

**TripActions**

# Taking Steps Towards Sustainable Business Travel

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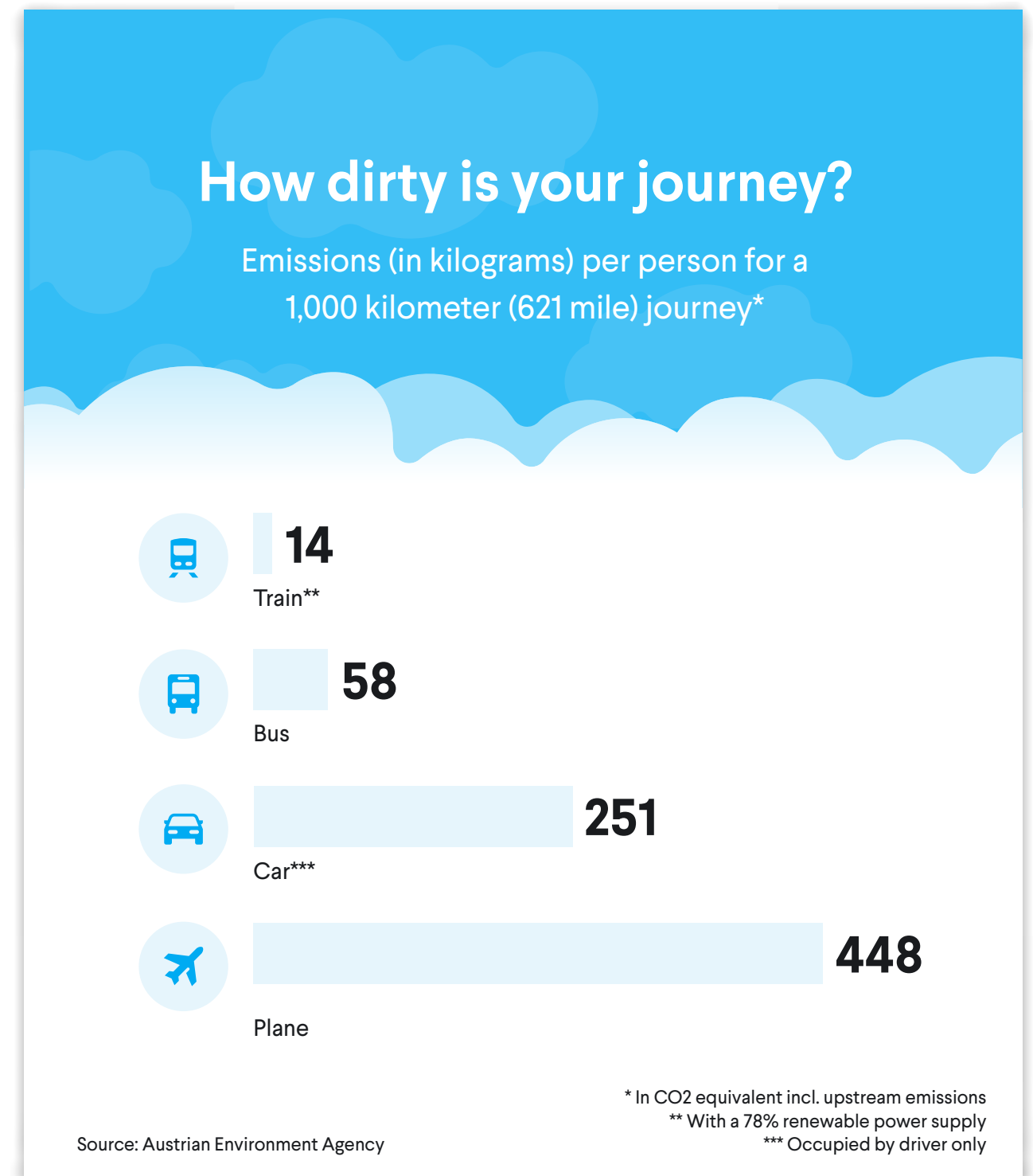
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**Business travel remains an essential connector of people, and vital to the exchange of ideas and goods that has made our world a better place in so many ways. Which is why it makes sense to determine every possible way to make travel more sustainable and worthwhile - even on an individual level.**

Travel, particularly air travel, is one of the highest contributors of carbon to the earth's atmosphere. To adequately address the climate crisis, the world will need serious, concrete and coordinated action by government, industry, and citizens working together – a planet-wide, public-private, concerted effort to turn things around.

