

Guilty Greenie: Season 1, Episode 8

Plane & Simple

Cait Bagby: Hello, and welcome to Guilty Greenie live on fireside from the Climate Collab Auditorium. We are your imperfect host. I'm Cait Bagby

Sarah Ferris: and I'm Sarah Ferris and we are tired of perfectionism in trying to live more sustainably. Personally, I'm completely overwhelmed with trying to make the correct choices.

Like how am I supposed to know whether fa-con is worse than chomping into your own homegrown, Babe the piglet. So let's get real for a minute and focus on what we can achieve, because I don't want to feel like I need a maths degree to work out the carbon footprint of a sandwich versus a salad every time I have a meal.

Join us as we bare all, we'll share our own guilt, share our own journeys and just add some levity in our attempts and fails to be more eco-friendly but in the real world, right, Cait?

Cait Bagby: Absolutely. We will be sharing our own journeys, the good, the bad, the laughable and today we are sharing the plane and simple Greenies guide to sustainable travel because this is something that, I think, hits close to home for both Sarah and myself.

Sarah Ferris: I think I'm going to feel super guilty this episode. Travel is something that I certainly cannot do without. I don't know if you can tell, but I'm not from around these parts in the UK where I currently live. My home is 24 hours on a plane on the other side of the world.

As a starting point, that makes me nervous I'm going to feel like this is going to be Sarah with the guilty, guilty, guilty greenie complex, this episode.

Cait Bagby: No, I think you're going to be pleasantly surprised and you know, our goal is not to make anybody feel more guilty than they already do. It's complicated. All of these topics that we cover, there's no single answer and having conversations like this is incredibly important because there's also no one size fits all. There's no, you know, it has to be done this way every single time because just you and I, our lifestyles are very different.

Sarah Ferris: Mmm. What's your relationship to travel then? Do you travel a lot?

Cait Bagby: Uh, not now. COVID. Before that though, I did grow up traveling. I was very fortunate, my parents had a good income and our vacations during the summers were spent driving cross country. So we would drive generally the lower 48 states and stop at campgrounds along the way. So we didn't do hotels or anything like that, or it was pretty rare. We did a lot of hiking, a lot of, exploration, staying with local communities, food festivals, things like that. They were very big on making sure we didn't bypass local communities and really got to know how things were there. So that, is something that stuck with me.

And as I got older, I've lived in Italy. I've lived in the UK. I love to travel. It comes back to, I want to get to know the local community. Every once in awhile I want to stay at a spa, I'm not gonna lie. But, for the most part, I really like learning. You know, in Belize I went to a women's cooperative and learned how to make tortillas by hand.

Yeah. So that's my relationship to travel. What about yours? Did you travel a lot before you moved to the UK?

Sarah Ferris: Well, I think we probably had different kinds of childhood because we were lucky enough to have a holiday place that we always went to. We would travel by car three hours, Bish bosh bash. So we didn't have any international travel. But I think that's also, what's driven my passion to travel because I lived in New Zealand. We're right at the bottom of the world. It's an isolated spot so it was expensive to travel, to get anywhere that was culturally different. What I was always craving, and I think this was because I was really interested in the classical studies and history, I wanted to see and feel places which we just couldn't do from New Zealand.

So what I wanted for my children was for them to experience going to the Eiffel tower or, seeing the Acropolis in Athens or, visiting the pyramids or just opening up that world to them. Not that they've done all of those things, but they know that those things are out there and they're accessible from where we are in London.

So, yeah, I think that's why we're still here is because we like to travel and we like the accessibility to be able to go and visit different cultures.

Cait Bagby: Yeah, I miss a lot about Europe. One of the things I miss a lot is the proximity to different experiences. In the United States, for anyone who's not from the United States, I don't think they truly understand how big the country is and how long it takes just to drive within your own state. You know, I could drive four hours and still be in my home state, uh, you know, Texas, you could drive days.

So I, I'm not sure people truly understand how big it is and it's full of incredible experiences. But I do miss, in Europe and even central America being able to take a train or drive for a couple hours and just have a completely different world in front of you.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah, that's going to be my next question. So I haven't spent a lot of time in the states, is it like, Europe, you can go one hour across the border and have a completely different experience? Do you get pockets of different experiences from one state to the other?

Cait Bagby: No. There are definitely different experiences. I'm from the Northeast, if I go down to Louisiana or Texas, or even up to the Pacific Northwest, it is very different, not just the landscape, but the, community is different as well. It's based on a histories, which is different from New England. It is different, but you can't really drive there. I'd say. You know, you'd be hard pressed to find those pockets. What I would say you can do more than difference in community is the geographical differences are incredible. You can find massive Redwood forests, to canyons, to deserts, to mountain peaks covered in snow. It's beautiful. It just takes a long time to get to all these places.

Sarah Ferris: If you could only travel within America for the rest of your life, would you be happy about that?

Cait Bagby: No, but that's, that's me. I was that child taking pictures out of National Geographic or any magazine, I could find, newspaper clippings and saving them, of places around the world. So I've always been someone who just wants to know from firsthand experience what the world is like. Would you be happy though?

