

Ask EcoGirl

By Patricia Dines

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Greening Your Summer Vacation

Summer's here! And with that comes the delight of summer vacations. So how can you honor the earth during your journeys? There are four main ways:

- 1) **Minimize the eco-impact of your travel activities;**
- 2) **Connect with nature;**
- 3) **Learn about and serve larger eco-visions and goals;** and
- 4) **Support organizations doing any or all of the above.**

Eco-Play Ideas

So how can you put these principles into action? Here are some ideas:

• **Vacation at home.** You can still escape to a hotel, but the shorter travel distance gives you more play time while trimming your transportation costs and eco-impacts. Plus you'll get to know more about your home region and support your neighbors and local economy. Folks come here from all over the world, but often we don't take the time to enjoy our local delights!

• **Stay at green lodging.** Mainstream hotels are increasingly offering guests the option to skip daily linen changes, thus saving water and energy (and trimming hotel expenses). However, some hotels go far beyond that, offering a wide range of eco-features. Local eco-committed options include Forestville's family-owned Case Ranch Inn B&B (www.caseranchinn.com), Healdsburg's h2hotel (www.h2hotel.com), and Yountville's Bardessono Hotel (www.bardessono.com). (Remember to check the specifics behind any green claim.)

• **Choose less-polluting transportation.** Look for opportunities to walk, bike, take a ferry, hop a train, or let the bus drive you and your clan to your destination. You can often rent bikes. If you're renting a car, consider a hybrid or electric one, which lets you

save gas, impress friends, and explore future purchase options. You can rent a Toyota Prius from dealers (www.toyota.com/rental). Some car rental agencies also offer eco-car options, usually from major airports and with advance reservations.

• **Visit parks and other nature areas.** This is a fun way to exercise and enjoy nature's beauty and wisdom while nurturing this passion in your children. Get local park information online. Also support parks through groups such as the Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation (www.sonoma-county.org/parks/foundation/fndn_programs.htm) and Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods (www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org).

• **Savor organic foods.** You'll be nourishing your body and avoiding toxics while reducing your food's eco-impacts. You can choose restaurants that are strongly committed to organic, explore farmers' markets, pick up snacks at natural food stores, and visit organic farms.

• **Go wine tasting at organic and biodynamic wineries.** As you play, you'll discover new wines and support eco-farmers. My favorites include Glen Ellen's Coturri Winery (www.coturriwinery.com), Healdsburg's Quivira Vineyards & Winery (www.quivirawine.com), Rutherford's Frog's Leap Winery (www.frogsleap.com), and Napa's Robert Sinskey Vineyards (www.robertsinskey.com).

• **Experience eco-education.** For instance, take an organic farm tour with Marin Organic (www.marinorganic.org/p_tours.php), or enjoy the tours and workshops of Petaluma's Daily Acts (www.dailyacts.org).

• **Explore specialty eco-activities to match your interests.** Adventurous folks can spend a day ziplining high in Occidental's redwood forests with Alliance Redwoods' Sonoma Canopy Tours (www.sonomacanopytours.com).

Or find a spa through the Green Spa Network (www.greenspanetwork.org). One of its founding spas is Occidental's Osmosis (www.osmosis.com). Children can play at Santa Rosa's Environmental Discovery Center (www.sonoma-county.org/parks/edc.htm) or Sausalito's Bay Area Discovery Museum (www.baykidsmuseum.org). Or retreat to the Green Gulch Zen Buddhist Center (www.sfzc.org/ggf) near Muir Beach, with its certified organic farm, public trails, meditation sessions, and guest lodging for overnight stays.

• **Enjoy eco-athletics.** For instance, each August you can join the Tour d'Organics (www.seb.org/event/475058-2012-tour-d-organics), an organized bike ride through west Sonoma County, with rest stops at local organic farms and a post-ride vegan meal. Also, Santa Rosa's Getaway Adventures (www.getawayadventures.com) offers bike and kayak trips to Napa and Sonoma County wineries, farms, and natural areas.

I hope that these ideas inspire you! For more leads and resources, see www.healthyworld.org/EcoTourismLinks.html.

Ask EcoGirl is written by Patricia Dines, Author of [The Organic Guides](#), and Editor and Lead Writer for [The Next STEP](#) newsletter. Email your questions about going green to EcoGirl@AskEcoGirl.info for possible inclusion in future columns. Also see "Ask EcoGirl" on Facebook! And contact EcoGirl for information about carrying this syndicated column in your periodical.

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