Business travel is not slowing down, so business travellers--and the organisations they travel for--owe it to the planet to be mindful and minimise their impact as much as possible. Travellers should look carefully at their own choices from their chosen method of transport, accomodation, and lifestyle decisions they make on the road. Similarly, travel managers should create and manage policies that enable their travellers to make these mindful decisions.

In this eBook we'll share some ideas for travel managers to introduce sustainable policies and for Travellers to reduce their carbon impact on the road.



# What Companies and Travel Managers Can Do

When it comes to environmentally conscious business travel, having smart policies in place with the right incentives and easy access information is essential. As each company is unique, travel managers should determine the best policies and approaches alongside senior leadership as these will vary depending on a range of factors like company size, industry and frequency of travel.



## What Companies and Travel Managers Can Do

### Create a Flexible Travel Policy That Encourages Mindful Decisions

The best travel policies enable employees to book business trips that make sense regarding cost and logistics, whilst taking into account environmental benefits.



#### Ask yourself questions like:

At what cost difference is it preferable for travellers to choose the option with less environmental impact?

And does the policy account for total costs in a holistic way, instead of placing hard limits on prices for high-value items like flights and hotels?

For example, an indirect flight from London to Zurich may be cheaper than a non-stop option. However, environmental impact would be reduced on the latter, due to the fact that more takeoffs result in more emissions and more fuel burnt. In the event of a missed connection, the former could end up costing time and money as well. Similarly, a hotel in the centre of town might be more expensive but could eliminate wasteful and costly taxi journeys than cheaper accommodations out of town.

### Maintain a List of Travel Providers with Good Environmental Credentials

Create a list of environmentally friendly travel providers in a shared space for employees to access freely. This best works as a living document that's open to suggestions and updates, as things are changing quickly in the industry.

Maintaining a convenient source of information for your travellers to use in choosing airlines and hotels will boost morale and also help build a more environmentally conscious culture.

### Include Emissions Information in the Booking Process

By making a given trip's total CO2 emissions clear in the booking process, an organisation can help its employees make more informed decisions when travelling and be fully aware of their trip's impact.

Depending on your travel management process, this might not always be achievable - however there are now [corporate booking tools which provide built-in emissions data](#).

## What Companies and Travel Managers Can Do

### Incentivise Public Transport Where it Makes Sense

In some cases, a taxi to the hotel from a late flight arrival is the only sensible option. However, in a city with good transport, the train or bus can offer various benefits: aside from being greener and cheaper, and might even save time.

### Incentivise Economy Class Flights Where Possible

Flying in a premium cabin can increase a traveller's carbon footprint as the seats take up more space and weigh more as well. Choosing an economy class seat is one of the best ways to reduce impact when flying.

For example, if your policy allows premium economy on transatlantic flights you could perhaps incentivise travelling economy instead by allowing the employee to choose a better hotel room at their destination.

### Carbon Offset Company Travel Emissions

Carbon offsetting can be effective for compensating company travel emissions, or making up for emissions produced by the company itself in the course of doing business. In the case of offsetting travel emissions, that can happen at a company-wide level, or be in place as an optional offering to staff when they take trips. You'll find more details about the world of carbon offsetting in a later section.