Sarah Ferris: Well I think that's probably why I live in Europe, right. Because I can be on a train and go from London to Paris in three hours so , no, I definitely, can't live without travel, but I'm on a train that's more sustainable. So I'm interested to see if you want to escape America anytime how are you going to manage that? What mode of transport is the most sustainable?

Cait Bagby: Swimming. I'm just going with swimming. I've been training.

Sarah Ferris: I hope you've got a good backstroke. Oh, that would be my nightmare.

Cait Bagby: All right. Kayak, find kayak. I'll take a kayak.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah, a little sea kayak.

Cait Bagby: Before we move on, I do have a question. This is a general curiosity question. Cause I don't know the answer to this question. What is the closest country to New Zealand and how long does it take to get there?

Sarah Ferris: Okay, so it's Australia and, there across the ditch, we like to say, and I think Auckland to Sydney, a couple of hours, across the ditch. We've also got the whole Pacific islands that we can go to, which is just as accessible as Australia. So you can be in the Cook Islands or Fiji or Samoa in the same time it takes you to get to Austria. We're very spoiled.

There's lots of beautiful unspoiled places. Don't get me wrong.. But, I like variety.

Cait Bagby: Me too. I'm sure people love hearing about our personal journeys, but they came for the facts.

Sarah Ferris: Bring it.

Cait Bagby: Let's start with modes of transportation. I think that's probably the most pressing question for people, isn't it? What's the best way to get there? You mentioned train. If we're talking within a country, train is one of the better choices. This is where things can get tricky in the sustainability conversation.

There are trains that are powered by renewable energy.

Sarah Ferris: Ooo that's got to be good.

Cait Bagby: Absolutely. But then there are trains that are still powered through traditional fossil fuels. So this is where doing your research really comes in, but on a whole, there's kind of like a pyramid walking and biking, best modes of transportation. So if you're staying in a city, walk or bike, if you can. Train or public transportation, if it's powered by renewable energy, great option.

Sarah Ferris: Makes sense.

Cait Bagby: Now we're talking longer distance, this is where I think things get kind of interesting.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. This is the one that I need to know the good answer to, because this is the problem. I've got an electric car so I feel like I can be guilt-free in my own, spaces even if we were to drive to France. I'm not sure I trust the French charging network yet. I haven't tested that one out. I'm sure it's probably better than the UK, But yeah, there's no way I'm taking a boat to New Zealand so I'm most interested in the flying. Tell me, can I do it greenly?

Cait Bagby: As you were saying, there's no way I'm taking a boat, my brain's like, oh, I would. Absolutely, put me on a boat. I love being on the ocean.

Sarah Ferris: The problem with that, I think it takes about six weeks. That's your entire annual leave, isn't it plus some.

Cait Bagby: Well, you assume that Americans have annual leave. I love that. We don't. Yeah, I feel like that gets into a bigger philosophical question about what a vacation should be. And personally, I don't think it should ever be a week long where you're rushing around from place to place.

Also very bad environmental impact if you're trying to cram in a million places within a short trip. I think vacation should be longer. I like the idea of six weeks, slow, slow vacation. But we digress. So, long distance, again, train. There are several countries and several rail systems that you can go between countries on.

Sarah Ferris: Before you delve any further are there any countries that are winning at electric trains? I want to say Japan.

Cait Bagby: I don't have any numbers on that. Japan has always been light years ahead when it comes to their rail system, the speed and their energy usage.

Sarah Ferris: I just threw you under the electric bus there. Expecting some numbers straight out of you.

Cait Bagby: You did. We're not walking, we're not kayaking. We've taken the rail system out at the moment. Between flying and driving, I know we said it wasn't a math show. We won't be doing calculations, but I'm throwing out some numbers. Here we go.

Sarah Ferris: Okay.

Cait Bagby: Roughly 24% of CO2 emissions from energy come from the transport sector. So that works out to about 8 billion tons of CO2, annually. And this was according to the International Energy Agency. Some people will say it's as low as 21%. And some people will say it's over 30%, but the generally agreed upon number is right around 24%.

Sarah Ferris: Right?

Cait Bagby: Of that 24% road travel makes up about three quarters, so about 75% of transport emissions. Overall, that means that road transport accounts for 15% of total CO2 emissions.

Sarah Ferris: Okay.

Cait Bagby: And then lastly, Sarah, I think this gets to the heart of what you want to know, which is aviation. Of that 24%, aviation accounts for around 11, 12% of transport emissions. Overall, that equals around 2 to 3% of total global emissions. Now there's some debate on these numbers but overall we can see there's a massive difference between uh, road transportation and aviation.

Sarah Ferris: Okay.

Cait Bagby: I'm going to hope our audience. That made sense.

Sarah Ferris: I am so number blind here, I can't even. So are you saying that the planes are actually a smaller proportion of the CO2 emissions versus cars?

Right? You are saying that. Okay, good. I've got that right. Whew. Win for me. Do you know what Cait I'm loving where this is going. This is going in the right direction for me.

Cait Bagby: Okay. You want me to keep going then?

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. Cause I'm feeling the guilt slightly rising off my shoulders.

Cait Bagby: Well, this is where I'm going to take you off the cliff. I'm sorry.

If you took a flight from London to New York that is the equivalent of using 11% of your annual average emissions total for a westerner. Okay. So if you tallied up everything you did in a year, 11% would be spent just on a single flight from London to New York.

