance. (n.d.). Issue Briefing: Impacts of Airplane Pollution on Climate Change and Health. Retrieved from [http://www.flyingclean.com/impacts\\_airplane\\_pollution\\_climate\\_change\\_and\\_health](http://www.flyingclean.com/impacts_airplane_pollution_climate_change_and_health)

Inman, M. (2010). Plane Exhaust Kills More People Than Plane Crashes. *National Geographic News*. Retrieved from <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2010/10/101005-planes-pollution-deaths-science-environment/>

Rosenthal, E. (2013, January 26). "Your Biggest Carbon Sin May Be Air Travel." *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/27/sunday-review/the-biggest-carbon-sin-air-travel.html?ref=elisabethrosenthal&r=0>