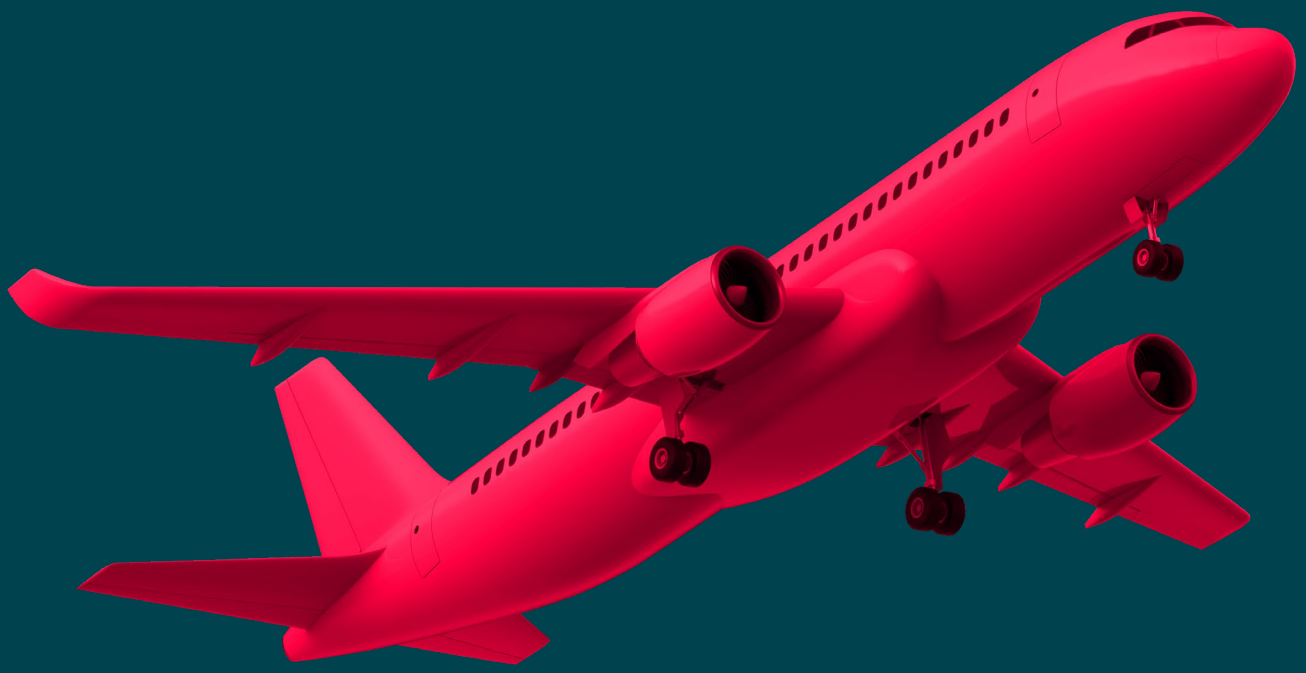
Corporate Traveller's Guide to choosing eco-friendly flights