Sarah Ferris: What else would make up that? How much would normally be you're driving on top of that?

Cait Bagby: That's actually a really good question and I don't know.

Sarah Ferris: What I'm hoping is that my electric car is giving me an extra 30% in the bank that I can use up on aviation.

Cait Bagby: Hm. That actually is a really good question. And again, I do not know. Um, I think the estimates right now are that 1 in 250 cars on the road are electric. So what does that around 2%, 3% of, vehicles or passenger cars are electric? But I don't actually know, but I would have to imagine the calculations include electric cars because it's based on energy usage. So, take your own from that I guess.

Sarah Ferris: I'm sorry. You think I care about other people? I'm just worried about my own carbon footprint. Let's not be mistaken.

Cait Bagby: And there it is everyone. Sarah's not doing the show for the audience whatsoever. It is completely selfish.

Sarah Ferris: I think I said that to you when we first started the show. I just needed to have someone hack my life for me, but you know, everybody's benefiting from me hacking my life cause they can hear your pearls of wisdom.

Cait Bagby: That's true. So you remember when I said the 11% though? That's 11% of a Westerner's CO2. That would be an entire years worth of carbon emissions for someone living in Ghana.

Sarah Ferris: Wow.

Cait Bagby: So it's not great.

Sarah Ferris: It's not great. I'm interested to know if we should be doing a show on what our actual Westerners footprint is. What's that made up of, because it'd be interesting to like break it down and look at, okay, here's a place I can make a gain and how much impact does that have. Put a pin in that for season two.

Cait Bagby: That's actually a really good idea at the end of each season, to take those challenges and figure out how much you've lowered your carbon footprint. I think that'd be brilliant.

Sarah Ferris: It feels scarily like it might have more maths in it though.

Cait Bagby: Yeah, it will. And we'll bring in a mathematician for that.

Sarah Ferris: We're going to need one.

Cait Bagby: Speaking of maths. Each year around 4 billion people fly, that was based on a 2018 statistic.

Sarah Ferris: Um, 2020 a little different.

Cait Bagby: In 2020, there was 1 billion, fewer international arrivals than in 2019. That was a 74% drop.

Sarah Ferris: Wow. That's gotta be so good for the planet.

Cait Bagby: Yes and no. This is where things get a bit tricky.

The travel and hospitality industry is one of the biggest industries in the world. So essentially it employs a lot of people.

Sarah Ferris: Oh, okay.

Cait Bagby: While the number of flights were decreasing. Which obviously led to a decrease in carbon emissions from aviation. That's awesome. It had an unintended consequence, which was often devastating to local economies that relied on tourism.

Sarah Ferris: So we're winning for the planet and losing for the people.

Cait Bagby: Exactly. And part of sustainable travel, isn't just modes of transportation, it's looking at the entire impact from your travel. So that's everything from carbon emissions, to environmental respect or disregard, and also support for local communities and, helping to strengthen all of those.

Sarah Ferris: So if you were going to go to a place on holiday for two weeks is your ideal to stay in one spot and just really embed yourself in the community or would you be okay with traveling around in a sustainable way to experience more of the country? Is that not better? Because you're spreading the tourism around as well?

Cait Bagby: I think we have to be real about a few things. And I alluded to this earlier, which is in the United States there's no guaranteed vacation. And I know Americans get a really bad rap when they travel for some very good reasons and some really, uh, misunderstood reasons. When I lived in Italy, so I went to university there, I was a full-time student in Rome, a large portion of the university was made up of study abroad students who every four months a new couple hundred students would come in. At the time I would get really annoyed because every single weekend they were off to a different country, a different city. They were constantly traveling.

And I don't know why I kind of took it as a personal affront because I thought you're not getting to know this beautiful city and culture. You're not experiencing it. But later in life I reflected and realized this may be the only time some of these individuals will ever go to Europe. They're trying to see and do as much as possible. So when you ask the question, would I stay somewhere for two weeks or would I try to fit in quite a few locations? One, it depends on the location and what I'm doing. But I'm planning a trip for next fall and we're looking at doing Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam in about two and a half weeks.

Sarah Ferris: And that's punchy.

Cait Bagby: Same reason. I don't know if I'll ever go back there. If you can travel between these countries in a more environmentally friendly mode of transportation, that's how it should be done. The other thing that I think is really, really important when we're talking about sustainable travel is respect to the local community. This is a big, big one for me.

Sarah Ferris: And what does that look like?

Cait Bagby: The first thing you can do is stay with a local host. You can do an Airbnb outside the city. I'm never going to recommend an Airbnb inside a city. But make sure it's owned by an individual and not a property management company. Make sure that money is going directly to that person. And if you can find them on another platform, or message them directly... I did that in Iceland, where it was listed as an Airbnb, but got in touch through friends to the owner directly and was able to rent out the place and they got to keep a hundred percent of those profits.

Sarah Ferris: That's a good tip.

Cait Bagby: The other thing is if you want to stay at a resort, I'm not going to dissuade anybody from doing that, but know who owns it. Is it a mega corporation that's owning it or is it a local agent that makes sure to employ the local population and not just employ them, but are they in management positions?

