



A Sea Change in Eco-Awareness

2010-05-12

EcoRooms & EcoSuites certifies two new hotels - The Comfort Inn & Suites in Boston and Habitat Suites in Austin, TX - as a 2nd sustainability wave crests in the hotel industry

There's really no way to scientifically measure it, but eco-awareness may have hit an all-time high this spring. More and more hotels are embracing greener policies, and major sustainability initiatives are being implemented by some of the industry's leading global hospitality brands.

- **WyndhamGreen** by Wyndham Worldwide, the company's recently launched sustainability program, is seizing the opportunity to manage energy consumption as a part of the company's overall green strategy across its businesses and brands, which together encompass nearly 70,000 properties in 100 countries. Due to its numerous brands, properties and distribution points, WyndhamGreen is expected to have a large impact on the company's overall carbon footprint. A recently released WyndhamGreen Global Best Practices showcases the company's initiatives in energy and water conservation, recycling, education, community programs and innovation. Kicking off the company's commitment is Wyndham Worldwide's Silver LEED certified 250,000-square-foot headquarters, located in Parsippany, N.J. The building is expected to reduce water, energy and waste 10% to 30%. The company also recently received the "Green Pioneer" award from ConEdison Solutions for purchasing 100% of the building's electricity from wind generation.
- Wyndham Hotel Group, the world's largest hotel company with more than 7,000 hotels and 11 brands, is implementing the EarthSmart linen reuse program to save resources and operational costs. The company's Super 8[®], Howard Johnson[®], Travelodge[®], Days Inn[®] and Ramada[®] brands currently participate.
- *Hilton CEO Chris Nassetta proclaimed that* by Dec. 31, 2011, all 3,500 Hilton Worldwide properties will use the company's proprietary "LightStay" system to calculate the environmental impact of its hotels and resorts, including the energy and water used in its buildings and the waste and carbon they produce. "We're putting measurement of sustainability performance on the same level as service or quality standards, and it will be evaluated as part of regular property-level reviews," Nassetta said.

Expedia Goes Green

Every day is Earth Day — at least that's the thinking behind Expedia's recent launching of its Green Hotel program.

The new Green Hotel section of Expedia's travel search Web site has a database of nearly 2,000 eco-friendly hotels, as well as green traveling tips and information on national parks.

To kick-start users' interaction with its Green Hotel program, Expedia is offering deep discounts for eco-friendly booking.

Isn't it wonderful hospitality companies' sustainable initiatives finally are getting noticed by more leading third-party hotel search and recommendation sites? We're sure to see similar efforts implemented industrywide.

To see a video of the Green Hotel special on the Discovery Channel, please visit:

<http://www.expediatriptips.com/2010/04/22/green-room-discovery/>

"Welcome to The Green Party, Expedia!" Burger adds. "Now, there are even more booking channels making it easier for consumers to reserve rooms at greener hotels."

Certification Matters

The progressive greening of national hotel chains outlined above demonstrates it's not enough for a hotel to say it's green anymore. For guests interested in socially responsible travel, they want proof that the hotel is living up to lofty environmental standards. They want to see measurable results from the hotel's green policies.

That's why members of EcoRooms & EcoSuites (www.EcoRooms.com) – the online directory for the greenest hotels in the U.S. – have begun taking the additional step of becoming EcoRooms certified.

The EcoRooms certification process includes a written application and a strenuous in-person audit performed by EcoGreenHotel (www.EcoGreenHotel.com), a member of our Board of Advisors or one of our other 3rd party auditors.



The Sustainability Audit is a comprehensive review of the hotel's current environmental initiatives, which also includes meeting the 8 EcoRooms & EcoSuites criteria:

1. Green Seal certified or equivalent cleaning products are used in guestrooms.
2. Green Seal certified or equivalent paper products (facial and bathroom tissue) are used in guestrooms.
3. Bathrooms feature amenity dispensers or small, practical amenity sizes with guests encouraged to take the remainder of their bathroom amenities home or donate them to homeless shelters or Clean the World
4. The hotel has implemented a Linen and Towel Reuse Program.
5. Guests are provided separate and easily identified receptacles and/or bags in which to deposit recyclables.
6. Energy-efficient lighting is in place in every applicable area.
7. High efficiency plumbing is deployed – 1.6 or less gallons-per-flush for toilets, 2.5 gallons per minute (GPM) or less for showerheads and 1.5 GPM or less for sinks with water-efficient aerators.
8. The property is 100% Smoke-Free.

Only hotels that meet 100% of the criteria will be officially CERTIFIED.”

The two latest EcoRooms members to receive their certification include the Habitat Suites in Austin, Texas, and the Comfort Inn & Suites Logan International Airport in Boston.