CORPORATE TRAVELLER™

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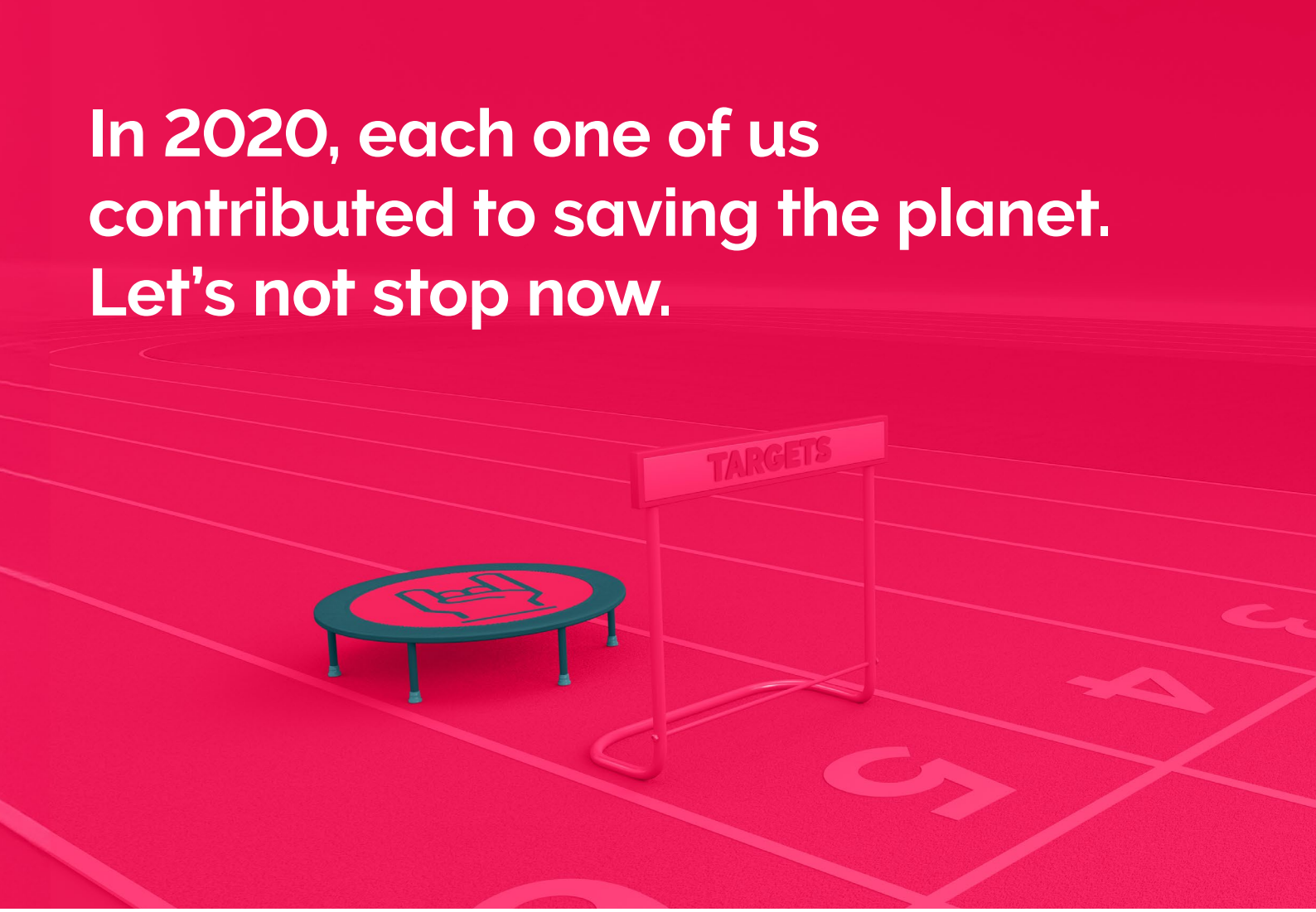
In 2020, each one of us contributed to saving the planet. Let's not stop now.



Global lockdowns in 2020 saw office staff scuttle home, companies pivot to remote working, and teams around the world embrace the likes of Zoom, Trello and G-Suite.

Working from home had its perks. Let's be honest: who didn't enjoy meeting with C-level executives online while secretly wearing pyjama bottoms? Even better – we could all pat ourselves on the back that we were saving tahe planet by producing fewer carbon emissions. Venice even reported dolphins had returned to its canals and waterways.

Fast-forward a couple of months, and the endless Zoom galleries lost their sparkle. Employees reported that video calls simply lacked warmth, humour and human connection. People missed the spontaneity of 'real life' meetings, the creative sparring and brainstorming in the boardroom, and the off-the-cuff remarks that can take a meeting or idea in a completely different direction. And – if you're going to sign a multimillion deal, you need to shake (or at least bump elbows) on it.

But, how can we go back to business travel when we know air travel is a key contributor to greenhouse gases?

The numbers don't lie:

- Estimates suggest air travel represents 2% of global man-made emissions.
- If global aviation were a country, it would rank in the top 10 emitters (European Commission).
- Aviation is responsible for 12% of CO_2 emissions from all transport sources (Air Transport Action Group).
- Passenger numbers could double to 8.2 billion in 2037, pushing the percentage of CO_2 emissions even higher (International Air Transport Association - IATA).
- IATA has targeted an average improvement in fuel efficiency of 1.5% per year from 2009 until 2020.
- IATA wants a 50% reduction in net aviation CO_2 emissions by 2050, relative to levels from 2005.

Keep it simple! Let's cut the carbon from corporate air travel.

It's clear that air travel throws a spanner in the works if you're trying to reduce your carbon footprint. Flights are the most significant travel spend, and unfortunately, they are also the greatest marker of carbon emissions.

Some companies, like PwC, introduced 'travel intensity' targets that helped reduce emissions from all business travel per full-time employee by 33%.

The world's leading aircraft manufacturers have also come to the party. They are working to increase efficiency by building lighter planes and are preparing for new kinds of more environmentally-friendly fuel. The older fleets, such as the trusty Boeing 747, seen in the air since the 1970s, are being phased out.