Sarah Ferris: Right. I don't think I've ever, ever stopped to think about that.

Cait Bagby: Once you see it though, you almost can't un-see it, because if everybody who's serving your food is from the local population, but then you see management walking around and they're clearly not from the area. That is a big indicator that that money is not staying in that community or not enough of it is staying in that community.

Sarah Ferris: But hold on. It, that's quite hard to do though when you're booking it, because you can't see who the management is then can you very easily? Is there a hack when you're researching it at all?

Cait Bagby: Yeah. This is where the internet is incredibly powerful. Think about all the review sites that you can go to and you can ask questions and say, 'Hey, I saw you stayed here. What was your observation?' Not of how comfortable the beds were. Although, important question. 'What was your observation on the staff? Did you feel like you were actually part of the community helping the community, or did you feel that it was very sanitized for the tourist palette?' The other thing with that to eat at local restaurants. Get off the beaten tourist path. Take those windy back roads. You will meet the nicest people. I've been invited into more people's homes for food than I can count and it's fantastic. You'll always walk away with a phenomenal story.

Sarah Ferris: True.

Cait Bagby: Great friends. Some of people I keep in contact with most in the world are people I met just, asking for recommendations and ended up at their family's bar.

Sarah Ferris: Wow. I can say I've never had that experience. I think I'm a very sterilized traveler might be the word. Often, I'll hire a house on Airbnb. So I do do that side of things, but I'm going to make an effort when I'm away next time, God knows when that will be with COVID, but to actually be a bit more integrated into the local community. Bit of a challenge there for myself.

Cait Bagby: Simple things, take a local art course, you know. Think about things you would do with your children. You might sign them up for art lessons or you might take them cycling. You can research all of that online: local art teacher.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah.

Cait Bagby: And again, that money goes directly to that community. And learn just a few words. Just hello. I'm sorry. I don't speak the language. Where is. Even if you write it down on a piece of paper,

Sarah Ferris: And even if you botch it up. I've been in places where I don't care. I'll just give it a try and it's so appreciated. My kids is so embarrassed of me because I will just give it a crack I get it wrong. I remember going into Germany and going up to the border control and saying auf wiedersehen instead of guten morgen or whatever it was supposed to be and the kids were like, where are you going, mom? And the guy looking at me like, well, you're a bit nuts, but thanks for trying.

Cait Bagby: Yeah, but the kids secretly loved that and I can completely relate to that story. Um, but what do you say we switch over to modes of transportation because I don't actually even think we wrapped up that conversation.

Sarah Ferris: Yes.

Cait Bagby: The short answer is for modes of travel take a direct flight and pack as light as you possibly can because fuel usage is calculated on the weight of the plane. So the lighter you pack, the less fuel that's needed. And then on top of that a lot of the emissions from aviation come from takeoff. So direct flight is the way to go.

When it comes to travel, walking and biking if you're in a local area are the best options. Second is public transport. Third would be flying if you're taking a longer journey. And last, very last is driving yourself like your own car.

Sarah Ferris: Often now when I book a flight, they say, do you want to offset your carbon emissions by paying extra? Do you know where that actually goes and how effective those offsetting plans are with the airlines.

Cait Bagby: Yes.

Sarah Ferris: Is it greenwashing?

Cait Bagby: It very much can be. Yes. . And I actually think we should do a show on carbon offset and carbon credits. Listen, It's never a bad thing, in my opinion, to give back or offset to the best of your ability, even if you don't know that much about it. There is a lot of greenwashing that happens in every industry, hospitality and tourism is not exempt from that whatsoever, but you do have to start somewhere and learn as you go. So, if you have that option, do it. And then in the meantime, stay tuned to the episode of Guilty Greenie where Sarah and I discuss carbon offsets.

Sarah Ferris: Do you think they'll ever at make aviation transport green? Do you think they can make an electric plane?

Cait Bagby: They are trying and I just came across an article last week that they were able to find a new biofuel and I forget what it was. It's not the first time that a green fuel has been found. The problem is scalability because we do fly a lot. We have tourism and then we have business travel. Business travel has dropped down, obviously because of COVID and more people are realizing they can work from home, but there is still a lot of business travel.

Volume is only going to increase as people want to see the world . It's scalability and it's also untested. So best guess is that one we are years away from making any of these biofuels or electric planes usable. And then on top of that, then you have to mass manufacture, which opens up a whole different conversation. My guess is we're looking years, decades out on that.

Sarah Ferris: So what I'm hearing is that it's okay if I travel by plane, if I have to. If I travel direct, travel light, and don't do it too often if it's 11% of my carbon footprint for the year, you don't want to be doing multiple long haul flights.

Cait Bagby: No. I mean, so many people overlook this but traveling locally is one of the most sustainable things you can do. Now, again, it depends, Sarah, you're close to a lot of things. I'm not close to a lot of things,

Sarah Ferris: But, I am far from my family.

Cait Bagby: Yes.

Sarah Ferris: So, I've always got built into my carbon footprint and need to get home hopefully when COVID opens up again, I'd like to be able to see my family at least once a year. So that's going to be part of my carbon footprint and I know that so I do have to be really aware of the rest of my travel that I'm doing in the year.

