

Carbon Offsetting: EcoTour Company Takes Direct Approach

As conscientious travelers look to make their trips more environmentally friendly, numerous carbon-offsetting companies have answered the call, offering ways for vacationers to compensate for their flight emissions by purchasing offsets that fund reforestation, alternative energy, and other related projects. Air travel is by far the largest cause of carbon emissions for trips, particularly abroad. A few mindful tour operators have teamed up with these carbon companies to offer their clients the option to offset.

Southern Explorations, a Seattle-based ecotour company, is taking a more direct approach. The operator recently began working directly with non-profits with projects in the South American countries in which they work to sponsor projects that balance flight emissions. Offsetting funds will finance reforestation and habitat preservation in some of the most critical ecosystems in the area including Patagonia, the Amazon, and the *Ecuadorian cloud forest* ?.

“We recognize the importance of promoting conservation in every way we can. Flights are one aspect of our trips that we can’t eliminate or improve, so we decided to offer offsetting to mitigate their negative effects,” says Southern Explorations president, Justin Laycob. When asked why the company decided to circumvent specialized carbon-offsetting companies, he responded, “We wanted to ensure that the highest portion of donations possible goes directly to the organizations that do the real ground work. We also wanted that work to happen in the countries we offer trips to. The only way we could achieve this was to create the relationships with non-profits ourselves.”

Southern Explorations has established connections to the non-profit conservation organizations of Conservacion Patagonica, Rainforest Alliance, and *Ecuador one here*. The company also intends to expand their carbon offsetting projects to their other destinations in Central America and New Zealand. For current projects, see www.patagonialandtrust.org, www.rainforest-alliance.org, and *website of NGO*. Visit the Southern Explorations website for additional information and ecotour details: www.southernexplorations.com.