

The question is...

how do you feel about the dramatic rise in world travellers?

In 2001, 12 million Chinese took overseas holidays; the World Tourism Organisation predicts that by 2020 that number will be up to 100 million. That's a huge number of 'extra' travellers taking to the world's skies, hotels and sites. But how do you feel about this?

You're worried, that's for sure – most of you voiced concern for the state of the planet. "This isn't just about the Chinese – we all need to start thinking more responsibly and considering whether we are doing the best for the environment or simply indulging ourselves," says Rosie Marks. William Robinson adds: "People should earn the right to travel – for example, you must plant ten trees before you can take a foreign holiday." However, we must legislate with caution: "We don't want a return to the Soviet days when a large percentage of the world's population were locked away in their own countries," Nick Ridout warns.

But perhaps, suggests Richard Hughes, the question is largely immaterial: "With the scarcity of oil and its future price, I believe international tourism will be so expensive in 2020 that only a small elite will be able to travel."

46%

Worried – the planet just can't take that many more travellers. Sites will become overrun and carbon emissions unsustainable

28%

Great! If more Chinese travel it will open up exchange between East and West, leading to a better understanding

26%

Everyone should be allowed to travel but it can't happen without some control – maybe a travel 'lottery'?

To take part in future polls, email poll-on@wanderlust.co.uk, writing 'sign me up' in the subject line.



[UGANDA, RWANDA & CONGO]

GOING APE

The cost of a permit to track Rwanda's mountain gorillas is set to rise from US\$385 to US\$500 from June 2007 – that's an expensive hour of animal action.

Operator Exodus Travel doesn't think it'll deter people: "Viewing gorillas is a one-off experience – there may be a rush, with people trying to book before June, but it won't put most off. The same happened with Kilimanjaro at the start of 2006 – prices were hiked, but demand hasn't dropped."

Neighbouring Uganda has already raised its gorilla-tracking prices – a permit is now US\$375 for foreign tourists. However, the Ugandan Wildlife Authority offers a money-back guarantee – if you're unlucky enough not to see the gorillas you get a 75% refund. James Bahinguzi, director of Tourism Uganda, says: "Although non-sightings rarely occur, we wanted to provide an extra incentive to further encourage interaction with the world's most endangered ape."

Even better news comes from the Congo, which has announced the creation of two massive new protected areas: Ougoué-Lekiti National Park in the country's west, followed by south-eastern Ntokou-Pikounda. Both areas – comprising nearly one million hectares between them – are home to healthy lowland gorilla populations. This is an encouraging move from a troubled nation that depends on its forests for economic development.

SAFETY FIRST, SECOND & THIRD

A pocket-sized smoke detector has become the latest must-have for safety-conscious travellers. The robust FlareSafe is also an LED torch and an SOS alarm, letting off a shrill whistle and lighting up if it detects smoke or if you're attacked.



Conceived after the Childers backpacker hostel fire in Australia in 2000, the FlareSafe is designed to give peace of mind when you're travelling through places with dubious fire-safety standards. That's not just developing countries, as co-founder Robert Carmichael notes: "A year ago the Australian authorities admitted that around 100 hostels in Sydney alone were death traps."

The three-in-one device costs £59.99. 020 7924 5020, www.flarebrands.com

6 Number of interactive, up-to-the-minute city guides – including Paris and Rome – available for use on Sony's PlayStation Portable. psppassport.com



Back to the future

The United Arab Emirates has altered time. Well, it's moved its weekend – from Thursday/Friday to Friday/Saturday – to tie in better with Western business hours. Double-check opening hours before visiting.