As a passenger or travel booker, you also have an important role to play. Chat to your TMC and ask them about the most fuel-efficient flights and aircraft. Tell them you'd like your journey to have the least possible impact on the environment. Your TMC can advise which plane – and seat – to book.

> **The silver lining is that for every challenge, there is a solution.**

Changing the face of plane travel

Legacy aircraft such as the 747, known as the original 'Jumbo Jet', have been withdrawn from fleets across the world. One of the reasons for retiring the 747 is that it is not particularly fuel efficient on transpacific flights. Not only does the 747 have four engines and therefore it burns more fuel, it is also larger and heavier than newer models with twin engines.

The Airbus A380 also features four engines but can carry up to 853 passengers on two full decks. Unfortunately, despite its capacity, the A380 is still not as environmentally-friendly as Airbus had originally hoped for its 'Gentle Green Giant'. In fact, it has been said that the A380 is unlikely to pass the International Civil Aviation Organization's aircraft CO2 standard, and, therefore, will not be able to be sold internationally after 2028 unless its fuel efficiency is improved.

It is clear that newer aircraft, like the Boeing 787 Dreamliner and the Airbus 350, with their lighter composite material airframes are significantly more fuel efficient than previous generation aircraft.

When flying for business, corporate travellers may well find themselves seated on a number of different planes. Many airlines have multipurpose fleets so the main ones to understand are:

Boeing 787 Dreamliner • Launched: 2009 • Number of passengers: 248 on B787-8 in two-class layout, 296 on B787-9 in two-class layout and 336 on B787-10 in two-class layout • Example carriers: ANA, British Airways, Etihad Airways, EVA Air, KLM, Singapore Airlines and United Airlines • Number of engines: 2

Airbus A350 • Launched: 2013• Number of passengers: up to 350 in three-class layout on the A350-900 and up to 410 in a three-class layout on the A350-1000 • Example carriers: Singapore Airlines, Qatar Airways, Cathay Pacific, Lufthansa, Finnair, Delta Air Lines, Vietnam Airlines, China Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines • Number of engines: 2

Boeing 777 • Launched: 1995 • Number of passengers: up to 396 • Example carriers (as of May 2019): Air France, American Airlines, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Emirates, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, United Airlines • Number of engines: 2

Airbus A330 • Launched: 1994 • Number of passengers: up to 335 in two-class layout • Example carriers (as of September 2017): Aer Lingus, Alitalia, Air Asia X, Delta Air Lines, Etihad Airways, Iberia, Turkish Airlines, Virgin Atlantic • Number of engines: 2

Airbus A380 • Launched: 2007 • Number of passengers: a comfortable 544 in three-class layout • Example carriers (as of June 2019): All Nippon Airways, British Airways, Emirates, Etihad Airways, Lufthansa, Qantas, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines • Number of engines: 4

Which aircraft should you choose?

Many factors come into play when deciding which plane offers you the best fuel efficiency on a business journey. For example, larger planes such as the A380 are most efficient when full. Airlines can use a less efficient aircraft on a route if it means high utilisation rates. Slot-constrained airports may even require larger aircraft to meet demand.

Andrew Hegley, General Manager of Corporate Traveller UK says: "Airline routes are complex. Operators use many different types of craft across many of their routes. For example, those flying from London to Johannesburg on BA could be seated on the A380, while on Virgin Atlantic passengers may find themselves on a newer, more efficient plane such as the A350. By talking to your knowledgeable TMC, you can find out all the answers and make the decision you feel most comfortable with."

No more excuses! Simple tips to make a difference

Now that you know all about fuel-efficient flights, you're likely to ask for the more fuel-efficient Boeing Dreamliner or the ballerina-light A350. But, what if you don't have a choice? What if the only option to get to your destination is to fly on an older – and less fuel-efficient – aircraft?

Despair not! There are other practical ways travellers can make a tangible difference and cut emissions.

Skip the layovers. Go direct.

Having a stopover to cut costs on your journey will likely end up costing the environment. Every extra take-off and landing burns lots of fuel. The upside for your traveller? No more long and boring lay-overs and time lost in airport lounges.

Fly economy

Flying "up-front" adds to your carbon emissions on a flight. According to the World Bank, because business class seats take up more space, the emissions generated while flying in business class are as much as three times higher than when you travel in the back.

Go big or go home

Combine several business trips together into one big trip to reduce your carbon footprint. By opting for one single long-haul journey with shorter regional or local flights in between, you can make a significant difference to your carbon emissions.

