

ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS > ECO-TOURISM

GREEN TRAVELER | ECO RENTALS

Taking It Easy Can Be Easy on the Planet



One of the environmentally sensitive Natural Retreats cottages in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

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Interest Guide Eco-Tourism

WHEN Mitch Thomson began searching on the Internet for a vacation rental this summer, he never imagined his stay at Kaweah Cottage, a two-bedroom retreat in the western foothills of the Sierra Nevadas, would end up changing his family's lifestyle.

"It was a work of serendipity," said Mr. Thomson, who was not specifically looking for a green home, though he happened to be taking a green building class at the time. "We wanted a week of peace and quiet and [hiking](#) with the kids, so I Googled 'Sequoia Cabins,' and then this house popped up that looked fantastic with close proximity to a river. In fact, you can hear the river from the house."

Mr. Thomson, his wife, Cheryl, and their two daughters and a son (ages 14, 11 and 8) ended up spending four days hiking in the mountains, swimming in the nearby ancient rock holes, and practicing what he called "off-the-grid living."

Kaweah Cottage (www.KaweahCottage.com), with its American clay interior walls, formaldehyde-free plywood, dual-pane glazing and sustainably harvested wood, is just one of a growing number of green homes around the world now available for vacation rentals. Just as Kaweah Cottage is situated on a hillside near the Kaweah River with views of the Sierra peaks, most eco homes are built into breathtakingly natural settings, so guests can enjoy both an indoor and outdoor green experience. Kaweah Cottage even has an organic [garden](#) where guests can pick fresh arugula, squash and tomatoes.