



## **The Vacation That Didn't Suck!**

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I don't mean to rub it in, but I just got back from vacation in Cabos San Jose. It is definitely a place manicured to make Americans feel good...even about the environment! The efforts taken at the resort towards that goal made sure that one part of the vacation didn't suck! They don't allow plastic straws in an effort to clean up the ocean. However, all their efforts are simply to make you FEEL better. They also raise the costs you incur and ignore the facts.

Plastics (from petroleum) make our lives better in a variety of ways. In the past 50 years, plastics have revolutionized our society. They keep everything from dry foods to liquid fruit drinks fresher. They improve transportation costs, speed and consumable losses. They enable the vast new array of technologies we depend on every day. In the medical industry, plastics make us safer with everything from disposable syringes, pill bottles and bandages to diagnostic and treatment equipment. Plastics have contributed significantly to improving our quality of life.

However, if you walked around the resort for five minutes you would see numerous signs stating their commitment to saving the ocean by banning plastic straws while they pour your next drink in a disposable plastic cup. It is simply a marketing ploy to make you feel better without making a positive difference.

We see the same efforts here in the states with the banning of straws and plastic grocery bags. But does anyone ever stop to think that the straws and plastic bags might be the best option and reduce costs.

Take plastic grocery bags for instance. If you want to ban them and replace them with cotton totes, you would have to use the cotton bag at least 131 times before its carbon footprint would be as low as that of a plastic bag. Replace it with paper bags? You would have to use a paper bag 43 times. Even using either that many times, the cost of the bags is still higher for the consumer.

But what about the ocean? Over half the plastic in the ocean comes from four countries: China, Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam. And 70% of the plastic in the ocean comes from the fishing industry (primarily buoys, lures and fishing line). Plastic bags account for 0.8% of plastic in the ocean and straws account for a fraction of that.

Banning these items actually increases the use of more plastics. California banned plastic grocery bags and the result was consumption of trash bags went up by 12 million pounds as people were no longer using grocery bags as liners in small trash cans. It also led to doubling the consumption of paper bags.