

TIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE, ENGAGED EXCHANGE

Going on exchange is an experience for life, but we should not ignore the fact that thousands of students travelling across the world each year has a serious environmental impact. We want to help you to make sustainable choices and engage meaningfully with your host destination. After all, you are now an ambassador for Tilburg University abroad!



WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

The [UN defines sustainability](#) as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Making choices with minimal environmental consequences is crucial to guaranteeing safe living conditions for us and future generations. Curious about your impact on the environment? Check out the [UN's carbon footprint calculator](#).

HOW CAN I BE SUSTAINABLE DURING MY EXCHANGE?

THINK ABOUT HOW YOU TRAVEL

How you travel to and from your exchange destination is a key part of a sustainable exchange experience. Students usually fly, even though airplanes produce huge carbon emissions. Check out this [calculator](#) to see how much CO₂ your flight to your host country would generate.

If your destination is not too far away, we encourage you to explore other modes of transport, like taking the train. Travelling via train offers a rich experience and strengthens your identity as a global citizen, as you get to see other cities and countries along the way.



We understand that travel options may feel limited if your exchange destination is on the other side of the world. We don't expect you to [sail a boat across the ocean like Greta Thunberg](#)! But try to think creatively – could you, for example, take a shorter flight then travel the rest of the journey via train or vice versa?

The following are great resources for planning your sustainable journey:

- [routeRANK](#) and [EcoPassenger](#) to plan the easiest, cheapest and greenest way to your destination
- [NS International](#), [Eurostar](#), and [Interrail](#), connecting European countries
- [Nightjet](#), Europe-wide night train services
- [Rome2Rio](#), helping you plan your bus, train, ferry or carshare journey



- [HappyRail](#)
- [The Man in Seat 61](#), offering incredibly detailed itineraries for worldwide train travel

MORE TRAVEL TIPS

Many students look forward to travelling to nearby cities and countries during their exchange. **Instead of heading straight to the budget airline websites, explore ways to do this via bus or train.**

For those feeling super committed to avoiding flying, **check out the [Flight Free pledge](#)**. Pledge to give up flying for leisure reasons, or for a full year or even forever!



OTHER STEPS TO A SUSTAINABLE EXCHANGE

Not all destinations are easily reachable without flying, and the increased costs of sustainable travel may be unmeetable. But don't worry - **there are other ways to incorporate sustainable choices into your exchange.**

OFFSET YOUR FLIGHT EMISSIONS

You can donate to a cause that aims to take the CO₂ emissions of your flight back out of the atmosphere through, for example, planting trees or investing in renewable energy. [Offset schemes are definitely no magic fix](#), but may still be a good place to start when thinking about reducing your exchange's environmental impact.



DONATE YOUR THINGS BEFORE YOU LEAVE!

For those of you clearing out your belongings before going on exchange, please consider donating your household goods to the next generation of TiU students. At the end of each semester, we host a 'Sharing is Caring' event, where you can drop off donations which will later be collected by new international students who arrive in Tilburg for their exchange. Keep your eyes on our Canvas and social media pages for more information about upcoming editions!

SHOP SECOND-HAND

You'll likely want to spruce up your new bedroom, or maybe you need some new clothes suited to your host country's climate. **Check out thrift stores, flea markets and Facebook Marketplace to give new life to second-hand items instead of contributing to the demand for new products** which can be damaging to the environment – did you know that [the fashion industry is responsible for up to 10% of global carbon emissions](#)?!



At the end of your exchange, you might have acquired more things than can fit into your suitcase again, but **don't throw them away!** Sell them or donate them back to second-hand stores or local donation drives and give them a new home.

EXPLORE PLANT-BASED AND LOCALLY GROWN FOOD



Transitioning to a more plant-based diet is said to be the single biggest way that we as individuals can reduce our impact on the environment.

Vegetarian and vegan options are becoming increasingly accessible in many parts of the world. [Happy Cow](#) is a handy tool for finding vegetarian and vegan eateries in your local area.

Many food products from mainstream supermarkets travels thousands of miles before they reach our plate. **Buying locally sourced food can reduce the carbon footprint or so-called “food miles” of our diet, as well as supporting local businesses and farmers.** Check out local markets and green grocers – they are often cheaper than supermarkets, too! You can even try growing some of your own food – [there are plenty of fruits and veggies that can be grown in small containers by your window or on a balcony!](#)

CHECK RECYCLING AND WASTE DISPOSAL RULES



Find out how the local recycling and waste disposal systems work to make sure as little trash as possible ends up in landfills and waterways.

Ask local students, employees at your accommodation or the International Office at your host university if you need help understanding the local rules.

And why not explore ways to reduce your waste altogether? Heading to the local market is a great way to explore your new home, and you can often find fresh produce without plastic packaging. So-called bulk or zero waste stores, where you can buy groceries and household products without packaging, are also popping up in many countries.

CHOOSE A SUSTAINABLE BANK



You might want to open a bank account in your host country to make transactions in another currency easier. **However, many major banks use your money to make huge investments in fossil fuel industries.** Use [Bank Green](#) to see how different banks in your host country score in their commitment to sustainability, and open an account at a bank with a good rating instead of one of the big polluters.