



Shebara, The Red Sea

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# Travel with a Conscience

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**Keen on lower-impact travel? These destinations – and airlines – are championing sustainability**

According to the Sustainable Travel Report by Booking.com, more than 75 per cent of travellers around the world wish to travel more sustainably. Taking a more eco-conscious approach to seeing the world requires taking many factors into consideration – from the airlines we fly with to the hotels we stay in; the restaurants we dine in and the clothes we wear along the way; and even the products and services we choose, for everything from our showers to our entertainment. For people who want to support more destinations that champion sustainability, it can be hard to know where to start. While we can't help you commit to the personal habits that can make a difference, we certainly can help you plan your next break. Here are some locations actively working to help build a greener future – and a chance to learn more about some of the airlines that can get you there.

**■ The Red Sea, Saudi Arabia** For Red Sea Global – the developer behind the regenerative tourism destinations The Red Sea and AMAALA – sustainability is one of the most important aspects to its principled approach. The company aims to power its destinations by 100 per cent renewable energy, establish marine-protected



Four Seasons AMAALA

areas, grow more than 30 million plants by 2030, deliver a 30 per cent net conservation benefit by 2040 across its destinations, and achieve fully net zero operations from 2030. The world-class properties being developed across The Red Sea aren't just iconic in terms of their groundbreaking design, outstanding service, and access to jaw-dropping, never-seen-before sights – they're also very focused on preserving the ecosystem they exist within, committed to maintaining its status as a pioneering regenerative tourism destination. The Red Sea has also been officially designated a Dark Sky Reserve by Dark Sky International, recognising its commitment to restricting and reducing light pollution in the area, and naturally protecting it from intrusive development. *flydubai flies to The Red Sea direct from Dubai twice a week from Dhs2,435. In recent years, the UAE-founded airline has been strategically investing in aircraft that reduce fuel use and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The Red Sea International Airport is also committed to sustainability, and is entirely powered by renewable energy sources.*



Amsterdam

**■ Amsterdam, The Netherlands**

Known as the bicycle capital of the world, Amsterdam has countless green spaces and walking routes surrounding its tree-lined canals, and restricts access to cars in certain parts of its urban areas. The city even has its own forest, the Amsterdamse Bos – which has been around since the 1930s. If you decide to explore through other modes of transport, you can rest with the knowledge that the city actively promotes the use of electric vehicles, and is taking steps to push its trams, trains, and buses towards zero-emission systems. Uniquely, this canal city is also leading the way in water management. Many of its restaurants embrace a farm-to-table organic approach, choosing as many locally-grown, sustainably-sourced ingredients as possible – and a wide range of its shopping options follow the same philosophy. It was also the first city in the world to formally adopt the doughnut economic model – a framework for sustainable development that is based on two rings: one being a social foundation, to ensure no citizens are left without life's essentials, and the other being an ecological ceiling, to uphold planetary boundaries protecting Earth's life-supporting systems. *KLM flies to Amsterdam direct from Dubai 24 times a week from Dhs2,440. Although only one per cent of KLM's fuel use is made up of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), it is striving to increase this – and in the meantime, it also supports three nature regeneration projects*

*around the world in an effort to help repair damaged ecosystems. The airline is part of SkyTeam's Aviation Challenge, and on-board, it tries to reduce the weight of onboard items, make more conscious meal choices, and recycle as much as possible.*

**■ Singapore City, Singapore**

The aptly-named Garden City's commitment to sustainability is evident from the moment you arrive in Singapore

Changi Airport. The airport is renowned for its green practices, which incorporate an intelligent water conservation system, revolutionary green spaces, and solar power, alongside a circular economy principle. The city itself is renowned as one of the most sustainability-friendly destinations in the world, through forward-thinking environmental policies and innovative urban planning. More than 47 per cent of the island is covered in green spaces (including vertical gardens and biophilic hotels), while many of its buildings hold the renowned Green Mark certification. By 2040, the government aims to phase out all vehicles with internal combustion engines, but in the meantime, its public transport system incorporates as many electric vehicles as possible, and the city is extremely cyclist- and pedestrian-friendly. Despite its small size, its biodiversity is impressive, and as a "Smart City", it has embraced cutting-edge technology to help reduce its carbon footprint and energy consumption.

*Singapore Airlines flies to Singapore direct from Dubai daily from Dhs2,100. The airline supports the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and is committed to exploring and adopting lower-carbon fuels. It continually invests in new generation fuel-efficient aircraft, and actively promotes resource efficiency and waste reduction.* →



Gardens by the Bay in Singapore

IMAGES: RED SEA GLOBAL; FOUR SEASONS HOTELS AND RESORTS

IMAGES: SOUTHTOWNBOY STUDIO, RICHELIE CHAN/ADOBE STOCK

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■ **Taipei, Taiwan**

On this beautiful East Asian destination once known as Formosa – meaning “beautiful island” – the government has set a goal of achieving 20 per cent renewable energy by 2025. To support this, significant investments have been made around offshore wind farms and solar energy projects, while the country has been promoting low-carbon tourism routes for over a decade. Multiple initiatives have been adopted to help reduce emissions and pollution in the transport sector, from an expanded public transport system to a switch to electric buses, subsidies being provided for electric scooters, and most robust bike-sharing schemes. As a population, Taiwan’s citizens and residents tend to be very waste-conscious – with more than 55 per cent of its waste recycled, the country has one of the highest recycling rates in the world. Many of its farms have embraced sustainable agricultural practices that reduce water usage and promote a variety of organic, pesticide-free methods that support biodiversity. In its urban areas, a strong green building policy has seen many of its developments receive impressive certifications or notable recognition. The Taipei 101 skyscraper, for example, is certified

as a LEED Platinum green building, while the Beitou Public Library in the capital is the country’s first green library, with a roof featuring photovoltaic cells that generate energy, and the ability to collect rainwater for use elsewhere.

