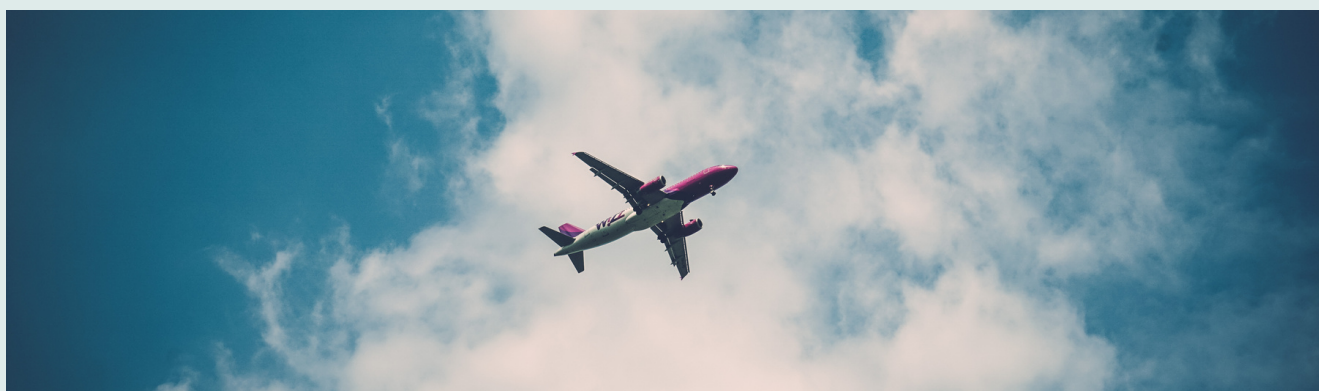




The Sustainable Travel Trend Inspired by Climate Activist Greta Thunberg

Issue

It is estimated that the aviation industry is responsible for around 5% of global warming (Timperley, 2020). Considering that only a small percentage of the world are frequent flyers, this industry has quite a significant impact on the environment respectively.



Due to the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 halting thousands of flights, the aviation industry's CO2 emissions decreased by 60% in the first three months (BBC, 2020). However, although the pandemic has reduced the impact we have on the environment, there is still an urgent need for us to reduce our emissions and make more sustainable decisions (Lund, 2020).

Outcome

As a result of travellers' increased interest in climate-conscious travel and the growing protests against unsustainable travel and tourism, tourism companies are responding. *Lonely Planet*, for example, has produced several resources for travellers aiming to partake in 'green' travel, including a guide on 'How to travel sustainably like Greta' (Brady, 2019).



Additionally, travel providers have started to include train-only journey options for tourists (Wiley, 2019). Airlines are also responding to the 'Greta Effect', some are promising to deliver sustainable aviation and encouraging passengers to offset their carbon footprint through the airline's own initiatives (Bgainski, 2019).

Actions

One of the most active champions of sustainable travel is Greta Thunberg, the teenager has been described as making an "unprecedented contribution to the spread of climate change awareness" (Gupta, 2021). In 2018 Greta began the 'School Strike for Climate' protest in Sweden. Since then it has spread globally, with thousands of young people across the world following in her footsteps and protesting against climate change.

In 2019 Greta embarked on a journey from Plymouth, England to New York City to attend the *2019 UN Climate Action Summit*. Thunberg made headlines by choosing to sail for 15 days in a zero-carbon racing yacht to avoid the pollution associated with travelling by plane or cruise ship (Nelson, 2019).



Greta's sustainable efforts have inspired young people to protest against the unsustainable travel industry. In 2019 schoolchildren in Bristol took part in the 'School Strike for Climate' alongside over a million children worldwide. They protested against a local issue; the planned Bristol Airport expansion (Brock, 2019). Many have protested the expansion due to the impact that increased flights will have on carbon emissions.

This interest in climate-conscious travel has become an important feature in travel and tourism discussions. The 'Greta Effect' has spread across Europe terms like 'train-bragging' and 'flight shame' are becoming more popular, displaying travellers' increased interest in minimising their environmental footprint (Wiley, 2019). Over 50% of Gen Z and Millennial travellers state that environmentally-friendly holidays are personally important (STR, 2020), with one third of travellers under 30 changing their plans to be more environmentally friendly (Stone, 2019).

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Photos from: Canva Images, Greta Thunberg's Twitter (2019), and Betts (2019) in Brock (2019).