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15 of the world's best eco lodges

With Earth Hour upon us you can flick the lights off for an hour, then plan your next vacation at one of these super-green retreats

By [Jini Reddy](#) (/author/jini-reddy) 30 March, 2012

This weekend we're all being told to turn our [lights off for an hour](http://www.earthhour.org/) (<http://www.earthhour.org/>). But we can do better than that.

A genuine eco lodge will show a commitment to several of the following key factors: energy and water conservation, recycling and reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill, the use of natural, sustainable materials and bio-diversity conservation.

They'll offer guests local, organic, seasonal produce, low-impact, nature-based activities and in many cases, the local community will benefit from — or have a stake in — the development of the venture.

It helps too, if owners encourage guests to arrive by public transport or make it easier to have a car-free stay.

Bewildered? Don't be.

<http://www.cnn.go.com/explorations/escape/worlds->

The green experts who've helped compile the list below ensure that a stay in one of these innovative eco lodges will guarantee you peace of mind, as well as the ultimate escape.

Also on CNNGo: [OK, the resort's green, but is it good?](http://www.cnn.go.com/explorations/escape/ok-resorts-green-it-good-333694) (<http://www.cnn.go.com/explorations/escape/ok-resorts-green-it-good-333694>)

1. Laguna Lodge, Guatemala



COURTESY LAGUNA LODGE

Want volcanoes and a 40-hectare estate to play around? Done.

Perched on the shores of sacred Lake Atitlan, the sublime views — volcanoes frame the lake — are worth the stay alone.

Hewn from a mixture of volcanic stone, wood and palm, the lodge is as much a showcase for indigenous crafts as it is a sanctuary for green globetrotters. Materials are recycled or derived from sustainable sources, toiletries are chemical-free and hot water is solar powered.

Food is classy and meat-free with ingredients sourced either from the lodge's gardens, or via local farmers. The ace up its sleeve? It's very own 40-hectare nature reserve.

"Few have so successfully combined a deep green sensibility with a first-class experience," says Gary Diedrichs, ecosleuth and co-author of greentravelguides.com (<http://greentravelguides.com/>).

Laguna Lodge, 1 Tzantzotz, Santa Cruz La Laguna, Lake Atitlan, Solola, Guatemala; +502 7823 2529; www.lagunalodgatiitlan.com (<http://www.lagunalodgatiitlan.com>)

2. Damaraland Camp, Namibia



Locally owned, globally revered.

Located in the Huab Valley, the camp is renowned for its upbeat and friendly atmosphere. Guests stay in adobe and canvas chalets, power is solar-panel generated and guided nature walks and drives, mountain biking and visits to see Bushman rock art are the big attractions.

Says Hitesh Mehta, author of "Authentic Ecolodges" and a member of the advisory board of the International Eco-Tourism Society (TIES): "The camp was funded by renowned South African lodge operator Wilderness Safaris, but is now fully owned by the local community. It was the development of Damaraland Camp that helped create the 352,000-hectare Torra Conservancy, the first wildlife-based community conservancy in Namibia."

Damaraland Camp is west of Khorixas in the Kunene region, midway between Khorixas and Torra Bay. From Windhoek travel to Khorixas via Outjo.

You need a 4x4 vehicle to reach the camp. Otherwise a lift at a pick-up point will be arranged; +27 (0)11 807 1800; www.wilderness-safaris.com (<http://www.wilderness-safaris.com>)

3. Wakatobi Dive Resort, Indonesia



An eco-diver's first choice.

The resort, in Southeast Sulawesi, arguably offers the best diving in the world. At the same time the issues of marine conservation and community development are at the forefront of its ethos.

"Wakatobi's raison d'être is to help the environment in an over-fished region where the reefs are being destroyed," says Justin Francis, founder of [responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com) (<http://www.responsibletravel.com/holiday/4658/sulawesi-diving-resort-indonesia>).

"Employing 150 people from the local community, they have created the Collaborative Community Based Reef Management Program whereby in exchange for direct payments to local villages, reef sanctuaries have been established."

Wakatobi Dive Resort, Pulau Tolandano, Kec Tomia, Kab Wakatobi, Sulawesi, Tenggara; +62 361 759 669; www.wakatobi.com (<http://www.wakatobi.com>), quotes and prices for tour available at [responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com/holiday/4658/sulawesi-diving-resort-indonesia) (<http://www.responsibletravel.com/holiday/4658/sulawesi-diving-resort-indonesia>)

4. Annie's Cabin, England



Green can be cute too.

The merest glimpse of this cozy self-catering log cabin in the heart of the Shropshire Hills will have you hankering after a stay.

"Its green credentials include sheeps' wool insulation, solar water-heating, and energy efficient electrical appliances, including low energy and LED bulbs throughout," says Richard Hammond, founder of [greentraveller.co.uk](http://www.greentraveller.co.uk/places-to-stay/annies-cabin-shropshire-uk) (<http://www.greentraveller.co.uk/places-to-stay/annies-cabin-shropshire-uk>).

Sound sustainability practices aside, Annie's Cabin is accessible to those with limited mobility, and lies just four kilometers from Ludlow, the slow-food capital of England.

Annie's Cabin, Ludlow Ecolog Cabins, Caynham Mill, Ludlow, Shropshire; +44 797 709 1928; www.ludlowecologcabins.co.uk (<http://www.ludlowecologcabins.co.uk>)

5. The Mudhouse, Sri Lanka



Flashlights not compulsory, but sensible.

Around a two-hour drive north of Colombo, hidden away in a forest, The Mudhouse sounds simple and basic, but feels like the height of luxury: huts are made from mud and coconut leaves, and there are also tree houses.

There's no electricity or hot water, and at night lanterns and candles lend a romantic vibe. On-site is a lush organic garden, brimming with produce that ends up on guests' plates and it's enthusiastically staffed by locals.

The area is a haven for birds, there are lakes to swim in, bikes to borrow and villages to explore.

Says Hitesh Mehta: "Organic architecture fuses with organic food in a forest setting teeming with birdlife. I am particularly impressed by the environmental consciousness exuded by the developers."

The Mudhouse, Pahladuwelweva, Anamaduwa, Sri Lanka; +94 (0) 77 301 6191; www.themudhouse.lk (<http://www.themudhouse.lk>)

Also on CNNGo: [10 beautifully exotic wellness retreats](http://www.cnngo.com/explorations/escape/worlds-10-most-exotic-wellness-retreats-714431) (<http://www.cnngo.com/explorations/escape/worlds-10-most-exotic-wellness-retreats-714431>)

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ABinLA The best eco-lodge is your front porch/living room because you didn't light a gas station on fire (that is the carbon foot print equivalent of putting a 757 in the air) to get there. - AB in Santa Barbara and at andrewbaker77dotcom



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