



Paving the way for carbon-neutral travel in Namibia

By Tourism Supporting Conservation (TOSCO)



Tourism based on wildlife is a key industry for Namibia and other African countries, as it contributes both to the economy and nature conservation. However, travel for tourism purposes is responsible for around **8% of global emissions**, which contribute to global warming and climate change. So while we need tourism to create jobs and sustain wildlife areas, we must also try to reduce the impact of travel on the environment.

Tourism in Namibia in particular, requires driving long distances to take in all of the varied landscapes and natural attractions. Many tourism companies and self-drive tourists use fuel-heavy 4x4 vehicles to access remote parts of the country. The long road trips through desert landscapes and 4x4 driving challenges encountered on rocky mountain passes or in the deep sand of the Kalahari are key attractions for adventurous visitors to Namibia. Electric 4x4 vehicles may be a possibility in future, but what can we do right now to reduce carbon emissions from the tourism industry?

The good news is that trees naturally use carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to grow. Planting trees is thus a simple way to offset our carbon emissions and help lessen the impact of the tourism industry on global warming. Besides producing oxygen, trees provide shade, food and shelter for a host of different animals and also humans. Fruit trees are especially valuable where people cannot afford a high quality diet, while indigenous trees can help restore the environment around urban areas without using too much water.



Tourism Supporting Conservation (TOSCO) realised that tourism could reduce its carbon emissions simply by planting trees. We therefore partnered with the Eloolo Permaculture Initiative to develop the Clean Travel programme. Clean Travel is Namibia's first carbon offset programme that aims to reduce the environmental impacts of travel while simultaneously providing poor urban communities and schools with gardens and trees that can improve their lives.

Using money generated through TOSCO's Clean Travel programme, Eloolo plants indigenous and fruit trees in communities and at schools that will look after them and reap the long-term rewards. All of the fruit trees are planted as part of a permaculture food production system that uses minimal water and maximises fruit production, which can be used to supplement diets or generate income through sales. The school children involved with the Clean Travel planting and nursery sites also learn about the importance of growing trees and reducing their own environmental impacts.



In 2019, Eloolo planted 135 trees with the income generated from the Clean Travel programme during 2018. Based on our current and expected membership growth, we aim to plant 1,000 trees per year on existing and new sites over the next three years. Each new site is carefully chosen to ensure that the trees will be cared for properly and the host communities will receive the maximum benefit from the programme.

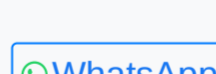
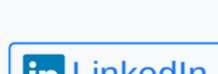
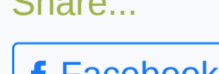
TOSCO and Eloolo welcome participating tourism operators and individual contributors to visit us at the nurseries and community gardens to see the results of their contributions first-hand. For tour operators, adding such a visit to their safari schedule will enrich their clients' experience of Namibia by introducing them to community members and school children who are making a difference. The guests will learn more about the project, Namibian trees, and ways to reduce their carbon footprint while on holiday and once they return home.

Members of the Clean Travel programme pay N\$ 300 per tree planted. Eloolo uses income from their trees to empower community members, many of whom are women, to care for the trees and maintain the community nurseries and gardens. Eloolo invites all of their supporters to participate in tree-planting events, which is a great way to meet the partner communities who will look after the trees in future. Clean Travel members receive a certificate that states how many trees were planted on their behalf each year. This is especially attractive for tour operators who can show their current or prospective guests that they care for the environment and Namibian communities.



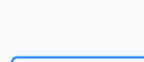
Through this and other projects, TOSCO aims to develop a strong community of environmentally responsible tour operators who want to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development and nature conservation in Namibia. All responsible tour operators or individual travellers can join the Clean Travel project by contacting the TOSCO team to find out more (contact details below). We especially wish to thank EcoSafaris and Matiti Safaris who have been the top contributors to the Clean Travel programme thus far. Our Clean Travel team agrees with the African proverb: "The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago, the second-best time is now."

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Current tree planting sites:

- Mōreson Special School: planting and educational site, future nursery site.
- Dagbreek School: nursery and educational site.
- Farm Okukuna / Goreangab: community nursery and planting site.
- Project Hope / Havana, Katutura: planting and sponsored site.
- Augustineum Secondary School / Katutura: planting and educational site.
- Waldorf School / Avis: Planting site and educational site.

Contact **Eloolo** at info@eloolopermaculture.org or **TOSCO** at cleantour@tosco.org



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