

London Trend Report March 2007

The Eco-tist Movement

For years the ecological movement was about reduction and simplicity. About downsizing, going back to the land and sustainability. Today it is increasingly about more - about high and decadent spending to relieve your conscience, about showing off your green luxury car, your vegetarian designer outfit, or even a politically correct diamond designer necklace.

This is what has been coined Eco-tism (Egoism + Eco) – whereby you are being ecological only really for yourself and your image rather than in the first instance (as it commonly should be), for the planet, the environment or the good of mankind. As one UK TV presenter: *“We now wear hemp clothes, eat organic and watch our electricity consumption... the next thing to sort out is the Porsche – but only when the right eco-model comes along.”* Or as Christa D’Souza, of Vogue magazine also said in an article on the Green Goddesses of Notting Hill, *“The organic supermarket Fresh and Wild is teeming with Marni-clad SUV-driving hippy chicks that couldn’t really give a toss about reducing their ecological footprints on the environment.”*

Among the most contentious boom areas of eco-tistical consumerism in London are luxury long haul eco-tourism. Critics are quick to point to the dilemma and paradox; your carbon footprint from flying is so enormous as to completely outweigh any ecological benefits your hotel might offer to the local environment or community. Second homes and holiday cottages are also something that no fashionable (and rich) Londoner will give up for the planet – so better, say the ecotists, buy a designer house on the Lower Mill Estate where there the developer was rumoured to be giving a free pig with every designer apartment, has imported rare Bulgarian beavers to help the eco-balance – but you can still fly your organic sausages in for dinner by helicopter.

For those who can't afford such luxuries, there are other less expensive weekend and leisure time pursuits that come under the "ecotist" banner. These include the new version of Monopoly played with a Toyota Prius figure rather than a gas guzzling motor, and trips to the Sustainable Dance Club at the Off Corso in Rotterdam – here the loos are flushed with rainwater, and energy generating dancefloors power the lights. Amongst the most sought after products by London's ecotists are anything with the Red label that was started by Bono and which is fronted by Gisele Bundchen. Although this is less to do with saving the environment and more to do with helping eradicate poverty, it has all been put into one big moral pot, and the attitude is, as Bundchen herself admits, *"We can all start shopping more, and feel good about it. No more guilt."*

Whatever you do, or buy, it is almost compulsory nowadays to count your "carbon footprint" and try to offset it. While a few years ago people were obsessed with recycling everything in anyway possible, today it is so-called "counting your carbs" One eco-columnist, Lucy Siegle recently offered the "Low Carbon Diet (or how to lose half a tonne in just one month)" in the Observer Magazine. Suggestions to help save the planet include: Turn off your computer when not in use – and save 29 carbs in one month (one carb is the equivalent to 100g of CO₂). Lower the temperature of your water heater – save 600 carbs. Use eco-bulbs in six sockets – saving 3.120. Or even move in with another person – and save 2.000 carbs. The idea of this diet, is that if you have any carbs left over from your allocated target for the month, you can spend them - For example, fly from London to Paris for 880 carbs, or drink two bottle of wine from New Zealand for 36 carbs. The promise is that, *"if you reduce your carbon footprint, you can treat yourself, with a gloriously clear conscience"*. Spoken like a true eco-tist.