



Guest Services

by Ray Burger

Green Suites' top ten ways for hotels to celebrate Earth Day everyday

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

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If you're 35 or older, you have been around for every single commemoration of Earth Day. First observed in 1970 and brought to fruition by founder Sen. Gaylord Nelson, the annual Earth Day celebrations serve as a grassroots method of reminding us of our mutual interest in the stewardship of our environment.

Hoteliers across the globe are in a unique position to positively impact the environment, their bottom lines, and the experiences, outlooks and loyalty of their guests. Here's a "Honey do" short list of environmental initiatives that cost little in the way of time and monies, yet have immediate significant positive impact for participating properties and our precious planet.

1. CONSERVE — Electricity, natural gas and water/sewer bills are in no way fixed costs. In fact, something as simple as changing a few light bulbs from incandescent to fluorescent (both compact fluorescent and linear, T-12 to T-8) is applicable for most hotel lighting applications and helps operators quickly and cost effectively reduce related energy consumption and costs up to 75 percent.

Further sweetening the "what's in it for us" value proposition is the fact that many utility companies offer rebates to encourage energy- and water-saving products, and Green Suites International has the partnerships and people to help hotels uncover rebates and will even help fill out the paperwork for them. Some of the most lucrative programs are in California, Utah, Oregon, and Washington, but rebates run coast to coast.

Hotels should consider purchasing more energy-efficient equipment or maintaining what they have in better working condition. Preventive Maintenance is very ecological.

Provide nightlights near bathrooms. Many guests often leave a light on at night because rooms are dark. A nightlight uses much less energy and increases guest satisfaction with your property.

Conserve water by changing sink aerators. At 75 cents a pop, this is a simple, easy-to-implement, low-cost solution.

Let guests know that the hotel will change the sheets every third day of their stays with their consent, and allow them the option of reusing their towels to help conserve our planet's natural resources.

Install turbo-charged 2 gallons per minute showerheads that give vigorous showers that keep guests coming back — and even asking where they can buy the showerheads for their homes.

A new dual-flush commode offers guests the choice of 0.8 gallons per flush for liquid and 1.6 GPF for solid waste. This alone will save enough water and effluent charges to pay for itself in less than two years in most locales. Where else can one get a measurable 50-percent annual return on minor monies invested in products proven to last a decade or longer?

If the hotel's positioning permits, consider switching to all-natural bathroom amenities with convenient/cost-efficient dispensers. Utilizing elegant amenity dispensers for soap, body gel, shampoo, conditioner and lotion will save time and money by eliminating the need to restock and saving landfills from millions of plastic amenities bottles each year.

Pictured below: Dedicated blue recycling containers make it easier for hotel employees to sort and recycle consumable items such as paper, glass, aluminum, tin, and food waste.



NEW! Energy-Saving Tips for Lodging video

The video, Energy-Saving Tips for Lodging, made jointly by the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute and ENERGY STAR®, is intended to demonstrate the value of strategic energy management when used by a lodging.

There are numerous factors that can affect the bottom line of a property: recession, weather, current events, etc. While these factors are beyond management's control, the efficiency of the property isn't.

This easy-to-follow video and companion guide highlight basic practices for reducing energy costs, including: simple, no-cost steps that dramatically reduce energy bills, long-term strategies for maintaining energy efficiency, energy-saving devices with a quick return on investment, and where to look for additional guidance, tools and support.

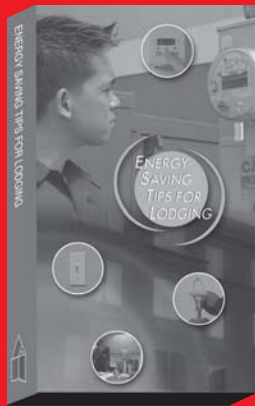
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Buy Organic. Consider purchasing linens manufactured from organic cotton.

Use organically grown produce. Try offering organic breaks for meetings that feature organic coffee, tea and even fruit smoothies.

