

goodescapes

This hidden gem has limestone cliffs, lush forests, beaches and tropical wildlife



# Eco Friendly ESCAPES

Being green is easy when it involves a trip to somewhere breathtakingly beautiful—and even rewarding, when you can help it stay that way. Jet off with a cause to our pick of the best environmentally-friendly getaways

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## 1 SUPPORT THE LOCAL ECONOMY

With numerous awards to its name, the Philippines' El Nido Resorts is a boon to the regional economy thanks to its many local staff, and the traditional handicrafts in the gift store woven by nearby villagers.

By staying in one of their luxurious rooms, you'll be supporting their marine conservation projects and coastal and underwater clean-ups. You'll also be asked to abide by their eco-practices during your stay, which you can learn about in their seminars that cover everything from waste management to energy saving.

When you're ready to kick back and explore nearby Bacuit Bay, you can enjoy nature-based low-impact activities that won't disrupt the rich wildlife. Back in your room, you'll have low-flow nozzle showers and energy-friendly lighting, while your meals will have low 'food miles' since almost three-quarters of the kitchen's purchases are locally-sourced. It's a perfect escape for the whole family.



Organic fruit in Kerala

## 2 EAT SELF-SUSTAINABLY

A self-sufficient haven, the Spice Village Resort takes pride in the fact that all of the food served is sourced within a 50-mile radius. As a guest, you'll be able to help harvest spices from their 35 acres of herb, fruit and organic vegetable gardens tucked away in beautiful Kerala in India.

Take along your husband and reel in fresh fish from their lake before taking a romantic cooking class, all while keeping your carbon footprint low—the resort is mostly run by solar power, all of its waste is separated and sorted for recycling, and even the cottages where you sleep are cooled by the refreshing mountain winds.

In warmer weather, the chemical-free grounds boast natural, biodegradable pest control to help keep you itch-free. It's no wonder the resort was the first in India to receive the PATA Award for environment. →



Toucans are native to Costa Rica

### 3 WORK AT AN ANIMAL RESCUE CENTRE

Home to more than 150 exotic species of endangered creatures, it's not surprising that there are numerous animal rescue and conservation programmes across Costa Rica. One of the most eco-friendly countries in the world (with one of the smallest carbon footprints), it aims to be the world's first carbon-neutral country by 2021. And you can play an important role in keeping the incredible biodiversity going strong by motivating a friend to join you in volunteering for a programme like Go Eco's animal rescue project.

Through the programme, you'll help run an animal rescue centre for several weeks by assisting in day-to-day activities like preparing the animals' food, cleaning their cages and trails, and maintaining their general wellbeing and upkeep. You'll also learn about the ecosystem and have the chance to learn Spanish. All of your meals will be included, and you'll get the chance to experience a real Costa Rican lifestyle by living with a host family.

Take advantage of time off work at the centre to see the animals in their natural habitat and explore the country. Head to the natural mineral hot springs at La Fortuna, the active Arenal Volcano, and Monteverde's misty emerald cloud forests; with its coffee plantations, awe-inspiring views and a flourishing ecosystem, you'll feel like you're at the top of the world.



Ras Al Jinz's turtle beaches

The endangered green sea turtle has existed since the dinosaur age



Dolphins in the Mediterranean

### 5 SAVE ENDANGERED TURTLES

Nestled at the tip of Oman, Ras Al Jinz Nature Reserve is a sanctuary for the green sea turtle. More than 20,000 female turtles return to its beach throughout the year to lay their eggs, and there's no better place to marvel at this phenomenon.

Established by Omani Royal Decree 15 years ago, the Reserve aims to conserve its precious nesting areas and protect turtles from dangers such as poachers and litter.

You can support the cause by staying in one of the Reserve's 14 rooms. Take the kids to the Scientific and Visitors Centre to learn about the turtles, then book a guide for an exciting family turtle-viewing excursion at night or at dawn (or both!).

Set amidst the landscape of mountains, wadis and waterfalls, each Riyal you spend at the Reserve will help maintain the safe beaches and historical sites, as well as research into the turtles' life cycle. ■

### 4 PROTECT DOLPHINS AND WHALES

While most people think of Italy and conjure up images of pasta and sun-dappled streets, beyond the coast lies an equally beautiful, rewarding getaway you can do solo: Global Vision International's cetacean-conservation trip.

For a week, you'll live aboard a sailing boat on the Ligurian sea as you research cetaceans such as dolphins and whales. Almost half of your package fee is a direct contribution to the programme, while your participation helps the team cut back on staff costs, ensuring as much money as possible is spent on trying to safeguard these species from extinction instead.

You'll also learn about the behaviour, environment and habitat of various whale and dolphin species, helping to play a key role in their survival. As a crew member your duties will rotate between cooking, cleaning up, navigation, and sightings. This chance to experience them in a way rarely seen by the public will give you a whole new appreciation for the stunning region and the oceans beyond.

#### WHERE TO STAY

- 1 **El Nido Resorts** From Dhs1,500 per night in the Lagen Island Resort. Visit [www.elnidoresorts.com](http://www.elnidoresorts.com)
- 2 **Spice Village Resort** From Dhs1,100 per night. Visit [www.cghearth.com/spice-village](http://www.cghearth.com/spice-village)
- 3 **Go Eco's Animal Rescue and Conservation Volunteer Programme** Dhs4,100 for three weeks per person including meals. Visit [www.goeco.org](http://www.goeco.org).
- 4 **GVI's Whale and Dolphin Research in Italy Volunteer Project** From Dhs4,270 for a week per person. Visit [www.gvi.co.uk](http://www.gvi.co.uk)
- 5 **The Ras Al Jinz Nature Reserve** From Dhs800 per night. Visit [www.rasaljinz-turtlereserve.com](http://www.rasaljinz-turtlereserve.com)  
*Room rates are based on a standard double-occupancy room.*

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