

2.4_Closure

According to The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), ecotourism is 'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education'.	This definition comprises the three principles of ecotourism: ensuring conservation of natural resources; empowering local communities; and educating both visitors and hosts. We sent our reporter, Alison Marshall, to check out the green credentials of Tivoli Ecoresort Praia do Forte, one of the ecotourism pioneers in the north-east of Brazil.
Waiting at the departure lounge at Heathrow Airport, ready for my eco-trip, I reassure myself that I am greener than most.	I usually cycle to work, eat very little meat, avoid single-use plastic and even have a compost bin. Having said that, I could buy more local produce, but all in all, I'm fairly happy that I'm doing my best to save the planet. So it's with a clear conscience that I set out to evaluate one of the most traditional eco-resorts in South America.
The first issue with visiting any eco-resort is your carbon footprint getting there, which, depending on the distance from your home, can be huge.	A quick online search tells me that a return flight from London to Brazil releases 2,606 kg of carbon dioxide per passenger into the atmosphere. I can't help but think that, regardless of how green Praia do Forte is, I'm already deeply in the red with the environment on this trip.
Upon arrival, I completely forget my environmental mission for a while, marvelled by the luxury of the establishment.	Set in 30,000 hectares of tropical rainforest, this five-star, 287-bedroom hotel offers its guests eight swimming pools, three restaurants and three bars all right in front of 12 kilometres of golden beaches. Once I recover from my initial wonder, though, I ask myself if something this luxurious can truly be ecological. Time to start my investigation.
After a few days, it becomes obvious that the hotel makes very good use of the surrounding environment whilst protecting it as much as possible.	There are forest hikes, river kayaking expeditions and moonlit walks to the Tamar Project, where turtles lay their eggs. Biologists and guides accompany tourists on all these trips, providing detailed explanations of the local environment and making sure we don't cause any damage to the ecosystem.
The next step is to talk to the locals to find out what kind of impact the resort has on the community.	I find out that around 70% of the hotel staff are local residents, who receive extensive technical training for their roles as well as learning other skills like speaking English. The resort earns extra points in other ways, too: a lot of the furniture is produced by local artisans, and the resort participates in community projects.
On the flight back, I go over the three principles of ecotourism, and the overall verdict for Praia do Forte is very favourable.	A complex this big has an obvious impact on the environment, but there is an effort to maintain it at a minimum. The local community seems to benefit greatly from the resort, and both staff and tourists are thoroughly educated. I, for one, learnt a great deal – and had a lovely time! If only there was a way of getting there that didn't pollute so much.