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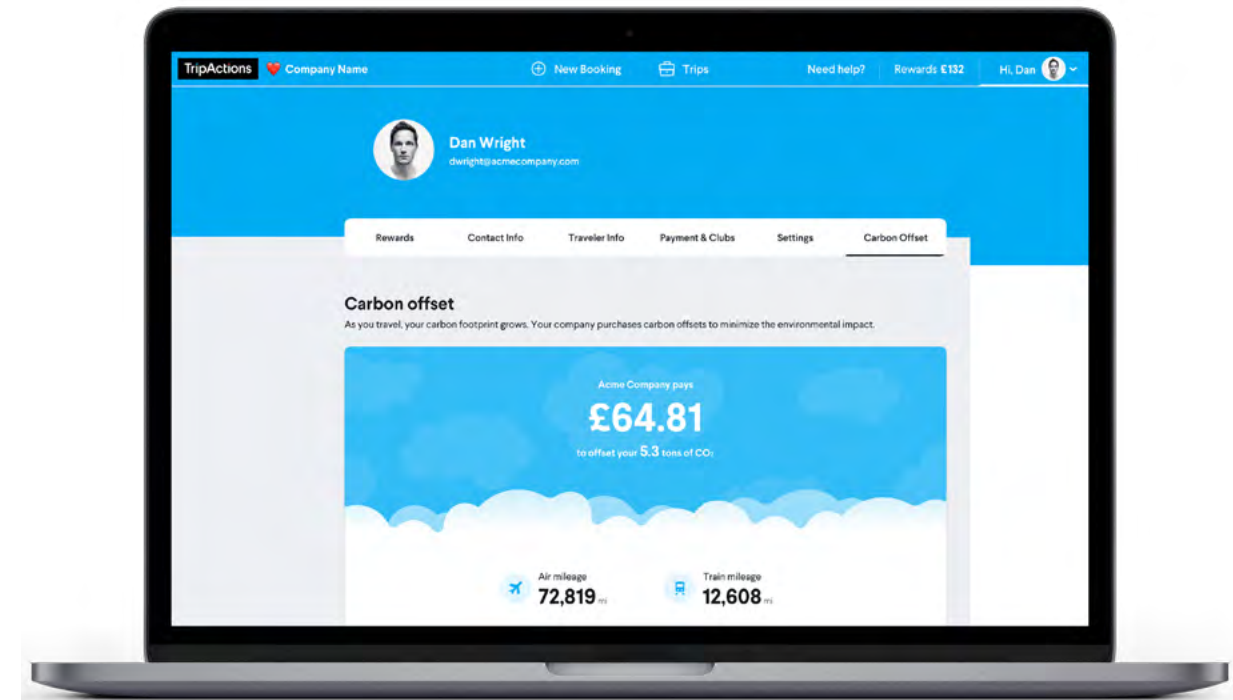
# What Companies and Travel Managers Can Do

## Understand Carbon Reporting Regulations

Carbon offsetting may be of special interest for companies that are required to report on their carbon emissions by regulation, something increasingly in effect in places around the world, including the UK. It's likely the rest of the world will follow suit, especially as the EU adopts stricter guidelines for its member states in the drive to be climate-neutral by 2050.

For now, reporting regulations tend to apply to larger companies and are unlikely to include staff travel in the reported totals. However, it's clear that there is growing pressure from governments worldwide to reduce emissions throughout the economy and for companies to take responsibility for their own share.

