



Guest Services

by Ray Burger

States' green lodging programs and hotels' eco-friendly practices plant the seeds for greener bottom lines

*Another great article from The Rooms Chronicle, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! ***Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.*** College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com*

Notice: The ideas, opinions, recommendations, and interpretations presented herein are those of the author(s). The College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University/The Rooms Chronicle assume no responsibility for the validity of claims in items reported.

It has taken some time but the wait has been well worth it for hoteliers and current and future generations of guests. More and more states are following in the footsteps of California and are launching “green lodging” programs to preserve precious natural resources and recognize and reward hospitality businesses’ eco-friendly practices.

In fact, the practice of eco-friendly practices has rippled from coast to coast to the point where states such as Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Vermont also are “getting game” and getting green — green lodging programs that is.

Pineapple Hospitality recently partnered with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to help the state’s lodging industry create a healthier, safer indoor environment and reduce the generation of solid waste in hotels and motels. In the public-private partnership, Pineapple is providing hotels and motels with technical assistance on cost-saving “green” products and practices. Offering an arsenal of energy and water conservation, air quality improvement and waste reduction, recycling and reuse solutions, Pineapple is helping Florida DEP’s nine certified Green Lodging facilities and 15 others currently enrolled and working toward the green designation to unearth a world of fresh ideas on how to help themselves while helping protect the environment.

Profits in the palm

Florida DEP’s Green Lodging Certification Program tiers its certified hotels into three levels:

One Palm Certification

To achieve this level of certification a hotel/motel must have completed the core activities representing a minimum set of best management practices in the areas of communication, water conservation, energy efficiency, waste reduction and clean air. In addition, the property must obtain support from top management, form an active multi-disciplinary “Green Team” and operate in compliance with all applicable environmental laws and regulations.

Two Palm Certification

To achieve this level of certification a hotel/motel must have maintained the facility’s One Palm status for at least 12 consecutive months prior to applying for Two Palm certification. The hotel/motel had to have conducted an environmental baseline assessment, developed and enacted performance improvement goals, implemented at least one green project and evaluated its progress. If Two Palm certification status is not achieved within 24 months of obtaining the One Palm certification, the property may be moved to inactive status and will be removed from the Green Lodging Locator website: www.floridagreenlodging.com. A hotel in inactive status will no longer be able to consider itself a Florida Certified Green Lodge and will no longer be able to use the Florida Green Lodging Certification Program to promote the property.

Three Palm Certification

To achieve this level of certification a hotel/motel must have maintained the facility’s Two Palm certification and have demonstrated continual improvement for three consecutive years. To retain this certification level, the facility must continue to maintain or improve its high level of commitment to protecting the state’s environment through the Florida Green Lodging program.











Who certifies these “Green Lodges”?

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has trained Green Lodging Assessors (predominantly comprised of state and local government employees) throughout the state who visit the lodging facilities. The assessor verifies the facility’s Green Lodging certification information via an onsite assessment. After a review by the DEP, the hotel or motel is certified if the lodge’s information is complete, correct and the property meets all of the program requirements.

Green bandwagon

According to www.allstays.com, at least 35 states have documented lodging facilities that are “taking the right step forward for us and Earth one night at a time,” including:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| ▲ Alaska | ▲ New Jersey |
| ▲ Arizona | ▲ New Mexico |
| ▲ Arkansas | ▲ New York |
| ▲ California | ▲ North Carolina |
| ▲ Colorado | ▲ Ohio |
| ▲ Connecticut | ▲ Oregon |
| ▲ Florida | ▲ Pennsylvania |
| ▲ Georgia | ▲ South Carolina |
| ▲ Hawaii | ▲ South Dakota |
| ▲ Indiana | ▲ Texas |
| ▲ Iowa | ▲ Utah |
| ▲ Kentucky | ▲ Vermont |
| ▲ Maine | ▲ Virginia |
| ▲ Maryland | ▲ Washington |
| ▲ Massachusetts | ▲ West Virginia |
| ▲ Michigan | ▲ Wisconsin |
| ▲ Montana | ▲ Wyoming |
| ▲ New Hampshire | |

Green Hotels: 30 VBEP partners: 18 Total participating properties: 48					
Environmental Policy & Mission		48	Towel/Linen Reuse Program		35
Energy Efficiency Upgrades		21	Composting		11
Using Recycled products		23	Using more enviro. friendly products		24
# of guest rooms for towel reuse		1758	Environmental Mgmt. Plan		30
Recycle & offer guests access & info		35	# of onsite assessments		11 in 0405
Saved Gallons of H2O	Saved Gallons of Bleach	Saved Lbs. Detergent	Saved KWH	Saved Lbs Recycled	Saved H2O/gal. Propane
895,320	1,317	11,191.5	21,488	124,020	6,566

As the Vermont Green Hotels Scorecard illustrates on the next page, Vermont’s participating green hotels are using sound environmental management practices to reduce their impacts on the environment, improve their bottom lines, and satisfy customer demand for environmentally conscious lodging establishments.