Cait Bagby: I would also say, we live in a modern world. We are to some extent at the mercy of how the world operates right now, economically, politically... so we do need to be accountable for our impact on things, but that also doesn't mean we should be beating ourselves up for wanting to do things like seeing our family.

Looking at, okay, I know I'm going to take two flights a year and that's non-negotiable for me, but maybe I can line dry my clothing. Maybe I can take shorter showers. Maybe I can

learn to compost. At the beginning of the show, we said everybody's lifestyle is different. And as long as you're not abusing it and excusing your behavior by just saying, oh, well, I'm going to take flights, but you know, I turn off the lights when I go to bed. You're not being accountable at that point.

Sarah Ferris: You're greenwashing yourself.

Cait Bagby: Yeah. Well, you're deluding yourself. Everyone's lifestyle is different. You have to find what works best for you while trying to constantly do a little bit better. But that doesn't have to be hard.

Sarah Ferris: I liked that. So if you were going to sum up your main points from the travel, what would be the things that you'd want to ram on home to everyone?

Cait Bagby: I would say when it comes to sustainable travel, you need to take into account modes of transportation, where you are staying, how you are supporting the local economies and communities and what you are learning from it.

So once you're there stay at a locally owned hotel or resort, whatever. Be very mindful of your impact in terms of, are you taking or leaving. Are you staying on trails when you're hiking? Are you being respectful? And then last, and certainly not least is to help the local community in the way that they need it. Don't just go in there and assume, you know, what they need. Really get to know people. Buy your art from a local art studio that's off the beaten path. Eat at family restaurants. Find the parks that are outside the tourist. And I should add this little asterick travel in the off season.

Sarah Ferris: Ooo threw that one in there last minute, didn't yeah?

Cait Bagby: So I was, as I was saying that I'm like, there are certain economies that heavily depend on tourism dollars and that money needs really to be spread out over the year. One, you get to help the local economy. Two, you get to see things,

Sarah Ferris: it's cheaper

Cait Bagby: and you get to see things that you wouldn't because otherwise you'd have throngs of people standing in front of you.

Sarah Ferris: Oh God, I can't stand crowds. I'm all about the off season.

Cait Bagby: I know, you know, the pretty travel photos are so enticing and they really have opened up the world to us in terms of how incredible it is but go to the places that people aren't talking about.

It doesn't mean they're less safe. It just means they haven't been plastered everywhere online, but those are the most magical experiences.

Sarah Ferris: Hidden gems, hidden gems.

Cait Bagby: That was a lot.

Sarah Ferris: It was a lot, but the great thing is I actually have come out of all of that information, feeling less guilty than I thought I would, which is a win for me.

Cait Bagby: I told you. Does this mean you're going to start trusting me now?

Sarah Ferris: I always trusted you. But I think for me having the electric car is been a massive game changer in how I look at traveling as well, and I think that's COVID as well. When COVID first came we had like a gas guzzler and after COVID having it sitting on the street for months on end not impacting the environment, I actually felt really guilty about sitting in it and putting the pedal down. So, that's why we went to the electric and I think COVID, I mean, it's, it's ball ache to be fair, but at the same time, it has had some benefits for the planet. Wouldn't you agree?

Cait Bagby: Yes. Last year, beginning of this year, there was some data that came out in terms of COVID and travel and how decreased travel has had actually helped the environment. Uh, some of the ones I'm sure people saw this on the news was, you know, the Venice canals had cleared up and there were, there were fish, there's certain species of fish that were coming back. Demand for coal went down. There was a decreased electricity demand. Traffic congestion lightened, right? We got cars off the roads and, CO2 emissions were lowered in some places by as much as 10%. What they found though, is a lot of those were short term.

Sarah Ferris: Right, cause it's interesting to wonder what we'll take forward from it. Like what will be the positive things that we will take forward from being in lockdowns?

Cait Bagby: That was the speculation. Everyone was really hopeful and they're like, oh, this is a great resetting point so when we move forward, we can now see how quickly we can turn things around. And it was like, everyone just kind of forgot, you know, applauded all the great things, but then just, was like, I have to go back to my, I have to go back to living.

Sarah Ferris: Yes. Yeah. I think it's interesting because I know that over here we've had a petrol crisis that hit us back in September 2021 and we couldn't get the lorry drivers from Europe over to England. We didn't have enough HGV drivers. I think there was also COVID was, you know, throwing itself in the mix there as well. And all of a sudden, since then, I don't know, and I've got no statistics on this, but the amount of electric cars that I now see in my neighborhood has definitely increased. And I think that's sped up the process in England. And hopefully that's gonna, you know, speed things up and we're all moving towards electric anyway, but enough of my electric car, God, I crap on about it. Don't I?

Cait Bagby: Because you love it. Actually. It's a great advertisement. Don't say the name of it though. Maybe we can get a sponsor.

Sarah Ferris: I can't. Oh, I know. That'd be great. I could have a fleet of them. Brilliant.

Cait Bagby: Well let's talk highs and lows. Now that I've had you feeling good about traveling.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah.

Cait Bagby: Let's talk about what your, do you want to start with lows today or highs?

Sarah Ferris: We could do lows.

Cait Bagby: All right, let's bring it down. That's right the mood was too good. Let's bring it down.