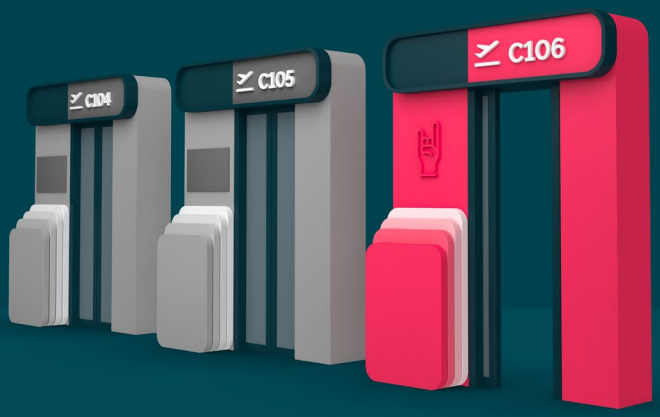
Pack light

Do you really need that extra pair of jeans? It might sound simplistic, but the best solutions are often the simplest. The more weight an aircraft is carrying, the more fuel it will burn. While airlines are reducing the weight of their aircraft through new materials and better design, passengers can also take initiative by simply packing light.

Let your airline do the work

Looking for an easy – but valuable - solution? Just tick the 'offset' box when you book your flight. By paying just a little more for your flight, you can do your bit to help offset the carbon generated by your flight.

Take off for a cleaner, greener future



The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented disruption in aviation, grounding nearly 70% of the global commercial passenger fleet in 2020.

Despite the fact that airlines are fighting to keep their heads above water in this challenging environment, sustainability hasn't taken a back seat. Instead, airlines are putting sustainability at the core of their recovery initiatives.

Sebastian Mikosz, Senior Vice President for Member External Relations at IATA, recently said the industry continues to be proactive when it comes to sustainability.

"We have had ambitious targets for carbon reductions for more than a decade. And despite the greatest crisis in the industry's history, our commitment to reaching these targets is unchanged. We will not be distracted from our goal to cut CO_2 to half of 2005 levels by 2050."

Bye-bye fuel guzzlers, hello sustainability

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the aviation industry showed clear leadership in improving carbon emissions, and airlines announced aggressive fuel-saving targets. Their commitment was evident at the Paris Air Show in June 2019, where business was brisk for fuel-efficient aircraft.

- Korean Air ordered 20 new Boeing 787 Dreamliner airplanes (787-10 and 787-9), citing the aircraft's "25% improved" fuel efficiency as an important factor.
- JetBlue selected the A321XLR, which is reported to have 30% lower fuel burn per seat compared with previous generation competitor aircraft. The airline announced plans to be the first carbon-neutral carrier in the US from July 2020.
- Many other operators still appeared keen to order the Boeing 737 MAX, which offers a suggested 20% increase in fuel efficiency.
- Chief Technology Officers of seven of the world's major aviation manufacturers released a joint statement during the Paris Air Show saying: "Humanity's impact on the climate requires action on many fronts. The aviation industry is already taking significant action to protect the planet and will continue to do so."

Synthetic fuel and biofuel is the next big frontier

Virgin Atlantic partnered with LanzaTech to produce its own 'waste' fuel version and already used it on a 747 test flight from Orlando to London Gatwick.

Virgin Atlantic Chief Executive Richard Branson wrote on his blog that this waste carbon fuel has "the potential to achieve >70% lower carbon emissions compared to regular fossil jet". He added: "The appetite for long haul travel is only getting bigger, and as airlines, it's our responsibility to deliver that in the most sustainable way possible."

Meanwhile, British Airways' parent company, IAG, promised it would invest a total of $400million on alternative sustainable fuel development over the next 20 years.

Supersonic net zero carbon

In 2021, United Airlines has decided to bet on a supersonic and sustainable future through a new deal with Boom Supersonic. They're aiming for the world's first net-zero carbon supersonic aircraft – ready for passenger travel by 2029. United placed an order for 15 Overture aircraft but has the option of purchasing a further 35.

Electric planes are gaining traction

Electric planes are also gathering hype and gaining traction. Zunum Aero, Ampaire and Eviation are among the biggest names in the 'e-plane' game, with the latter unveiling a nine-seater aircraft that can travel 650 miles (1,040km).

While change takes time and effort, the future outlook for the aviation industry is optimistic and green.

Hegley concludes:

"The future of air travel is going to look very different for passengers in the near future. It is great to see airlines and manufacturers putting this issue at the centre of their strategies, and adapting their fleets and fuels accordingly to ensure that their environmental impact is lessened well beyond the pandemic."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