

It never fails: during the month of May, I start thinking about how my family and I will spend our summer vacation. This year, we decided to incorporate sustainability into our vacation plans. I know when I tell people we are taking a sustainable vacation they assume it is all about hiking or biking for miles or trekking across the Appalachian Mountains, but, these are extreme green vacations. What we are doing is incorporating sustainability whenever possible, into our vacation. A sustainable vacation is taking into account your eco-footprint and making as many socially responsible choices as possible, from deciding where to go and how to travel to choosing where to stay.

First, a little research is in order. How do you want to spend your vacation? Is it sand and sun, glaciers and ocean, or lakes and woods? Or maybe this is the year you consider one of the breathtaking spots located in New York State or nearby Canada that you have always wanted to visit but never found the time. How about considering Niagara Falls, camping in the Adirondacks, or visiting the Corning Museum of Glass or the Herkimer Diamond Mines? There are many amazing spots right in our own back yard. These local vacations look and feel as though you've traveled far away, without the driving hassles and fuel necessary to reach destinations that are hundreds or thousands of miles away.

Now you need to determine how you will travel to your vacation destination. Buses and trains, depending on your vehicle, can be the better choice, since they typically are five times more energy-efficient than driving. If you were planning on flying, driving is a better choice, since even long-distance car travel creates fewer CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than plane travel. Investigate your options and find out which mode of transportation best fits into your sustainable vacation.

Where do you stay if you want to be sustainable: a hotel, a condo, or a camp? If you are thinking hotel or this is your only option, understand that typical hotels consume significant amounts of energy. If this is your only option, look for a green hotel. Green hotels have adopted a list of environmentally friendly practices, including requesting that guests re-use towels and housekeeping will only change your sheets upon your request. If you have the option to choose a condo or cottage, these are an even better choice because you now have the option to cook your own meals, open windows when the air conditioner is not really necessary and wash your sheets and towels when you know they need cleaning.

Last but not least is making sure your home and office stay sustainable during your vacation. The short list provided below will help ensure that your home and office are sustainable while you enjoy your vacation. For more on greening your vacation visit GREENYOUR, your guide to green living.

#### **Sustainable Summer Vacation Office and Home Practices**

- Unplug all unnecessary appliances, light fixtures, electronics, computers, printers, clock radios, paper shredders and cell phone chargers. Most of these items if left plugged in, continue to use energy even when you are not using them.
- Make sure all recyclables and trash have been discarded properly.
- Stop mail delivery and arrange to pick up mail at the post office after the trip. The US Postal Service offers a simple online form for requesting Hold Mail Service: <https://holdmail.usps.com/holdmail/>. This is also a great time to stop all those unwanted magazines at <http://www.obviously.com/junkmail/>.
- Turn the water off at the main shutoff valve (homeowners only) and lower the temperature to vacation setting or the lowest setting on your hot water tank.
- Turn the air conditioning off or place at 85 degrees to decrease the amount of time it will come on while you are away.
- At home, for safety, use a timer to schedule one light to turn on for a period each day.
- At home, if you haven't already installed a motion sensor outside for nighttime lighting, consider taking time before your vacation and installing the sensor. Not only will it trigger when you come home late at night, but it will save energy year round, since your outdoor lighting will be off most of the time, except when you really need it.
- Be sure to have care arranged for all pets.
- Last but not least, turn off all overhead lights before leaving on vacation.