



Reducing waste when traveling

Travelers can generate a lot of waste and pollution, even with the best intentions. But it isn't hard to make a few changes that can help us avoid a lot of trash and otherwise green up our time away from home.

What can I do?

The U.S. Travel Data Center estimates that 43 million U.S. travelers are "ecologically concerned." There are several ways that travelers can reduce waste while traveling. Here are just a few ideas to get started.

Tips for reducing waste while traveling

- Businesses are responsive to their guests, customers and clients who voice concerns, so speak up. Write a note or speak directly to the general manager of the hotel, the operator of a resort or campground, the captain of the airplane, or the manager of a tour company; offer up compliments or comments regarding their company's environmental performance.
- Book your guestrooms, campsites or meeting rooms in places that are clearly interested in protecting our environment, and let management know that's why you've chosen their establishment. Encourage the places you visit to reduce waste and to implement water- and energy-saving measures.
- Use reusable bags, storage containers and towels. Rent equipment, avoid disposables, and pack waste-free picnics by bringing reusables and recyclables home with you. Buy fruits and vegetables without packaging.
- Purchase electronic tickets for air travel whenever possible.

- Going on a fishing trip? Use non-lead sinkers. This will protect wildlife from lead poisoning.
- Gas boats on land instead of in the water to reduce pollution in lakes and rivers.
- Upgrade to the most efficient boat motor. A 4-stroke engine is quieter, 40 times cleaner, and 2 to 4 times more fuel-efficient than a 2-stroke engine. (*Focus 10,000: Minnesota's Lakeside Magazine*, July 1999)
- Keep campfire ash far from lakeshores to protect water quality.

Typical hotel waste

Nationally, about 50 percent of a typical lodging's waste stream is recyclable. The portion that isn't recyclable could be significantly reduced or eliminated.

Food and non-recyclables	46.2%
Paper	25.3%
Cardboard	11.7%
Plastics	6.7%
Glass	5.6%
Metals	4.5%

Based on volume

Sources: HVS Eco Services (1998) City of Los Angeles Waste Generation Study (1993)

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Food/Restaurants tips

Food and packaging waste accounts for as much as half of what is thrown away in a day, especially when you are far from home. Yet there are some easy ways for you to reduce how much food and packaging you throw away.

- Reduce **fast food waste** and excess packaging in carryout food. “No thanks, I don’t need a bag,” may draw a curious look, but often a bag isn’t needed for smaller orders.
- Carry your own **reusable mug** to avoid disposable cups.
- Pack a **cooler** of food bought in **bulk or deli-style** (which are often “least-packaged” options) such as meats, cheeses and cookies.
- Bring along **reusable plates and flatware**. Use lightweight plastic plates instead of paper plates, because they can be washed and used several times over.
- **Avoid room service** to reduce the use of disposable items.
- Ask for **smaller portions** when ordering food where portions are excessive. When offered individual packages of condiments, take only what you’ll use.
- Make sure to promptly **refrigerate leftovers** you bring home so they don’t end up as waste.



Transportation tips

- Choose to **walk, bike or cross-country ski** instead using motorized forms of recreation.
- Enjoy **walking tours**. Walk where sensible and safe.
- Use **public transportation** when available.
- **Carpool** with friends or family to reduce miles traveled in your vehicle.
- Use the **hotel van** instead of renting a car.
- **Share taxis**. You create less pollution, plus you leave the driving to others.
- If you are driving, **turn your motor off when idling**. Encourage tour bus drivers to turn the motor off when idling.

Hotel tips

Many hotels have implemented waste reduction practices into their operations. Here are a few things that travelers can do to help hotels reduce the amount of waste they generate.

- Let the hotel know that it’s not necessary to **change your sheets and towels** every day.
- Reduce water use by taking **shorter baths or showers**.
- When you leave your hotel room, **turn off** the air conditioner, heat, lights, television, and close the drapes.
- Participate in hotel **recycling** programs by placing recyclables in appropriate bins.
- Be sure to **turn off** exercise equipment, sauna, whirlpool, or tennis court lights when you’re through.
- **Leave** the little bottles of bathroom amenities in the room if unopened. Share any complimentary newspapers with others. Leave it in the lobby for reuse or see that it’s recycled.
- If available, use the hotel’s **electronic check-out** program on the TV. You can view your bill, approve it, and help reduce paperwork.

Eco-tourism

Eco-tourism is a philosophy for travelers to follow to reduce their ecological impact on the places they visit. Become an “eco-tourist.”

- Take only the brochures or maps that you need.
- Take photographs, but avoid disposable cameras that are expensive and wasteful. The **Use Less Stuff Report** recommends buying rolls of film with 36 shots rather than 12 or 24. Packaging waste is reduced, and you’ll save about 40 percent.
- Do not take “souvenirs” from natural areas, historical areas or hotels.
- Leave only footprints. Take everything out that you brought with you.
- Protect endangered species and avoid purchasing products such as tortoise shell, ivory, animal skins or feathers. The U.S. Customs Service (www.customs.ustreas.gov) offers a list of items that cannot be imported or brought into the country.
- Set an example — pick up at least one piece of litter every day, especially at places with lots of tourists.



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Reduce Waste—If not you, who? is a project of the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance • 800-632-3299



Your county solid waste office is a great resource for waste reduction materials, including local waste and environmental information, education resources and speakers.

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