

A taxing meander - but in a *really* good way

 By [Brian Berkman: contributing editor, travel](#)

20 Feb 2012

About four years ago while visiting Karoo lodge Samara we were encouraged to plant spekboom trees to counteract the carbon emissions we produced in getting there. That was the first time I'd consciously engaged in the impact of my life as a traveller and, rather than feel guilty about it, I was offered a neatly-packaged solution to deal with it.



Green Travel: Cape Country Meander members like Old Mac Daddy, (pictured), will bill a voluntary green tax to offset your carbon footprint.

In the same way that StreetSmart - the excellent initiative that assists people who live on the street via a voluntary donation, automatically added to restaurant bills of participating restaurants, so does the newly launched Cape Country Meander's Voluntary Tax Programme spell out the environmental cost of being there, and offer an easy solution.

The recommended voluntary tax is proposed based on an average carbon calculation which includes:

- Road travel. This is calculated using 0,4kg of CO₂/km travelled and an average distance per traveller of 200km to the Greyton, Riviersonderend, Elgin, Tesselaarsdal, Caledon, Villiersdorp, Botrivier and Genadendal areas in the Theewaterskloof. This equates to 80kg CO₂ emissions for their road travel per day.
- Accommodation: This is based on an average visitor's profile and calculates the cost of electricity used for cooking, showers and lighting. This equates to 36kg of CO₂ emissions per night.

Priced at R120 per ton CO₂, each overnight tourist would be given the option of paying R13.92 per night for their carbon off-set. Each day visitor to a wine farm or mountain biking trail would be given the option of paying R8.00 per trip for their carbon offset.

The first project identified as a beneficiary of the Cape Country Meander's Voluntary Tax Programme is a greening project which would involve planting trees in selected areas, training local people to water and care for the trees and paying them a bi-annual stipend for this work. The programme will be branded as The Cape Country Meander Tree-preneur programme.

A tree in a 20-litre container filled with composted soil, has the potential to permanently sequester 514kg CO2 over a 40-year lifetime.

The Theewaterskloof region, as represented by its joint tourism organisations and under the umbrella of the Theewaterskloof Municipality, is equally concerned about the preservation of its natural assets and the betterment of its communities and has set itself a target of becoming a leading centre of innovation and adaptation, recognised for its low carbon footprint.

The programme is committed to ensuring that all funds generated are ring-fenced and 100% invested in suitable local projects. Meticulous records of donations will be kept.

For more information go to www.thecapetrymeander.co.za.

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