**Cathay Pacific** flies to Taipei from Dubai via Hong Kong, typically twice a week, from Dhs3,740. The Hong Kong carrier is so deeply committed to sustainability that it releases its own annual Sustainability Report. In its 2023 report, Cathay Pacific shared an aim to significantly improve its carbon intensity and reduce cabin waste by 2030, by modernising its fleet, incorporating a variety of circular economy principles into its product and service design by selecting more sustainable or recycled materials upstream, and channelling used items back for recycling or repurposing.

■ **Glasgow, Scotland**

One of Glasgow’s nicknames is “the dear green place”. A loose translation of its Gaelic name, Glas Caomh – which means “Green Hollow” – it’s an apt name for a place that has been working hard to embrace its status as a green city. It has a goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2030, and since 2023, it’s

boasted a low-emissions zone with restricted car access, to help cut down on pollution and increase its pedestrian-friendly quality. The Glasgow region has more renewable energy sites than any other UK city and by 2030, it also hopes to be the UK’s first net zero destination. It’s already been named the number one most sustainable destination in the UK and Western Europe by the Global Destination Sustainability Index – which also ranked it as eighth in the world for its sustainability-friendliness, against more than 100 other destinations. The host city for COP26 in 2021, its many green accolades include the Glasgow Convention Bureau Award in 2017, the OVO Hydro being the first arena in the world to achieve the Greener Arena Certification in 2022 – the same year that the GFPP started its own Good Food Movement campaign – and achieving the Silver Sustainable Food Places destination in 2023. This year, the Glasgow World indoor Championships became the first event to earn platinum level recognition for sustainable delivery. Beyond the formal kudos, visitors to Glasgow can enjoy bike hire schemes to be used on ever-expanding bike paths, easy access

to countless public green spaces, restaurants that are embracing organic and locally-grown and sourced ingredients, hotels that minimise waste, and a city-wide effort for a vision to move “from steam, to green”.

**Etihad Airways** flies to Glasgow direct from Abu Dhabi daily from Dhs4,720. Etihad’s Greenliner Program isn’t just a commitment and sustainability strategy for the airline to follow – it’s “a call sent out to the aviation world” to think and act differently, as they remain open to others to “tell us what we’re doing wrong, and step up to show us how to get it right.” The airline continues to invest in newer, more fuel-efficient and emissions-reducing aircraft, embrace alternative fuels (SAF), and utilise technology such as the ecoDemonstrator programme. Etihad has also invested in carbon-offset programmes such as the Etihad Mangrove Forest Project (which committed to planting 182,000 mangroves in Abu Dhabi and other global locations to absorb CO2), and the airline aims to not only reduce 50 per cent of net emissions by 2035, but also achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

■ **Basel, Switzerland**

“For Basel Tourism, sustainability isn’t just a buzzword – it’s a principle we want to embed within tourism development,” Letizia Elia, director of Basel Tourism, states on the canton’s official “This Is Basel” destination site. Switzerland as a whole boasts a decent amount of sustainability-friendly ideals: 75 per cent of its power comes from renewable sources, and by 2050, the country aims to make this 100 per cent. In 2023, the Swisustainable Destination programme was announced to help the country achieve its goals of being a sustainable country for tourism by 2030 – and just six months after the programme was launched, Basel became one of the first three tourism destinations in Switzerland to reach Swisustainable Destination Level I. Basel-Stadt is also on-track to achieve net zero by 2037.

Basel is easy to explore on foot (the city centre is car-free) and easily accessible by train – and with the BaselCard, visitors can travel on all public transport free of charge. It’s also easy to rent an e-bike, for just CHF20 per day. A number of its hotels, like the Gaia hotel, have embraced only-organic products and zero-waste strategies, while others are setting an example through the wider social, environmental, and economic



Towers of Kelvingrove in Glasgow



Rhine River in Basel

aspects of sustainability. Among its award-winning sustainability-friendly properties, the Basel Marriott Hotel was the first hotel in Switzerland to receive the Operations and Maintenance (O+M) platinum LEED certification. The Novotel Basel City holds a Green Key certificate, and both of Basel’s ibis hotels use 100 per cent renewable energy, also investing at least 10 per cent of profits

into sustainability and community projects. **flydubai** flies to Basel direct from Dubai four times a week from Dhs1,325. The Dubai-based airline is committed to supporting the UAE’s plans to achieve net zero by 2050, and continues to identify areas across the business to enhance its sustainability efforts complementing the fuel and carbon emissions reduction that its fleet provides. **BT**



Taipei, Taiwan