2. REUSE — Old, worn towels have excellent second lives as rags. Kitchen scraps and coffee grinds serve as high nutrient compost for organic herb gardens (fresher is better). Every reuse increases the hotel's ROI, including the aforementioned popular linen and towel reuse program. By encouraging guest participation through literature detailing how towel and linen reuse conserves our planet's resources, hotels also help themselves with substantial reductions in laundry labor costs, detergent, electricity/natural gas and towel and linen replacement expenditures.

3. RECYCLE — Printer/toner cartridges, paper, newspaper, glass, cardboard, aluminum cans, plastic bottles, etc. You name it, there's probably a profitable recycling market for it. Become a model for driving responsible recycling behavior. Does the hotel have a Recycling Coordinator on site? Assistance may be available from the local municipality. Most are looking to reduce the waste stream to eliminate N.I.M.B.Y. (Not In My Back Yard) issues associated with landfills and the ever-increasing costs of operating these facilities. Provide containers for can and bottle recycling for staff and guests.

4. BUY RECYCLED — Office paper and public restroom paper products are a great start. Add to the demand for environmentally friendly products. Visit www.greenseal.org for products manufactured from a high percentage of post consumer content. The 50 million-plus "green guests" in America alone will appreciate, remember and reward the hotel's thoughtfulness.

5. DONATE — Give away, don't throw away old sheets, pillowcases, furniture, table linen, etc. Not only does this establish goodwill in the community, it reduces needless and premature waste. Consider holding an annual parking lot sale (perhaps in conjunction with Earth Day). Donate a meeting room once per month to a local environmental

group, and leftover food from the hotel's kitchen to a local non-profit organization. It is in giving that we truly receive.

6. EDUCATE/TRAIN — Get the critical "buy in" from staff, from top to bottom. Does the hotel have an Eco Champion or Eco Leader? Be proactive in driving change. Does the hotel have a "green team" of staff committed to implementing these cost-saving initiatives? Think green and reward green thinking. Have a "green-storming" session with staff and challenge them to come up with ten more ideas to save time and monies while helping preserve our planet. Reward participants by giving them each a small tree or a shrub to plant at home to remind them to keep thinking green. Visit www.arborday.org for an online tree store.

Sponsor a school field trip and get kids thinking green. Work with the teachers to show how the hotel is helping save energy, reduce water usage and pollution, and improve the environment.

Encourage hotel guests to think green in their lives. Place small plaques in rooms and common areas showcasing the property's commitment to environmental responsibility and detailing accomplishments of the eco-initiatives the hotel has instituted.

Build a micro-website promoting the hotel's green practices and offering ideas for others. Websites save paper and guests appreciate having information online and easily accessible whenever they need it.

7. HOLD GREEN MEETINGS — If a meeting planner asked the hotel's Sales and Catering staff for a Green Meeting, would they have a clue? Visit www.greenmeetings.info to start.

8. GET RECOGNITION FOR YOUR EFFORTS — This can be done by visiting www.bestgreenhotels.com and signing up your hotel for its initiatives already in place; continue to add listings/links as you add initiatives. Remember, green-minded travelers patronize green properties. Contact your state for a listing on their website. California, Florida, Vermont, Pennsylvania and many others have green lodging websites for visitors and guests interested in patronizing green lodging operations.

9. OBTAIN AN ENERGY STAR RATING FOR YOUR HOTEL — A strategic approach to energy management can produce twice the savings for the bottom line and the environment. Visit www.energystar.gov for more info.

10. BUILD A GREEN HOTEL — It all starts with a plan. The U.S. Green Building Council is a great place to seek information about how you can design and build green. Remember, it's easier to design for efficiency and conservation than to retrofit for it. Visit www.usgbc.org to get more information.

There are so many reasons to adopt an Earth Day attitude year-round, and the results are often front and center — from the physical beauty of well-planned, planted, and maintained grounds that attract and retain guests, to the fond memories that bring back repeat business. Hoteliers can make sound business decisions and feel good about them at the same time. Most managers want their guests to see a lodging property as a home away from home that reflects both the hotel's and the guests' commitment to the "Big Home"... Planet Earth. ✧

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This is just one small step that we take to help preserve the environment.

