

Put the kettle on



When we said we were doing a 'green' issue, our friend Jasper Winn wrote to tell us all about his favourite piece of 'sustainable' outdoor kit. This is what he said: "Bio-fuels are going to save the world. Or something like that. Though apparently we'll have to replant the whole Amazon basin, most of Indonesia and a good part of Ireland with GM soya, maize and sugar cane first.

Even if bio-fuel isn't exactly the

answer to the global energy crisis it is an eco-winner in one field; cooking in the outdoors – especially if you have the brilliant and efficient Irish-made Kelly Kettle.

Going back more than a century, tweedy fishermen first brewed up using the Kelly Kettle on Mayo lakeshores. Unchanged in design since then, a scrap of paper or a twist of birch bark with a handful of twigs (much greener than gas, spirits and white-petrol in not-so-eco containers and canisters – and more easily available) will boil water in the aluminium double-wall outer tube that forms the chimney in a few minutes. And you can cook on them too.

Today the kettle's popularity has spread far beyond the shores of Lough Conn. They've been fired up in every climate from the Arctic to tropical jungles and even make the best use of scarce dead vegetation on Sahara crossings, making them popular with aid workers cooking up a brew. Make it a Fairtrade brew and you're about as green as a recycled, seasick leprechaun with grass stains on his arse and shamrock in his ears. And a lot more eco-friendly than someone pouring a few acres of rainforest-grown bio-fuel into a Hummer. For more information visit www.kellykettle.com

Bags better

Despite surfing consisting of messing about in the great big blue, in the past the sport hasn't always been on the best of terms with Mother Earth. Toxic petrochemicals and high-grade plastics have been used for years to produce wetsuits, surfboards, clothing and wax. Companies like WaveTribe are however trying to turn that tide by producing eco-friendlier board bags, apparel made from organic cotton and leashes from recycled plastic.

WaveTribe's board bag is manufactured with recycled plastic filler material for padding and hemp for the outer shell. There's lots to like about hemp. Firstly it grows so it is renewable and secondly it's requires a lot less water to cultivate and process than cotton (even organic cotton).

WaveTribe's founder Derek D designed the surfboard bags and leashes based on his 30 years of surfing experience. On a recent 'research' trip to Mexico, he even slept in one of the board bags. "R&D has never been so sweet. Surfing is all about freedom of expression and when I travel I want to leave the smallest footprint possible," he says.

WaveTribe products are available at www.wavetribe.com and they are currently looking for a European distributor.



Board on bamboo

More pop – less plastic, that's what you'll get with Salomon's sustainable SickStick snowboard. In each board, 400g of fast growing, CO₂-absorbing bamboo replaces 300g of plastic, 100g of resin and 200g of fibreglass. Even the traditional ABS sidewalls are replaced with durable, waterproof bamboo rods.

The SickStick has a double pointy nose, shaped for riding powder in both directions. The stance is centred on the board's effective edge, to ensure rider's balance for freestyle tricks, and the tail is tapered for quick turns in tight spots.

And there's style to go with the substance. Los Angeles based artist Geoff McFetridge's handiwork reflects the intertwined relationship of human kind and the natural world. The Sick Stick comes in a cotton-bamboo knit bag instead of a PVC sleeve, while the hangtags are printed on recycled paper instead of coated stickers.



Travel light

Jasper Winn also shared some pearls of wisdom on how to lessen your impact when you travel both at home and abroad. "For an internet-enabled, modern take on hitchhiking take a look at www.liftshare.org which puts drivers and travellers in touch on a share-petrol-costs basis, and works for Ireland as well as the UK and further abroad. As for longer distance travel, let alone getting around Europe, you don't always have to leave the ground. Ferries, trains, even buses (the trans-Argentine double-decker coaches, for example, have fully reclining seats, 'in-flight' catering and drinks and big-screen entertainment), can all be a positive part of a long journey rather than just throwing away hours and whole days on flying. Check out www.nofly.co.uk for alternative travel possibilities."

One such adventure we came across is the OzBus (www.oz-bus.com) – perfect for the hordes of Irish students that head Down Under for that infamous year out. From Galway to Sydney, this 13-week overland journey of epic proportions spans from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean and takes in 22 countries. Highlights include Istanbul, Tiger reserves in India, the Mount Everest region and Bali.

