

Should You Ground Yourself? Flight-Free Pledges

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THE

DailyDose

The newsletter to fuel — and thrill — your mind. Read for deep dives into the unmissable ideas and topics shaping our world.

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Today

It's no secret that planes aren't good for the planet. The aviation industry is responsible for nearly 3% of global carbon emissions, even though several airlines are taking steps to reduce emissions. Inspired by the Swedish flygfritt movement, a global campaign has emerged in multiple nations, with Flight Free UK taking off in 2019 and Flight Free USA in 2020. Those who sign up commit to avoiding air travel for at least a year. In today's Daily Dose, we see how those who've taken the flight-free pledge are doing anything but staying put.

– with reporting by *Fiona Tapp* from Ottawa, Canada 

The flight-free pledge



1 |

Fly less, travel more

London-based Helen Coffey is the author of *Zero Altitude, How I Learned to Fly Less and Travel More*. She's taken the flight-free pledge for the past three years and says she'll never fly in Europe again. But that hasn't stopped her from travelling. In fact, her adventures have become more exciting: Consider her recent 40-hour ferry crossing from Marseilles, France to Tangiers, Morocco. The journey was as gratifying as the destination. "It gives you such a sense of the distance that you're travelling that you miss out on when you fly," she says.

2 |

Change the system

To be sure, it's easier to set a self-imposed flight ban when you live in Europe. After all, the continent is well connected in other ways, with many reliable train routes and land crossings connecting countries. That's why Ariella Granett, co-founder of Flight Free USA, says that these pledges need to be combined with a push for wider changes to systems, such as better rail infrastructure. "This is the shift that needs to happen ... and it starts by being aware that we *can* change ... it's not too late to transition to a fossil-free future," she says.

3 |

The unseen damage of frequent flying

Granett says it's essential to understand just how damaging frequent flying is to the planet. "People don't realize the magnitude of a flight compared to other things they commonly do," she says. "If you were to bring your own fuel to the airplane, you would have to wheel a couple of barrels of oil along with your luggage for your share of a flight."

The staycation stays in vogue



1 |

“It hasn’t felt like a sacrifice”

Despite having family members spread out over four different continents, Granett hasn’t flown in three years and says she’ll never fly again. She lives in California and has plenty of places to enjoy in her backyard, whether her family stays hyper-local or takes trains or drives to explore the state. “It hasn’t felt like a sacrifice at all ... my lifestyle is aligned with my understanding of the science behind climate change and what we need to do.”

2 |

Build your community

It's also important to invest in relationships to strengthen your local community and prevent you from feeling disconnected from loved ones far away. Granett says that the flight-free movement is a community in itself. "A sweet side of this flight-free story is that I've come in contact with campaigners working on these issues all over Europe and become friends with them. I feel more globally connected, but I'm not going anywhere!"

3 |

Become a tourist at home

There's another advantage to staying at home. Coffey says that we often neglect to enjoy our own towns and cities in the way a tourist would. "I live in London... I've lived here for 13 years and I've never been on the London Eye, or to the Tower of London. It's a mindset," she says. "When you decide not to fly, change your idea of what travel is and what it's for. For me, it's having new experiences and making new connections with people and places."

**You've heard of slow fashion.
Now there's slow travel.**



1 |

Give more than you take

Slow travel also allows you to *contribute* rather than simply *visit*. Synan traveled to the rural Atlas Mountain region in Morocco to take part in long-term projects with an organization that helps women attend secondary school. “I’ve gone back and visited a lot of the girls,” she says, describing her experiences as giving her “better kinds of travel memories.”

2 |

No, seriously. Take your time

A traveler and blogger at speckontheglobe.com, Abby Synan flies sparingly, and stays at each destination for weeks at a time. “We have this hurry-up mentality of ‘I have two weeks’ vacation time, I want to hit six countries,’” she says. “Put a little bit more forethought into the itinerary you’re creating.” That might mean giving up on plans to visit multiple countries. “You’re picking one country and you’re travelling within the one space by public transit, as opposed to hopping on three or four flights.”

3 |

The pleasure in the planning

When you practice slow travel, the trip starts before you even leave home. Slow travel requires more pre-planning to learn about local transit and to research longer-stay accommodations. This part of trip planning taps into a delicious brain science phenomenon known as “anticipatory savoring.” Coffey is a fan. “All the travel I’ve done has been so much more exciting and adventurous and felt more exhilarating because planning how to get there is such a big part of it,” she says. “It turns places that we might consider normally quite standard or passé into something very adventurous.”

Try other forms of transport



1 |

Adventure without flying

Ashley Parsons, an American living in France, has committed to never flying in Europe again and avoids long-haul flights unless absolutely necessary. Staying grounded hasn't affected her ability to travel. In fact, she recently completed a journey on the old Silk Route by bicycle and horseback. That trip, which she and her partner called "En Selle" (In the Saddle), saw the couple climbing mountains, cycling from France to Uzbekistan, riding horseback across Albania and Kyrgyzstan and camping for 170 nights. Unfortunately, they had to suspend their travels and return home because of COVID-19.

2 |

Walk, bike, ride

As border restrictions have lifted, Parsons and her partner are planning to complete their journey. “We'd like to continue our trip and there's a series of overnight trains from France to Tehran,” Parsons says. “So, if we can get to Iran by train with our bicycles, we can then bike across the border into Pakistan.” Her key takeaway: When you travel by foot, bike or on horseback, the journey is an integral part of the experience and lets you discover true hospitality. “After we left Europe, we were invited home all the time by people. People really kind of worry about you when you're travelling in a different way,” she says.

3 |

An unforgettable journey

On her journey from France to Morocco, Coffey says a silence descended over her boat as it approached land, the mist cleared and a new country – a new continent – came into view. If she had travelled by air, she wouldn't have been able to savor this experience. “The approach into the city, where you're just like very slowly, majestically making your way into port gradually ... I just found it incredibly exciting.”

Community Corner



What are your thoughts on taking a flight-free pledge and slow travel approach for your own travel?

Share your thoughts with us at OzyCommunity@Ozy.com.

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