

5 brilliant ideas to impress the guests at your hotel

Sustainability is becoming more common in cities, towns and villages across the world, and hotels are no exception. Environmentally-aware guests will make choices based on how a hotel meets their green expectations, on top of price and location.

For a hotel owner, many green features can also have lasting financial benefits. Installing low-flow shower heads is a great example. Saving water means lower water and heating costs, so the cost of replacing shower heads, or installing aerators, is quickly paid back. These modifications do not downgrade the comfort of your guests but show that you care about the environment.

There are so many ways you can go about greening your hotel – while major works like insulating your building, planting native plant or food gardens, or designing for natural light are all fantastic, they do need a large commitment of time and money, and just may not be realistic.

Luckily, there are many quick and easy ways you can show your environmental commitment, save money and impress the guests at your hotel, all at once, and without a hefty financial or time commitment.

Here are five simple ideas for greening your hotel...each can be done in a day!

1. Place engaging towel changing cards in your rooms.

These are possibly the easiest way to implement green practices into your business as done by many hotels already but do it wisely! Pay careful attention to the text you put on the cards – showing your guest how the previous visitors have acted is actually a very good motivation! According to the Green Hotels Association, asking your guests to consider not changing their sheets and towels daily can save hotels up to 6 euros per room per day. As well as saving you time and money, you are showing your guests you have a clear commitment to sustainability and are aware of the environmental impacts of running your hotel.

2. Replace single serve toiletries with better quality organic toiletries in refillable dispensers.

Replacing your single-use toiletries with refillable dispensers for your guest toiletries will save on both packaging and product waste. Soap, shampoo, conditioner and moisturiser

can all be dispensed hygienically through no-waste fixed dispensers. This change should be linked with introducing better quality products (than the one you provided in single serve bottles).

Have a look around for a local business producing premium organic toiletries who you may be able to work with – perhaps reduced cost supplies in exchange for product information in the rooms. Community relationships can have powerful benefits for all participants and can enhance the guest experience on a number of levels.

3. Develop a site-wide recycling policy, with recycling bins installed in rooms and public areas.

Do you have recycling bins in place in guest rooms and public areas?

Easy to set up and effective, recycling bins are an easy way to show your guests you care about the impact of waste, and empower them to reduce their environmental impacts. Bins are more effective when they are accompanied by pictures of which waste typically goes into which bin, especially for foreign guests who are not familiar with the language or the bin colours.

The best option is to have compartmentalised bins, but to avoid having to spend money on new bins and to avoid throwing away those currently in use, you can invite customers to leave certain waste in specific places, e.g. glass bottles, paper and cardboard can be left on the table for the cleaning staff to pick up and use the bin for plastic or other waste.

A 2009 article in Green Hotelier noted that hotels can reduce their waste disposal bills by up to 50% by removing paper, plastic and other recyclables from their waste. This reduction can create significant savings, particularly for hotels in locations with high disposal costs.

4. Install low-flow shower heads.

Low-flow shower heads can reduce water use by more than half while providing similar performance, which has an immediate beneficial effect on both the environment and your water and heating bills.

Not all shower heads are created equal...anywhere up to 20 litres per minute can be classed as low-flow. A high-efficiency low-flow system will operate at around 7 litres per minute. Do you know how your shower heads rate? You can easily check by taking a bucket, placing it under an open shower and seeing how much water comes out in a minute! Is it more than 14 - 20 litres? You know you will save more than half of the water use in showers by replacing shower heads with low flow ones!

There are three methods which are used to minimise the use of water in modern shower heads. Aerators add air to the flow of water, flow restrictors reduce the water pressure and the design itself of the shower head create a similar feeling to the old devices while using considerably smaller amount of water.

5. Train your staff

You cannot do everything on your own, you need the support of your staff. To engage them in the green practices, you need to educate your staff on the benefits of each program. They should have a good idea of the benefits to the environment, the guest and the hotel, of each program or improvement. Work with your staff to come up with additional ways of promoting sustainable practices and greening your hotel...as the ones 'on the ground', staff can often bring ideas from a different, and very valuable, perspective.

No matter which green ideas you install in your hotel, it is essential that you believe in the principle behind the process. If not, your guests will easily see through the "green washing" and your efforts will be counterproductive. Before you take on new programs or policies, take the time to understand the environmental reasons behind the program.

Happy greening!

Do you want to know more about this topic?

Best Environmental Management Practice
in the Tourism Sector

Check our best practices

Learning from frontrunners

David Styles
Harald Schönberger
Jose Luis Galvez Martos

2013

