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Say 'eco-tourism' to most people and they would probably wonder what you meant. This kind of travel, however, is growing in popularity as travellers begin to understand some of the consequences of global travel for endangered wildlife, locations and cultures. Eco-tourism is a more sensitive way of seeing the world and of exploring without leaving deep footprints wherever you go.

Using some careful planning, it is possible to find a huge range of options now when it comes to these kinds of family vacations. Not only are adventure tours a great way of learning how to care for the world, you can also develop new skills and overcome new challenges, all of which contribute to your personal development. Similarly, your children can take full advantage of the opportunity to learn new skills and experience new perspectives on the world.

Caring and Culture

Many providers of eco-tourism breaks also do as much as they can to minimise the carbon footprint of their package tours. Many adventure tours ensure that they use local and public transport after touchdown at the airport, helping to minimise the effect of burning fuel. They also strive to limit visitor numbers to areas of animal conservation, causing less stress and disruption to often vulnerable species in their native environments.

As well as working alongside animal conservation projects, it is also possible to visit areas where the culture of the local human population could be under threat. There is also the possibility to visit remote areas of the world and stay with local families. Not only can you gain a clearer understanding of the kind of issues that face them on a daily basis, you can also help out and offer your own skills to improve the local situation. This is far more gratifying than the usual holiday spent baking on the beach or drinking in the bar.

Tigers and Trails

Many eco-tourism packages also offer the opportunity to deepen your cultural understanding of the world. People in remote places often have vastly different ways of seeing the world than we do in the West and it helps when as many people as possible can develop a greater understanding of the nuances of different worldviews. This should help to develop more possibilities in the fight to preserve threatened cultures and increase awareness of the issues surrounding certain areas.

Whether you want to help to conserve the tiger in India or to see monkeys in the jungles of Sri Lanka and whether you prefer challenging yourself physically or mentally, eco-tourism offers you some great opportunities. You will relax in some of the world's most remote and interesting regions and also gain skills and valuable experience to help you in your wider life. The sense of gratification is satisfying, whilst you will be left with some fantastic memories as well.

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Grant Bond has been writing about travel ever since he left Durham University in 1990 with nothing but a backpack and a pair of hiking boots to his name. From family vacations to trekking in the woods of Alaska, Grant has covered most of it during his career. He now writes for a range of travel websites and blogs.

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