



GCSE

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ENGLISH

HIGHER TIER

PAPER 2

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Resource Material for use with Section A

WHEN IT'S GOOD TO FLY

First we say you've got to fly less. Now we're saying you have to jet across the planet to stay in eco-luxury. Life's confusing, says Mark Hodson



Flying is bad, right? Nobody with a social conscience should fly halfway round the world on holiday, spewing carbon into the atmosphere.

Well, it depends. If we were all to stop travelling to developing countries tomorrow, who would suffer? Not just us, but hundreds of thousands of people whose livelihoods depend on tourism. We've spent a generation trying to persuade people in poor countries throughout the world that if they protect their local ecosystems, we'll pay them a rewarding visit. So, do we walk away from the rainforest eco-lodges, community-run safari camps and conservation diving schools just because environmentalists tell us to?

This does not give us the right to whizz around the world, but it should remind us that travel, when organised with care, can be a great force for good.

PORINI CAMP, Kenya

African national parks are a good thing. That's a no-brainer, isn't it? But what happens on the other side of the fence? In Kenya, it turns out that the local Masai people felt excluded and their feelings weren't exactly boosted by the busloads of tourists who were herded into their villages to stare at the 'colourful' natives. No surprise, then, that the Masai continued to hunt protected animals, which they regarded as a threat rather than a benefit.

But Jake Cook, a white Kenyan, had an idea. Why not open a camp on Masai-owned land outside the national park, employ local people to build and run it, and pay them rent? Not only would the tribes reap a real benefit from tourism, they would also have an

incentive to conserve the wildlife. Visitors, in turn, would experience a genuinely warm welcome and get the run of a vast area of wilderness.

The result is Ambolesi Porini, a small tented camp a few miles north of Ambolesi National Park. Because only twelve visitors a day are allowed in, the animals – elephants, cheetahs, lions and leopards – remain genuinely wild and unaccustomed to the sight of vehicles.

GROOTBOS, South Africa

On paper, the Grootbos private nature reserve looks as though it might be too goodie-goodie to be true. A five-star eco-resort, it's so environmentally friendly that it lectures its guests about trees and seaweed.

Dull and worthy? Not when you get there. Barely visible from the road, the hotel hugs a wooded hillside overlooking a protected wild beach. It's stylish and comfortable, with cosy cottages hidden among trees. The hotel's ethos is 'luxury, conservation and social



responsibility'. The owner has opened a gardening school, the first in South Africa, to train jobless men from the nearby town, and built four football pitches for local schoolkids. The children can play only if they turn up with a bag of rubbish to recycle.

Trained guides – also recruited from the local towns – walk guests through the grounds, pointing out the wildlife and some of the 9,700 plant species. Even if you have only a passing interest in plants, you'll be entranced.

SHINTA MANI, Cambodia

There aren't many hotels where you can phone room service and order two live piglets. But then Shinta Mani is no ordinary hotel. It works with the local community to take young people out of poverty and set them up in a career in the hotel industry. Each year, the hotel takes 20 disadvantaged youngsters and puts them through its own hospitality school. Guests can sponsor a student in exchange for photos and progress reports, or support local villagers: a donation of £45 buys a freshwater well, while £40 pays for the pair of piglets that an enterprising local family raise and sell on for a profit.

All well and good, but how is the hotel? With all those students running around, are you in for a Cambodian-style Fawlty Towers experience? Happily not. The service is outstanding, and the staff are polite and friendly.

ZEAVOLA, Thailand

When the tsunami swept over Thailand's coast, one of the worst affected areas was Ko Phi Phi. In the weeks after the disaster, there was talk that tourism was finished. The islanders had other ideas. A sparkling example of Phi Phi's resurgence can be seen in Zeavola, a sumptuous hotel on a white-sand beach. Guests stay in villas built in the style of a traditional village, and dine at a seafront restaurant. Since it opened, the hotel has worked with a local school which was badly hit by the tsunami. A donation is made for each night a guest stays, and the locals have repaired the school which now has a new classroom and a playground. The hotel also does good work in the community – donating staff and materials for clean-up projects.