How to travel sustainably during the festive season

While it is true that the travel and tourism sector has been greatly impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic at a global scale and in an unprecedented way, the desire to travel has been witnessed in various parts of the world including in Kenya. This has been in the wake of ease of restrictions and lockdowns that characterized governments’ response towards the pandemic. The number of tourist arrivals may not be in the pre-pandemic levels but today’s traveler remains environmentally conscious and socially aware than ever, albeit in the knowledge that travelling in the new world is different from a health and safety standpoint.

The principles and philosophies of sustainable travel remains unchanged to this day and should be followed every day even now as the festive season approaches. Festive season is perhaps one of the most exciting periods of the year, where families gather to celebrate together and to travel to protected areas to view wildlife among many other activities. This week we will share some of the tips that we need to take into consideration as we travel for holidays, so that we may live our world a better place, and more importantly to remind ourselves of the important role we can play in shaping our world towards sustainability.

Reduce plastic waste generation

Plastic waste is mainly generated from plastic water bottles and plastic straws, and quite often than not disposed into the environment rather than recycling. Once in the environment, this type of waste photodegrades into finer toxins, which end up polluting surface water and ground water resources, affecting biodiversity such as fish. Perhaps, most of us could be wondering how the plastics affect fish? They ingest plastics in the disguise that they are food, which end up filling
their gut leading to death. The good news is that we have the ‘tools’ in our hands to avoid these trends by adopting sustainable alternatives, which are increasingly becoming available. One of these alternatives is the use of refillable water bottles, which are either glass or steel and come in a variety of sizes and shapes. The picture below illustrates a wide range of refillable bottles that you can purchase for your use.

Source: https://www.yournec.org/zwh-reusable-water-bottle/

Secondly, paper straws, bamboos straws and stainless steel straws have also emerged as sustainable alternatives to plastic straws. The picture below taken during the ecorating reassessment of Medina Palms in March 2019, illustrates a bamboo straw in use.
Re-use of towels

In most eco-lodges and camps it’s common to find notices strategically placed in the guest bathrooms, encouraging them to conserve the environment and natural resources. Re-using your towel may always seem to be a simple thing, but in reality it is quite important in the sense that this practice not only conserves water and energy, but also potential chemical pollution from use of laundry detergents.

Supporting the local community

Tourism has for many years been a major contributor to the global economy. The ability of tourism to be a driver of local development cannot be overstated. From providing employment, construction of schools, improving health infrastructure, providing market for locally produced products just to mention a few, tourism continues to play an important role in ensuring local communities benefit on a far more successful and sustainable scale. These benefits have been realized in various tourist destinations in Kenya such as Masai Mara, and at the heart of this
success without whom none of these would have been possible are the guests. As you travel during this festive season, you too can play a role in supporting local development in the tourist destinations you will be visiting for example through donations. The picture below is a kitchen at Siana Girls Secondary School constructed by Entumoto Safari Camp through guests’ donations.

Sustainable travel does not mean scaling back on comfort or enjoyment, but rather traveling with a company, and staying in an accommodation that conserves the environment, supports local communities and preserves the local cultures. The good news is that ecorated facilities are already leading the way in ensuring that your travel is sustainable. We hope through this article you have learned a few tips you can adopt while you travel to see the enchanting wildlife and relax on the sandy beaches that our country offer. Together, we can secure the future of our planet!