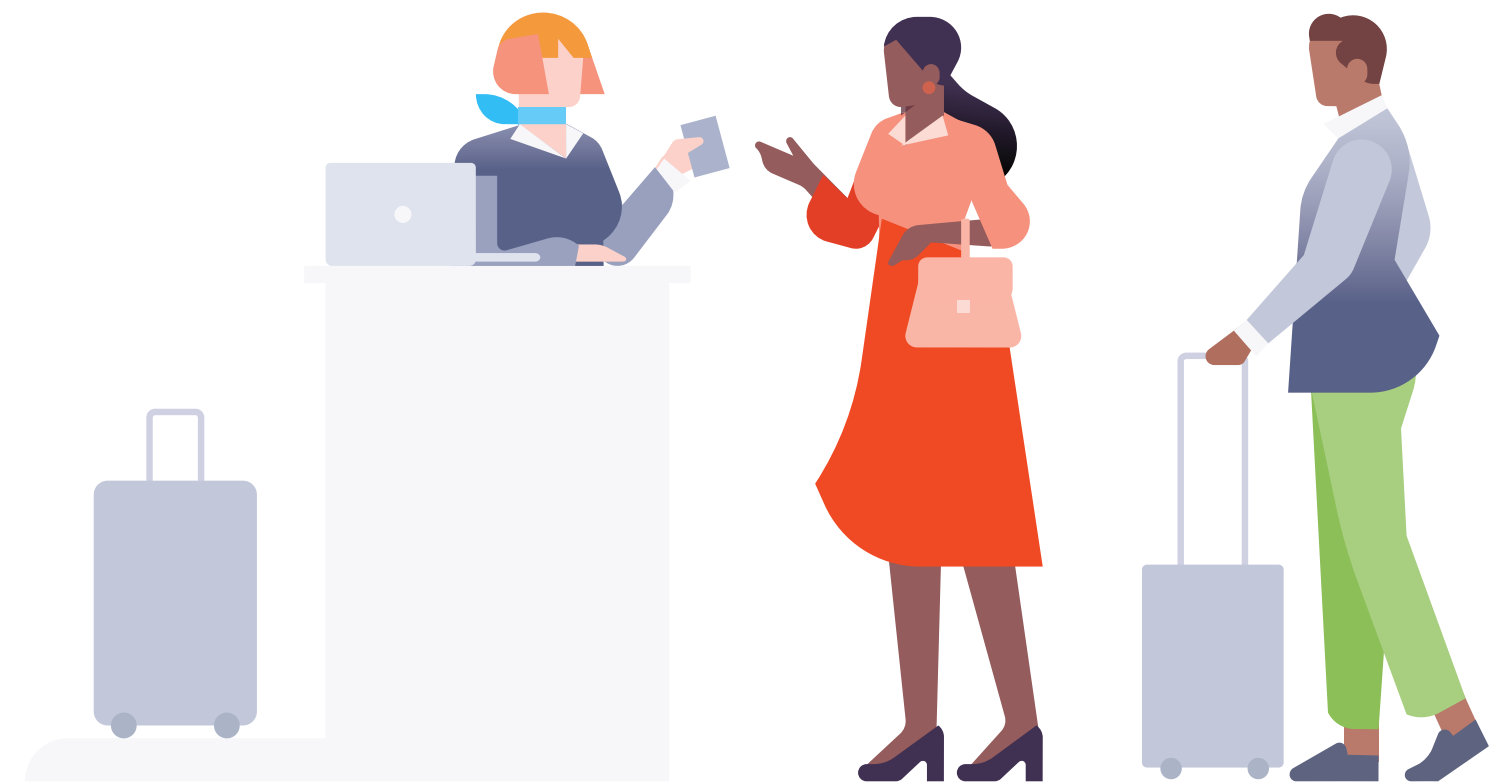
There is also a growing desire from customers and consumers globally to understand the environmental impact of the companies they interact with. Transparency is becoming more and more important. That can mean that even where it's not legally required, it can be beneficial to report your carbon output.



**Alongside efficiency gains and reduced emissions through advancing technology, offsetting can help bring your company closer to being carbon neutral.**

# Planning Travel – The Big Decisions

Once the right policies and incentives are in place for company travel, the next step is for staff to be equipped to make the big decisions: when it's vital to travel, and how best to choose sustainability focused travel providers. This kind of preparation will not only help reduce company and individual carbon footprints but also could begin to reduce costs for the business as well as see employee happiness rise.





## Planning Travel – The Big Decisions

### Decide When It's Essential to Travel

Ensuring you travel when it's truly necessary is a fundamental starting point. In many instances there is no substitute for being there in person; however, it's likely there are some trips which could be skipped, or perhaps multiple trips could be combined into fewer resulting in less round-trips by air.

