

ECO ADVENTURES

For as long as travel necessitates using carbon-emitting transportation – airplanes, cars and ships, for example – ‘sustainable travel’ will remain an oxymoron, at least until a workable global emissions trading scheme is implemented. (Air travel currently accounts for three to five percent of global carbon emissions, but it is the fastest growing cause of global warming.) However, responsible tourism can provide real social and economic benefits to local people and destinations. And the ‘altruistic travellers’ visiting these destinations don’t just want to see the sights; there is a visible travel trend from ‘seeing’ to ‘doing’, which ranges from the hardcore ‘voluntourists’ who help to rebuild communities devastated by natural disasters or teach village children, to groups taking charity cycle rides, to ‘geo’ tourists taking personal, no-footprint adventures in fragile environments.

In this issue, we try to cover as many of these green-themed ventures as possible, while highlighting organisations that are leading the way to facilitate these endeavours. This first takes us to the hill tribes of northern Thailand, from page 90, where we meet some of the ethnic groups which make this region so culturally rich, and learn which villages can accommodate home-stay visits.

Next it’s to New Zealand, one of the destinations best equipped to manage sustainable travel around its tranquil, unspoiled surrounds. Here we try out the insane number of fairly extreme sports the Kiwis throw at us, from page 100, focusing on South-Island Queenstown and Invercargill.

Scooting over to Brazil – a leader in ecotourism – from page 112, we frolic around the billion-year-old plateau which looms out of the plains near Brasilia and encounter one of the least known and most threatened jewels of the natural world: the savannah forest, or *cerrado*.

Voluntourism is fast becoming an important niche travel market with over 75,000 Brits now partaking in volunteer travel each year. We visit Thailand’s Andaman coast from page 122 to see how one group is helping to alleviate poverty long-term through community-based tourism initiatives.

Architects are important pioneers in the eco travel movement. One of the world’s leading authorities on sustainable tourism facilities is Hitesh Mehta, and he shows us some of his ecolodge guidelines from page 126.

Much of our eco analysis is reserved for a special *Take the Green Road* section on Laos from page 130, detailing important projects in which sustainable tourism NGO SNV is involved.

Diving – massively popular, and also, unregulated, massively threatening to underwater habitats. We take a look at several semi-sustainable aquatic options in Australia and Southern Thailand, from page 140.

Travel... wisely, or your grandchildren won’t forgive you, with **lifestyle + travel**.

Safe journey,



Peter Myers
Editor-in-Chief

