

Is there any such thing as a sustainable holiday?

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Is there any such thing as a sustainable holiday? The answer is

of course no. Every human activity has some environmental effect and the great majority of these are negative. Tourism has been in the news a lot recently with protests in various places over the effects that tourists are having on the local environment and economy. Most of these places it has to be said correlate with high usage of airBnB but nevertheless the most sustainable holiday is to stay at home. Of course most of us don't want to do this. We need a change of scene to get away and forget about the stresses in life. I will describe some aspects of our recent holiday from an environmental point of view both good and bad. I'm not by any means holding it up as a perfect sustainable holiday by any means, but it does have some positive points. In September we walked the St Cuthbert's way to celebrate a wedding anniversary. This approximately 65 mile walk starts at Melrose in the Scottish Borders and ends up in Lindisfarne. We were not walking it

as a pilgrimage *per se* and I think its fair to say few do.



First the

positives. As a positive point we were getting to and from the walks' beginning and end via public transport. We took the newly reopened borders railway to Tweedbank and then caught a bus to Melrose. Trains have a low carbon footprint but buses are an order of magnitude lower. Another positive was that we were walking the route of course. We needed to eat. Everywhere you go now offers local produce on their menu but actually how local this is a moot point. We did manage to forage a lot of fruit along the way including with permission about four days supply of faller apples for our lunch. At one

place we stayed a lot of our meal came from the walled garden.



More mixed stuff We needed places to stay. We stayed in hotels and BandB's. These had a mixed record as far as the environment was concerned. In the first place the room we stayed in was cold and we could have done with heating on. Other parts of the house were very warm. The second place the house was very new with underfloor heating. We needed no heat switched the underfloor heating right down (which seemed to make little difference, possibly in part since its uninsulated feeder tank was next door). We had to open the window since the room was almost 25°C. We think the lady who owned the BandB never switched the oil fired heating off all summer. The next night in a hotel (old building) we needed the heating on but we could turn it off when we went to bed. The next night in huge old pile the room was cool but OK and in the last but one night also a BandB the room was in the eaves and we needed some heat. In our last night on Lindisfarne the first thing we did was turn the small radiator that heated the room off. Plainly no heating was really needed here. One of the biggest carbon emitters is CH. The fact that the temperatures varied so much I think depended on the levels of insulation, the directions the rooms faced and whether the windows had been opened during the day.



There is still plenty of scope to reduce the nations' energy use by

the means of low energy bulbs- its amazing how many incandescent bulbs are still out there. Other. We used a taxi one night (tried hitching first) since we had to go some miles to get something to eat. We hitched off Lindisfarne to catch the



bus to Berwick upon Tweed.

Our footprint was low, few people

walk this route compared to other routes I've walked. Probably about 20/day, so the impact on the local environment was low. Of course if you find the perfect place don't go there you will ruin it... As a sustainable holiday it was not too bad but part of the problem is you are dependent on other people and their environmental attitudes. Neil

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