Sarah Ferris: All right. Do you want to start?

Cait Bagby: No, I've been talking too much here. What was your low of the week?

Sarah Ferris: Well, my low of the week is the compost bin. Okay, couple of episodes ago, you gave me the challenge of recycling, of composting, all my food waste in the house. And this is probably the one challenge that I was resistant to because I knew I should do it. I didn't know why until we had that episode, go back and listen to it if you're not sure why it's great reason to compost food, but, it's just still annoying. I still swear every time I empty the bloody bin because the damn bag breaks of blah, blah, blah, plus, it's one habit that has not been adopted by everybody in the house. So every time I opened the bin, the banana skin in the bin beside the compost bin. So yeah, that's my low and it's not that big. We'll get there and I will not, not have the compost bin now. I'm not going backwards, but it is just a little bit of one of those reality points of, um, yeah, it's not all rainbows and butterflies.

Cait Bagby: Yeah. We talked about freezing so it would stop, you know, juicing, so to speak on the kitchen counter. Um, but you said you didn't have a space in the freezer for that. What about, why use a liner at all? Is it required?

Sarah Ferris: No, its because then I can do smaller bits. Like I can just, it seemed like it was cleaner. I think the problem is the bag is compostable and by the time you go to empty it. What I'm hearing myself saying is I need to empty the bin more often. That's probably the issue.

Cait Bagby: I mean, that would, that would help one issue.

Sarah Ferris: Shut the heck up, Sarah, about your winging over a compost bin, but you know, you did ask me my low. If that's my low, then I'm living a great life. Let's be fair.

Cait Bagby: But that's a very real frustration.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah, we're being real. Okay. Come on, tell me your low.

Cait Bagby: My low of the week, I feel like it's an accidental, it's an accidental low

Sarah Ferris: Hold on. Nobody plans a low. I'm just pointing that out.

Cait Bagby: Yeah, that's a good point. Okay. We had Thanksgiving this past week, there's a lot of food, a lot of dishes, everyone just sat down to eat and someone went to go rinse off, I think it was a plate or something, and they said, 'oh, your, your water is not working.' Now I have a tap faucet. So you don't need to pull the handle in and out. You literally can tap it with your forearm or the back of your hand.

Sarah Ferris: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Cait Bagby: I have one of those and I thought, you know, when we have people over, sometimes they don't know how to use it and it kind of gets reprogrammed. So I thought not a problem. Went in there, wasn't working so I thought maybe the batteries died. So replacing the batteries. No, it turned out my water pressure tank broke.

Sarah Ferris: Oh, that is a pain.

Cait Bagby: Yeah. I had no water in the house. We did figure out how to rig it for the day or not the day for 10 minutes at a time we'd get water and then it would turn off again so this went on and on. We called a couple of plumbers and no one called us back. We didn't exactly know what was wrong with it, but we knew it was an older system from the eighties. So instead of replacing what we think was probably just two or three pieces that needed to be fixed, we bought and installed an entirely new water pressure system.

Sarah Ferris: Cait, that's exactly what I would've done. But I'm guessing that's probably more efficient in terms of heating, maybe. I'm clutching it, trying to find some positives for you?

Cait Bagby: No, so it's not for heating. It's just literally for getting the water through the pipes.

Sarah Ferris: Oh, okay. Well, I can't help you out. Shame, shame, shame on you.

Cait Bagby: It was like when I think of it as a low, I had to buy an entire new system instead of just replacing one piece.

Sarah Ferris: But you know, sometimes you do that. You do the right thing by replacing a part and then the next piece falls off and the next piece and the next piece. And by the time you've got to the end of it you've built a whole new system anyway. So Hey, give yourself, give yourself a break on that one. Let's go to your highs and bring it up. Bring it up. What have you got for me?

Cait Bagby: Well, my high actually has to do with the plumbing. It sounds so weird. Um, so I learned after the fact, most likely the reason a plumber never got back to us is because apparently Thanksgiving through the holidays through Christmas is the busiest time for plumbers. And I couldn't figure out why I thought are people washing more dishes? What's happening? Turns out it's actually from the garbage disposals in the sinks.

Sarah Ferris: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Well, we don't have one, but yes, I know exactly what you mean. Yeah.

Cait Bagby: I don't have one either. They scare me.

Sarah Ferris: We used to have them and we'd always like, my mum would be absolutely petrified that somebody would put their hand down and mush it up. So it was used with caution.

Cait Bagby: I've never heard of that happening to anyone, but for some reason I can picture losing a few fingers, so I don't allow them in my house. Essentially people are throwing food down there that doesn't belong down there and they're jamming their systems and then everything's backing up.

So plumbers get really busy. So my high was that we had I'm gonna say a minimal, it's not, definitely not zero, but a minimal food waste Thanksgiving.

Sarah Ferris: Well done.

Cait Bagby: Anything we didn't eat that could either be composted or fed to the animals, we did that. Anything that could be saved to be made into soups or stocks we did that. So I'd say for the amount of food, very, very minimal waste.

Sarah Ferris: Well done. And that's why I think that you live like the Waltons. I have this idyllic picture of you living there with you pickling jars and yeah, I don't know, pumpkin mash that you've bottled up for, for months on end.

