

London Report October 2007

Go for Green in London: From the Green Cab to Eco-plus from St Pancras

Big cities and green transport are one of the key environmental challenges for the 21st century, and naturally London is doing its bit to “green-up” the transport system. Be it by taxi, car or bus or bike, there are now many alternatives to ease the Ecotist’s conscience.

The black Taxis are a symbol of London, and Londoners cannot imagine the city without them and their black smoke belching from their exhaust. But if you want to go green instead, better to ring one of the companies with an “Ecocab” such as Atlas who have a fleet of Toyota Prius’. One of the greenest mini-cab companies around, Green Tomato Cars, claim that they also offset double the amount of carbon dioxide that their cars produce by buying carbon credits with Climate Care. They also claim that the cars they use produce half as much CO₂ as a black cab, that they are no more expensive than a “conventional” cab, and that also noise pollution is also reduced as the Prius’ are very quiet.

Undoubtedly the greenest transport in London is with a bike and following successful schemes in Vienna and Paris, there is now a successful and growing street based rental station network here. The OYBike System is a rental system that allows you to hire and return a bicycle via your mobile phone and has rental bicycles at many key locations including Tube stations and car parks. Once you have paid the 15€ to register (which is simply an advance payment on usage), you can use the bikes for up to 30minutes for free (useful if you have a short ride from a bus/tube station to your work), or are charged according to how long you need the bike. Costs range from €3 for up to one hour, or 12€ for a day. Typical usage is say, a person travelling to main distance to work on the tube and then taking a bike for the last part of the journey and leaving it at a bike station near their office. Or during their lunch break, using a bike for a ride to relax or shop. The organisation also offers company rates whereby corporate customers can negotiate a fixed fee for any number of staff to use the scheme, and can provide breakdowns of use on a regular basis for accounting and tax purposes.

Londoners are considered among the most environmentally aware people in Europe but live in one of the least car-friendly cities in the world. Furthermore having a private vehicle in London is getting ever more expensive as the congestion charge zone expands, and parking fees rise. At the moment it costs 12€ a day to drive into central London, but if you

have an alternative fuel vehicle you are exempt from charges. Parking is also free in some areas for electric cars. These are just some of the reasons that Smart have chosen London as the first city in the world to stage road trials of the electric-powered Smart Fortwo. The car, with a 70-mile range and 70mph top speed will be initially rented out to local authorities, estate agents, and other fleet users who live within the capital's congestion charge zone, for around 600€ a month. Recharging is through a standard electrical power point and there are even free electricity top-ups available in some areas.

While the perspective for green travel in London is improving, also leaving the city is getting greener. As the new high-speed channel tunnel train takes off, Eurostar are now advertising their green credentials: their "tread lightly" initiative promises that a journey to Paris emits ten times less CO₂ than flying, and all journeys will be carbon neutral at no extra cost to the passenger.

Eco Opportunities

- Eco-Cabs on the rise
- Car/Bike share schemes
- Offset Plus (transport companies which offer greener alternatives AND offset CO₂)
- Electric charging points (the new garages).

www.atlas.uk.com

www.greentomatocars.com

www.climatecare.org

www.oybike.com