



CLIMATE CLUB

THE IMPACT OF FLYING



Flying is one of the most carbon-intensive things individuals will ever do. While air travel connects people and cultures, reducing unnecessary flights - or replacing them with lower-carbon transport - is one of the most effective ways to shrink your climate impact.

1. Very High Emissions per Passenger

- Aviation accounts for around 2.5–3% of global CO₂ emissions, but because of extra warming from contrails and high-altitude effects, its total climate impact is closer to 5%.
- A single return flight from London to New York emits roughly 1.5 tonnes of CO₂ per person - about the same as the annual emissions of an average person in many developing countries.
- A single long-haul flight can cancel out months of other low-carbon living efforts.
- Flying produces far more emissions per kilometre than any other major transport mode:
 - Domestic flight: ~255 g CO₂e per passenger-km
 - Car (average 1.6 occupancy): ~170 g
 - Train (electric, UK average): ~35 g
 - Coach: ~28 g

2. Rapid Growth for a Global Minority

- Aviation is one of the fastest-growing sources of emissions, and while cleaner fuels and electric planes are being researched, real reductions are still years away.
- Efficiency gains have been outpaced by rising demand for air travel.
- Fewer than 4% of the world's population fly internationally in any given year.
- The top 1% of frequent flyers are estimated to create over half of all aviation emissions.
- The impacts of climate change fall most heavily on people who rarely or never fly.

3. Benefits of Flying Less / Low-Carbon Alternatives

- Trains, buses, and ferries emit 90–95% less CO₂ per kilometre than planes.
- “Slow travel” by rail or coach can be part of a holiday adventure with more time to connect.
- Within Europe, choosing the train over a short-haul flight can cut emissions by up to 95%.
- Supporting better rail networks and local holidays strengthens communities and reduces dependence on high-carbon transport.
- Normalising low-flight lifestyles inspires others and signals demand for greener transport options.
- Choosing to fly less helps make global emissions cuts more equitable, leaving carbon space for essential travel and for countries still developing their economies.

The Bigger Picture

Flying less is one of the most direct and meaningful ways individuals can act on climate change. When we choose alternatives - trains, local holidays, virtual meetings - we're helping to build a cleaner, fairer, more connected world that doesn't cost the Earth.