Cait Bagby: I don't live on the Prairie.

Sarah Ferris: That's the one little house on the Prairie, not the Walton's.

Cait Bagby: What was your high?

Sarah Ferris: Well, I had two. One of the things that's changed in my mind since we started doing the podcast is when I look for any products that I must have, and now I'm actually thinking, do I really need this? So I had a problem where I had a shoe, I had my sneakers which I go to the gym with, and one of the sneakers, to this day I do not know where it's gone. Just went missing in my house so I had like one sneaker. It'll show up probably tomorrow, but it's gone. It's baffled every single person in our house where that sneaker has gone.

Uh, so I had to buy a new pair of sneakers and I made the choice to put in the word sustainable when I searched for them. And, uh, yes, I bought some sneakers that had, uh, well they say they're sustainable, but they've got like a, something called a rubber compound. That's like a sustainable compound, which is made from 70% natural, 20% Virgin rubber, 10% conventional.

I'm hoping that's better than a normal shoe.

Cait Bagby: Interesting.

Sarah Ferris: Is it? Or have I just been greenwashed?

Cait Bagby: Without knowing the brand and without knowing where their rubber is being acquired and where it's being made, I can't truly answer that question for you. Um, but do you know what I think the ultimate high of that was?

Sarah Ferris: What?

Cait Bagby: It made you stop and think, do I really need it? And is there a better alternative out there? I think that right there, it's a half the battle. Yeah.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. It is definitely and I did the same cause I needed to get suitcases. All our suitcases had fallen to pieces and we thought we might go somewhere until, Omnicron has come along. I did the same thing trying to find suitcases that were made out of a hundred percent recycled plastic bottles, which is pretty cool.

Cait Bagby: That's great.

Sarah Ferris: Thank you. So that is my win. So I'm quite happy with them.

Cait Bagby: Those are great wins. That really is the goal of Guilty Greenie is just a really start thinking about the choices we make, why we make them, and how we can just do a little bit better.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah.

Cait Bagby: That's really what it is. Start questioning, start questioning why we do certain things.

Sarah Ferris: And it's becoming muscle memory. Now it's becoming habit.

Cait Bagby: It's like going to the gym, something I don't ever do, but I've heard, I've heard this thing called muscle memory.

Sarah Ferris: My God, you know, I went to the gym the other day for the first time and I'd been there for years, like nine years, I'd been at the same gym and then I took a year off when COVID happened. I went back to the gym and I thought I'm going to do a HIIT class. Just blast it. See if I can move something. The guy in the class said to me, 'oh, Madam, is this your first time at the gym?' Oh, I was mortified. I can not tell you. And I was just like, yeah, no. Okay. I've got a mountain to climb. He goes, 'you're climbing a mountain. You shouldn't do that yet.' I'm like, it's a saying, leave me alone.

Cait Bagby: This is the trainer?

Sarah Ferris: This is the trainer. Like, where's your motivational speech, dude?

Cait Bagby: Did he give you a couple of tips or anything? Or no?

Sarah Ferris: I could see him eyeing up the defibrillator in the corner. Out of the corner of his eye.

Cait Bagby: I guess we're going to have to figure out if anybody paid attention during training on how to use this.

Sarah Ferris: Exactly. Exactly. And I saw him today at the gym when I went back today and I could see, I just was like so shamed by him that I couldn't even look him in the eye. Anyway, I'll prove him wrong. All right. So let's go on to the challenge of last week.

Cait Bagby: I'm so curious about this, how this went for you. The challenge last week was to clear out your email inbox of anything that was not needed.

Sarah Ferris: When you told me this, it blew my mind. I didn't even know it was a thing. Uh, and I did put it to the family as I do every week.

Cait Bagby: And how'd they feel?

Sarah Ferris: So I asked Gareth, my husband and Aviana my 13 year old. I'll let them tell you.

This week's Guilty Greenie challenge is that I have to, and you have to do it to delete all of your emails that come into your inbox that are spam and unsubscribed to them. Do you know why are you going to do that?

Sarah's Family: Because it's really annoying. I have like thousands of emails I don't read.

It takes up electricity to process all the servers that send the emails.

I mean, they use electricity but I didn't know that.

I've got 17,000 and my inbox actually. Might take me a while.

Sarah Ferris: So apparently it creates a carbon footprint, which I didn't realize. I just thought it was a paper free.

Sarah's Family: Yeah, that makes sense, actually, because we're doing an audit at work and part of your carbon footprint is how many or what AWS data centers you use and how much

Amazon web servers. That and Microsoft are the two big data centers in the world that people use.

Sarah Ferris: See, if you can delete some of yours.

Sarah's Family: I've done it already. I've encouraged you to do it in the past and you've mocked me.

Sarah Ferris: I didn't know it would make any difference.

Sarah's Family: Given you get one about every 10 seconds.

Sarah Ferris: I think my spam folder is probably causing, an Ozone hole somewhere.

Cait Bagby: I love the different reactions. Aviana's just like it's just annoying.

Sarah Ferris: I know it's so annoying to me.

Cait Bagby: But the Gareth is spot on.