This should be an ongoing discussion within each company based around its priorities, but there is data available to help inform the decision. A Skift report, "[The State of Business Travel 2020](#)", includes survey results from employees and management, that uncovered the most important reasons for travel as establishing and fostering business relationships, attending conferences and events and closing deals.

### Choose High Quality Travel Providers

Some airlines and hotels are taking serious steps to reduce their carbon footprint, and if travellers reward those that excel in this area with their business, that can only help to push the pace of innovation along.

Positive steps being taken in this regard can run a wide range, from buying new planes that burn less fuel to removing single-use plastics from the aircraft. For hotels, look for those in new, energy-efficient buildings, which do things such as prioritise locally-sourced products and food, and do away with wasteful plastic mini-bottles of toiletries.

Travel booking processes haven't traditionally been geared towards comparing how green various aircraft types or hotels are. Luckily new entrants in this sector are utilising ever better data to offer more useful information. As this isn't yet widely available, however, it's worthwhile to do some research and keep track of new developments.

Airlines are especially active in this regard, with their environmental efforts taking many forms. For instance, Easyjet now automatically offsets carbon emissions for every seat on every flight. British Airways is bringing in electric-powered tugs to push airplanes around the tarmac rather than the old diesel-powered variety. Icelandair and Virgin Atlantic have replaced wasteful premium amenity kits with reusable and largely plastic-free examples. Qantas, All Nippon Airways and Air France have each pledged to remove hundreds of millions of single-use plastic items like cups over the coming year.

## Planning Travel – The Big Decisions

### Choose How and When You Travel

Booking with a sustainable airline is a good start, but there are further opportunities to make positive choices.

**Airline Seat:** Lie-flat business class seats are more comfortable, but flying in one means taking on a much larger share of carbon output. Economy class seats are much easier on the environment. As a result, it's worth carefully considering whether a bigger seat is really necessary – for example, is a flat bed really necessary on a relatively short daytime flight?

**Flight Timing:** Flying during the day is better for the environment than flying at night. That's because contrails from the plane reflect sunlight away from the earth, reducing warming, whereas at night they lock warmth in. One study found that night flights had around double the impact of day flights for this reason.

**Packing Light:** This will only have a small effect, but the less the plane has to lift the less fuel it will burn, and everything counts. Taking unnecessary luggage along complicates the trip and adds to your impact, meaning everybody wins when you pack light.



In the case of offsetting travel emissions, that can happen at a company-wide level, or be in place as an optional offering to staff when they take trips.



# Day-to-Day Steps to Take While on the Road

Beyond the main building blocks of travel management and booking processes, there are further steps travellers can take to reduce their footprint while on the road. You may already do many of these things at home, but while away they can become more difficult to achieve. In some cases it only requires a bit of forward planning to make a difference.



## Day-to-Day Steps to Take While on the Road

### Say No to Single-Use Plastic

As difficult as it can be while on the road, the more you insist on not accepting single-use plastics, the more merchants and travel providers will have to change to accommodate. This can take various forms. For example, request that shops and restaurants do away with single-use plastics and switch to biodegradable cups or paper straws.

Remember to carry a refillable water bottle as an essential first step, and even bring reusable cutlery and an empty tote bag for carrying food while on the run.



**If everyone takes a stand against wasteful packaging, it can make a difference.**

### Opt for Public Transport

Public transport can vary a great deal from city to city, but in many places investments in transport are making it a more attractive option. In a number of cities getting around by car is increasingly difficult, whether because of excessive traffic or restrictions on the flow of automobiles. As a result, not only is public transport greener and cheaper, it can also take less time to get where you're going.

Web- and app-based resources for working out local transport are getting more plentiful, making local trip-planning easier. For example, sites like [rome2rio.com](http://rome2rio.com) and apps like Citymapper are saviours when it comes to understanding the best sustainable local transport options.



## Day-to-Day Steps to Take While on the Road

### Choose Vegetarian or Vegan Options

All available data indicates that a vegetarian diet is far less taxing on the environment. As a result, this is another way to have a significant individual impact with your choices.

