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The Best Places for Ecotourism

For many, love for travel and love for the planet go hand-in-hand. Ecotourism is all about getting the adventure we crave in a way that respects our surroundings, conserves the environment, and improves the welfare of the local people. With such a big beautiful world to explore, choosing the place for your next eco-friendly trip can be daunting. Here are the three best places for ecotourism that we believe meet all the criteria for a world-class, world-affirming adventure.

3. La Paz, Mexico

The [City of La Paz](#) is located along the Sea of Cortez in Baja, Mexico. It's also right near the [UNESCO World Heritage Site on Isla Espiritu](#). Whales, dolphins, sea turtles, and manta rays live in the surrounding waters while a colorful range of bird species like Reddish Egrets and Great Blue Herons frequent the skies. The island features towering cliffs, lava rock formations, and even rock art left by extinct Indians. Home to 39% of the world's total number of marine mammal species, a third of the world's marine cetacean species, and 891 fish species, this famous site is an absolute treasure to experience for any nature lover.

While visiting, you can take a boat trip to a private island for whale, sea lion, and dolphin spotting. Or you can choose to re-center yourself with a yoga class overlooking the ocean. The island also offers surfing, kayaking, paddling, hiking, and more. You can even take a Mexican cooking class from renowned local chef Liker Algorri, author of *Cooking Adventures in Baja* and chef-in-residence at [Los Colibris Casitas](#), a restorative, eco-friendly hotel in Todos Santos.

You might also choose to take a shopping excursion into the surrounding towns, where you'll have ample opportunity to support the local people. Or you might choose to glamp with one of the many local services, which offer beautifully decorated safari-style tents with real beds, luxe linens, and plush towels.

But no matter where you choose to stay while in La Paz, Mexico, you are guaranteed to leave feeling enriched. And the best part is, this natural paradise with so much to offer is also close to home. That's why we believe La Paz, Mexico, has earned the right to be named one of the top places for ecotourism.

2. Zanzibar, Tanzania

Zanzibar is an archipelago in the Indian Ocean off of Africa. It is an autonomous region of Tanzania and home to the [UNESCO World Heritage Site, Stone Town](#), which sits in the historic center of Zanzibar City. Its stone streets are lined with architecture that mostly dates back to the 19th Century. At that time in history, Zanzibar's culture was a rich mix of Arab, Persian, Indian, and European influences.

That is why UNESCO declared it a World Heritage Site in 2000. The city still bustles with local commerce, dining, and socializing to this day. It also offers many places to stay, allowing you to fully immerse yourself in and support the local culture.

And should you tire of the hustle and bustle, Zanzibar's coral reefs are just a drive away. Not only are they teeming with a rich biodiversity of marine life, they are also surrounded by pristine beaches dotted with well-appointed, tranquil resorts. If you're ready to immerse yourself in nature even more, Zanzibar's beaches also offer secluded, eco-friendly lodges.

And of course, mainland Tanzania is nearby as well. The country is brimming with world-class ecotourism destinations, including the one and only Serengeti National Park. The fact that you can experience African wildlife, pristine reefs, and a rich, diverse culture makes Zanzibar the perfect choice to be named one of the best places for ecotourism.

1. The Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan

Bhutan is located in the Eastern Himalayas of Southern Asia between China and India. Although it currently has no UNESCO World Heritage Sites, it boasts eight declared tentative sites that you can explore. The World Wildlife Fund has also identified the Kingdom as one of the 234 globally outstanding ecoregions of the world, thanks to its rich biodiversity. When you visit, not only will you be able to take in the breathtaking surrounding mountains, but you can also catch tigers, leopards, sloth bears, Tibetan wolves, and more in the wild on well-chaperoned excursions.

When you visit the Kingdom of Bhutan, you also get the chance to see many sacred Buddhist sites. About three-quarters of the locals practice Buddhism. The ancient religion is so entrenched in the local culture that it is also recognized as the state's religion. Many Hindus also count among the local population, further adding to the spiritually rich culture. The entire Kingdom is rooted in the importance of remaining peaceful and centered, no matter where you choose to stay or explore.

But what makes Bhutan perhaps the best ecotourism place of all to visit is the fact that its government restricts the number of visitors allowed, who must all travel on pre-paid, guided tours. The funds are used to help preserve and protect the Kingdom's biodiversity along with helping the locals to thrive. For that reason above all, we feel the Kingdom of Bhutan deserves to be considered the top ecotourist destination of all.