Sarah Ferris: And interesting that his work was actually looking at that. Doing a project on how much that contributes to their carbon footprint, which I thought was really good.

The thing that surprised me about this challenge was I didn't even put two and two together. I thought, oh great, I'm paper-free so I thought that was guilt-free. Didn't even take into account the electricity that it was consuming. It is freaking time consuming to unsubscribe after nearly 40 well, 46 years old of just letting your inbox pile up. Well, to be fair email, wasn't around 46 years ago so maybe 26 years ago. Um, it was good. And now I'm just consciously doing it. Every time that one comes through, I'm unsubscribing. Some of them make it easier than others.

Cait Bagby: Yes.

Sarah Ferris: Um, and that's really annoying, but I'm definitely going through it. I think it's good now because Aviana is going to know to do it from the beginning and she's going to have a nice clean inbox, which is something that's going to take me a long time to achieve. Good challenge.

Cait Bagby: I think I had mentioned in the last show I spent, this was two summers ago when I learned the size of the problem, I had 200,000. I had hundreds of thousands of emails and I sat there in the evenings deleting and unsubscribing to the point where now my inbox total not even unopened or anything has 32 emails in it.

Sarah Ferris: Oh, that's impressive. Okay. That's hashtag goals. I'm going to try and get there. It's a long way for me to go, but I'm gonna try.

Cait Bagby: For anybody curious, Gareth nailed it and also I love his reaction about how he's like, I've told you about this, and I've tried to get you to do this. It's taking a stranger to convince you. Roughly, 319.6 billion emails are sent daily. That's about 3 million emails, every single second.

Sarah Ferris: Wow. That's a lot.

Cait Bagby: And it takes up server space, right? If you're not deleting them, it takes up energy for those servers. Also energy to send them. For a plain text email, it's around four grams of carbon emissions, sorry, carbon dioxide equivalent. If you add multiple attachments, like a PDF or photos or anything like that, it's 50 grams. It adds up very quickly to the point where sending one less email would save the equivalent of 3,334 cars on the road. It would be the equivalent of taking 3000 cars off the road.

Sarah Ferris: I feel like I have been responsible for the polar ice caps melting with just my emails. That is really, really bad. Great. Well now I'm terrified of next week's challenge. We're going to be doing tech. Are you tying your challenge to that?

Cait Bagby: Yes, I am. You get another tech one? And I think this is also going to surprise a few people. We're not going to go into the particulars of it today. We'll save that for next week. I'm so sorry for this. I'm sorry.

Sarah Ferris: Don't start like that. That's not a good way to start.

Cait Bagby: I'm so sorry. Okay. Your challenge for this week is no streaming music.

Sarah Ferris: I think I've just won. Hold on I need to clarify.

Cait Bagby: Like no Spotify, Pandora, SoundCloud, apple music.

Sarah Ferris: Is it just music or is it podcasts?

Cait Bagby: Here's the thing I was talking about this challenge with my husband and he said, um, here's the issue with that challenge is if all your listeners stop streaming, you will not have a show.

Sarah Ferris: And this is the last episode of Guilty Greenie. Thanks everyone for coming. Goodbye. Oh, no.

Cait Bagby: If, if people, you know, take some advice, take some insight away from Guilty Greenie to the point where we actually don't have a job, I would say we've done our job.

Sarah Ferris: True. True. So are you telling me that I can't stream podcasts or I can?

Cait Bagby: What do you stream the most?

Sarah Ferris: Podcasts, but cause I it's part of what I do now. I'm not a massive music listener. If I'm ever got something in my ears, it's generally a podcast, but it's not saying that other people in the house don't so, you know, we can inflict the pain on them. Right?

Cait Bagby: We'll change it. No streaming TV or movies, then.

Sarah Ferris: Oh, Cait, you breaking up on me for sure. Right now. Can I tell you something.

Cait Bagby: Best of luck to you.

Sarah Ferris: We're getting a new TV tomorrow.

Cait Bagby: Oh, that sucks for you.

Sarah Ferris: That does suck for me. Okay. I'll stop the podcasts. I'll stop the podcast. I promise.

Cait Bagby: The first step bargaining. Isn't bargaining the first step? To happen.

Sarah Ferris: I will stop the podcast and raise you the streaming of the music. Okay. All right. Let's go back to the original. That's are one kind of, we sit on the couch together at night and have a moment watching a box set or something together. So I'd rather get rid of the podcasts and the, um, music, please. Can I please, please, please?

Cait Bagby: I will let you choose. Because this was going to be a very tough challenge, so I will, I will let you negotiate the terms of this one. Streaming, that's the focus though?

Sarah Ferris: All right. Well, I'm going to commit to you that I'm going to stop streaming music and podcasts.

Actually. Why don't we record tomorrow?

Cait Bagby: No.

Sarah Ferris: Worth a try,

Cait Bagby: See, I have this co-host on this podcast that makes me do work when I'm not hosting a show, she makes me edit transcripts and all sorts of stuff. So take it up with her.

Sarah Ferris: Gosh, she sounds like a cow. Alright. Well I think that's it for the week. Isn't it?

Cait Bagby: I think it is. So, please do join us next week to see if Sarah accomplished her challenge for more, the good, the bad, and the laughable.

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Sarah Ferris: Bye-bye.