The good news is there are more and more sustainable food options available across a growing swathe of the world, including in places like airports. And the more requests for good, healthy and sustainable food received by the likes of airlines, hotels, and airport cafes, the more they'll have no choice but to provide better options.

### Decline Room Cleaning

Many hotels now offer the option to say no to housekeeping because it helps them save costs, and on a three-night trip it's unlikely the average traveller will need their sheets and towels washed. Declining housekeeping saves water and energy, so it's a good policy to make your preference known.



# Introducing Carbon Offsetting

Carbon offsetting has been around for years but it remains not very well understood. There exists some confusion about what exactly carbon offsetting does and whether it's really an effective way to make up for the emissions from flying. That's partly because offsetting can take different forms, and not all carbon offsets are created equal.

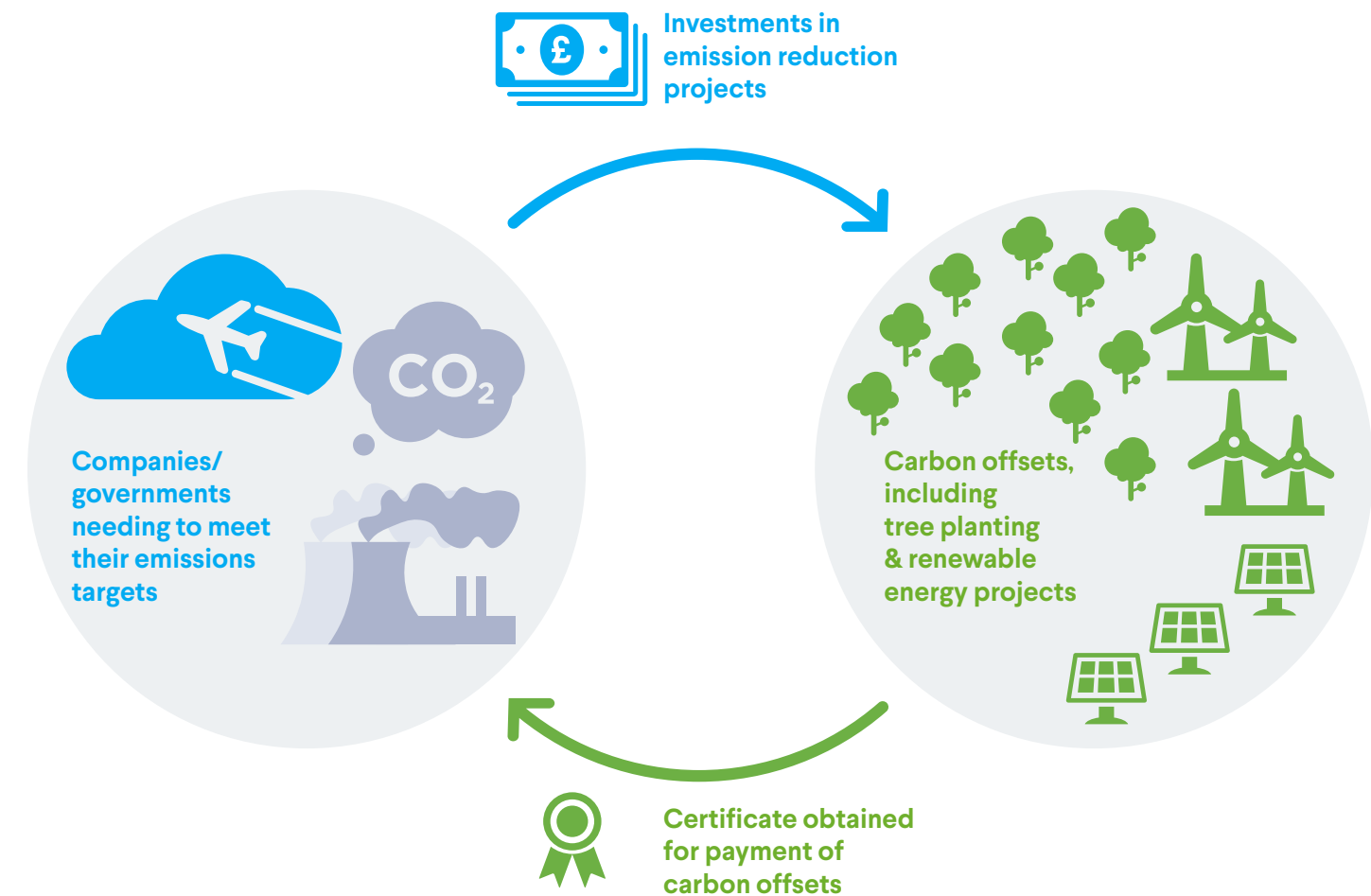


# Introducing Carbon Offsetting

## How it Works

Broadly speaking carbon offsets calculate a monetary value that an individual, or organisation, can pay in order to offset carbon emitted from a journey. Costs tend to be fairly low – around £10 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> offset is a typical figure, although this can vary depending upon the specific offset scheme. (For reference: a roundtrip between London and San Francisco would give you a footprint of around 1.5 tonnes).

That money is put towards projects that reduce carbon emissions by an equivalent amount. For instance, it may go towards planting trees, or capturing methane from landfills, or be invested in wind power projects. The best of them combine multiple benefits and also create employment in green jobs. It's not an exact science, but when the money is used on worthy projects it can have a real and positive impact.



## Introducing Carbon Offsetting

### How to Choose An Efficient Carbon Offsetting Programme

A good carbon offsetting project should ideally meet three criteria:

- 1 It should be happening because of the money you and others are putting in, not something already in progress and simply benefiting from additional funds.**
- 2 It should not involve reducing emissions in one place at the cost of increasing emissions elsewhere.**
- 3 It should be as permanent as possible, because a project to reduce emissions won't be very effective if it's cancelled or reversed shortly after.**