Why get green?

The following are just a few reasons why hoteliers should consider adopting and implementing environmentally and ecologically-friendly practices today:

- *Money matters*

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), hotels and motels investing in energy-efficient lighting upgrades can expect to yield a profit of \$6.27 on each dollar invested. Simple waste audits of your facilities can help you identify opportunities for reducing wastes, and recycling or reusing materials.

- *Win Customers*

According to the Travel Industry Association of America, within the United States alone 43 million people are self-proclaimed “eco-tourists” who are willing to pay 8.5 percent more to environmentally-sensitive travel suppliers. A survey of U.S. travelers found 87 percent would be more likely to stay at “green” properties. By demonstrating that they care for the environment as well as their visitor’s comfort, hoteliers can earn respect and customer loyalty and enhance their company’s competitiveness.

- *Protect OUR Planet*

Lodging is the fourth most intensive user of energy in the United States’ commercial sector. Improving energy efficiency in the hospitality industry will help reduce energy consumption, thereby reducing U.S. greenhouse emissions and global climate change. Reductions in the use of hazardous cleaning materials, water consumption and waste disposal will all contribute to protecting Pennsylvania’s land, air and water resources.

- *Earn Recognition*

State DEPs and Pineapple can help green hotels and motels share their stories through positive public recognition. Green hotels and motels may be recognized through awards events, or in articles, news releases, newsletters and other publications both on the Internet and in print.

Creating eco-friendly guestrooms

Hopefully, after reading this article and careful consideration, ownership and management will seek to realize the full potential of cost-effective, eco-friendly practices. Many resource agencies, consultants, and private companies, including Pineapple, stand ready to assist. One advantage is that these individuals and organizations have typically developed close relationships with leading green product providers to save hoteliers money and time while maximizing any potential rebates from utilities and local governments.

Perhaps Pineapple's Eco Rooms demonstrate the extent of its involvement the best. Typically providing a complete payback in 12 months or less, these Eco Rooms include several of the following:

- \$ Energy-efficient lighting solutions such as GE fluorescent lamp bulbs and The WattStopper occupancy sensor nightlight;
- \$ Bathroom amenity dispensers using biodegradable, hypoallergenic soaps, body wash, lotion, shampoo and conditioner;
- \$ Recyclable/biodegradable plastic bottles filled with all-natural bathroom amenities and hand soap packaged in recycled paper;
- \$ Programmable digital thermostats to control guestroom energy consumption without compromising guest satisfaction;
- \$ Patented low-flow/high-pressure showerheads and sink aerators;
- \$ Early-closer toilet flappers and tank diverter valves;
- \$ The Nature's Mist deodorization system, which helps hotels guarantee non-smoking rooms no matter what a property's guests' preference mix is;
- \$ In-room air filters;
- \$ A towel and linens reuse program;
- \$ Non-toxic, non-allergenic all-natural cleaning products
- \$ Facial and bathroom tissues made from 100-percent recycled materials and at least 30-percent post-consumer waste paper;
- \$ Recycling receptacles for guestrooms, lobbies, meeting rooms, restaurants, kitchens and offices.

Conclusion

The bottom line is just that, money talks and people walk. Chances are that many of your hotel's competitors already are undertaking some or most of these eco initiatives and making more money and a better name for themselves in the process. More importantly, they are helping to preserve the environment in the process. Where will you stand on this issue? ✧

(Ray Burger is president of St. Charles, Missouri-based Pineapple Hospitality Inc., www.pineapplehospitality.net. A former hotel GM with more than 25 years of industry experience, Burger has spent the past decade developing, delivering and supporting products and programs proven to help hotels cut costs and boost business with America's estimated 50 million environmentally conscientious travelers. For more information on Pineapple's full line-up of eco-friendly solutions and other "fresh ideas for hospitality," e-mail ray@pineapplehospitality.net or call him at 636-922-2285.)