

TRAVEL: Eco-travel and technology

The impact of eco-travel

Most forms of travel use one of the world's most valuable natural resources - oil. We burn oil for our transport, which creates carbon dioxide (CO₂) - a main contributor to pollution and global warming. We are now looking to develop more eco-friendly methods of travel, which means finding the best way to get from place to place, whilst causing the least amount of harm to the environment.

What you can do

There are many simple steps that can be taken to make travel more eco-friendly, such as using public transport, cycling or walking instead of driving; or using trains or even boats instead of flying.

Eco-friendly vehicles

Diesel, unleaded and leaded petrol are the common fuels used in vehicles, but the public is becoming more interested in vehicles that are better for the environment. Car companies are now trying to develop models that are more environmentally friendly and produce lower carbon emissions by using alternative fuels. Increasing public demand, as well as Government and European legislation, has added to the need for these alternatives to be developed.

Electric cars:

Instead of using fuel, an electric car works using a large battery (which is charged from the mains) with an electric motor, so it does not generate emissions. This battery can be even more eco-friendly if charged using renewable energy. Although electric cars are initially expensive to buy, in the long run they can be cheaper to run than petrol or diesel cars, and are also excluded from some congestion zone fees. They are best for short journeys that are less than 100 miles.

Hybrid electric vehicles:

Hybrid vehicles use a combination of petrol and electricity to run. These vehicles have a battery that is charged by electricity generated by a small onboard liquid petroleum gas (LPG) engine. This normally runs at a constant speed, giving the most economic use of fuel and low level of air and noise pollution. This is commonly used for cars and buses. However, hybrid cars can be expensive to buy and some car batteries have been known not to work in cold climates.

Electric bikes and scooters:

Bicycles are generally an eco-friendly mode of transport, and there are now a growing number of electric bikes on the road, which use an electric motor. These are growing in popularity (particularly in places like China) and are seen as a great form of transport as they have low running costs, are quiet, are environmentally friendly and are usually exempt from congestion zone charges. There are disadvantages though; they can be expensive to buy, have a low maximum speed and electric power outlets are not always easy to find. They can also take longer to 'fill up' or charge.

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TRAVEL: Eco-travel and technology cont'd**Air powered vehicles:**

A large amount of research and technology is being developed to create energy efficient vehicles that are powered by a compressed air engine combined with an electric motor. There are a few models soon to be launched in the United States.

Hydrogen vehicle:

Hydrogen is an energy carrier and able to power a vehicle in two ways, either through combustion or through fuel cells that turn the hydrogen into electricity. Although this is a more eco-friendly fuel, a disadvantage is that a lot of energy is used in its production.

**Did you know?**

- In Great Britain there are 247,523 miles of roads, and 10,072 miles of railway networks, 1,988 miles of waterways and 471 airports and airfields.
- A journey on Eurostar from London to Brussels generates one tenth of the emissions of an aeroplane journey for the same distance.