To determine which companies offering offsets are doing so in the most ethical and effective ways, and to ensure your offsets will have a real effect, it's useful to turn to groups like The Gold Standard, which certifies offsetting schemes and makes it clear what those schemes do. There are a handful of trusted, non-profit organisations like this that are useful sources of information.

Some travel management platforms can now calculate and display your journey's carbon footprint as you select flights and so on. Alternatively, you can also go to trusted sources to calculate your carbon emissions such as the ICAO.

Carbon offsetting isn't a complete solution to the carbon problem, and it shouldn't be treated as an excuse to stop actively reducing your own emissions. But if you're mindful that it isn't a catch-all solution, carbon offsetting is potentially a very effective part of a broader solution.



## Final Thoughts

It's established that travel has a significant impact on the environment, and the number of flights taking to the skies continues to grow every year. However, it's not all doom and gloom: just about everyone with a hand in the travel and transportation industry – from airlines to hotels, aircraft manufacturers, even the governing bodies that regulate air traffic control – is currently working hard towards decarbonisation. They're developing new technologies and figuring out ways to be more effective and efficient with existing ones.



**While full decarbonisation may be a way off, every incremental advance helps, as do the incremental steps that each of us can take to reduce impact on a personal level. Travel remains important, with real economic, technological, cultural and interpersonal benefits and is a vital part of many businesses functionality and success.**

Taking small but effective actions that reduce your impact whilst travelling is a critical step to ensuring travel can continue to be an integral part of doing business for many years to come.



Let's work towards a sustainable future and still harness the power of in-person communication.

We believe being there in person is powerful. It enables employees to build relationships, close deals, and drive growth. Fast becoming the default for corporate travel, TripActions is the modern business travel platform that combines the latest machine learning-driven personalization with unrivaled inventory choice and proactive, global 24x7 live travel agents to delight employees, finance leaders, HR professionals, and travel managers alike—all while empowering organizations to seize travel as a strategic lever for culture and growth. Learn more at [www.tripactions.com](http://www.tripactions.com).

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