Greetings!

Promoting responsible travel during Easter holidays

The upcoming festive season is already bringing so much excitement. Travelling is already part of itinerary of some of us. However, we are often asked what are the things we need to know or to do when it comes to being responsible on our travels? Responsible travel is about leaving a positive impact not only on the environment but also on the communities and cultures in the areas we visit. This week we will provide a brief guide in promoting sustainable tourism in case you will be travelling to a protected or conservation area such as national parks, reserves and conservancies or even to our beautiful coastal beaches during this Easter.

Ask the tour company for their policy on responsible tourism

Most tour companies that have embraced sustainability often have a sustainability policy on their website but if you do not see it ask them if they have one. This basically describes their commitment to minimising their negative environmental impacts, social, or cultural impacts, respect of human rights and support to local economy in the areas they conduct their business. When you book your travel through a tour company that has sustainability at ‘heart’ you are likely to impact positively on the environment, communities and cultures of the areas you will be spending your holiday. They also work with accommodation facilities that are committed to promoting sustainability in their operations. Most of these accommodations participate actively in sustainable tourism certifications such as Eco-rating certification.
**Participating in beach clean-ups**

Some of the eco-rated facilities along the coast such as Turtle Bay Beach Club in Watamu have scheduled regular beach clean ups, and encourage their guests also to participate. Taking part in a beach clean-up is a simple activity, but one which will keep the oceans healthy for generations to come. Just by picking the plastic and flip-flops along the beach, you shall have saved our biodiversity in a big way. This is because when these wastes end up in the ocean marine life such as turtles often confuse them to be food, ingest them and their stomachs get filled; which prevents them from feeding anymore and eventually die. Some hotels at the coast have adopted an innovative approach towards beach cleanups, that you could also adopt as an accommodation. They have placed baskets close to the beach with a signage encouraging guests to pick at least one basket, and collect rubbish during their beach walk then later empty the rubbish in the bin before placing the basket back on the rail. See illustration below of baskets at the Driftwood Beach Club.

![Baskets at Driftwood Beach Club](image)

**Avoid using plastic straws**

Plastic straws are single-use plastic that you will only use once then dispose away. Plastic straws just like any other plastic do not biodegrade but rather photodegrade into finer toxins that pollute the surface water and ground water resources. Basically you do not need plastic straw but can
consider other sustainable alternatives such as paper straw and bamboo straws, if you have to use a straw during your travel. The picture below illustrates a bamboo straw in use at Medina Palms.

![Bamboo straw in use at Medina Palms](image)

The responsibility to travel in a sustainable way lies with us. The reality is that it’s not really hard; you just have to make a start and embody these values. We hope that you have got a few ideas through this article, and you will practice them as a way of promoting sustainable tourism. We also believe that you will share your best experiences with others, so that this conversation can reach many people, for the benefit of our planet!