“Our Certified EcoRooms & EcoSuites Hotels empower guests to make a difference in this new era of accountable, sustainable travel,” says Ray Burger, President of EcoRooms & EcoSuites’ parent Pineapple Hospitality. “Our certified hotels not only have a track record of environmental achievements, but they’ve taken the extra step to have an independent, third party verify the results, and ensure they are doing everything they can to reduce their impact on Earth. After staying at hotels like the Habitat and Comfort Inn Boston, even the most green-minded traveler might take a few ideas home with them.”

Comfort Inn & Suites — Boston

Along with completing its EcoRooms & EcoSuites certification, the Comfort Inn & Suites Logan International Airport just completed a multi-million dollar eco-driven renovation.

Owned and operated by the third-generation Saunders Hotel Group, this 208-room Comfort Inn & Suites has made ongoing environmental initiatives part of its corporate culture since opening in September 2000. It recently was named as the greenest hotel in the 5,000-property Choice Hotels chain, winning its 2008 Eco-Excellence Award.

“When we first started talking about these issues, people were scratching their heads. They didn’t know there was a problem,” says Tedd Saunders, Saunders Hotel Group’s Chief Sustainability Officer. “The interest that’s there now is only going to grow. There’s a sea change among the public. Guests, corporate travelers, and meeting planners: They are all thinking about environmental issues, and that’s only going to increase in terms of interest and guest expectations.”

Certifications through programs such as EcoRooms & EcoSuites will help hotels stand out in the growing green crowd.

The Comfort Inn Boston has put more than 90 green practices in place, including in-room recycling bins, a food waste composting program that engages guests, a laundry ozone system that eliminates most hot-water usage, spa-quality shampoo and soap dispensing systems that eliminate 270,000 small plastic amenities bottles from entering the waste stream, a pool ionizing system that eliminates the use of chlorine, and a small fleet of CNG (compressed natural gas) shuttles.

The hotel also just installed a new air wall system by the front entrance, keeping cool air in during the summer and out during the winter to reduce energy costs. And even during the renovation, nearly 80% of all debris removed from the property was recycled and kept out of local landfills.

The Comfort Inn & Suites Logan International Airport (Boston) provides ongoing training with its staff and guests to ensure each program is a success. A “Green Team” conducts spot checks of rooms to ensure green initiatives are being implemented properly. There are cheat sheets for attendants and the front desk to make sure they understand the green programs and policies.

“A lot of our initiatives are interactive, so it’s really important to have everybody involved,” says General Manager Katrina D’Argenis. “Our team communicates really well and lets us know if there is anything that we could be doing better. It’s all about sharing information to create the best solutions for the hotel and planet.”

Habitat Suites — Austin, Texas

The recently EcoSuites’ Certified Habitat Suites is a model of environmental consciousness. Its green policies have been going strong since the early 1990s, when it was one of the first hotels to stop using pesticides on its property – something nearly unheard of at the time in Austin, Texas.

Over the years, the hotel has started using nontoxic, phosphate-free, natural cleansers. Air ozonators/ionizers are used for clean air quality in suites. Trees have been planted to shade suites from the summer sun, lowering air conditioning costs. All suites have windows that open for natural ventilation, along with window tinting, radiant barriers, proper insulation, weather stripping, duty cycling timers on circuits, and high-efficiency air conditioning units. Water heaters are lowered to an efficient temperature and lighting fixtures have been changed to compact fluorescent. The hotel also has put up solar panels, rain barrels and even planted an organic garden in-house.

As the Habitat Suites’ eco-programs have continued to grow, along with the hotel’s list of environmental awards including, among others:

- The city of Austin’s ICI Water Conservation Award;
- The Austin Corporate Recycling Coalition’s Environmental Vision Award for Landscaping and Composting;
- The Keep Austin Beautiful "Industry Leadership Award";
- The Co-Op America National Green Business Leadership Award; and
- The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce’s “Greenbelt Award”.

More than the recognition, the Habitat Suites greatest reward might be the fact that its total bottom line costs have dropped 13% since 2002.

“It’s not just the right thing to do, it’s not just a line to give to a group of business people to attract their business. The savings and value of going green continues to be a really compelling case for anyone in this business,” says Habitat’s Hotel Manager Natalie Marquis. “In recent years, the price of natural gas has been so volatile. When we installed our solar thermal system, natural gas prices nearly doubled and our bill went down.”

Marquis says Habitat’s standing as a leader in green has been a great attraction for guests, and a great way to build community locally.

“We’re really proud to be a part of this growing movement of socially responsible travel,” Marquis says. “We’re always willing to help educate and lend our experience to those who are interested in going green or sustainability. Being a part of EcoRooms & EcoSuites – becoming a certified member – is really a great way to reach out and share our successes with others.”

Certified Tips

EcoGreenHotel’s Director of Sustainability Jeff Kiec recently completed the EcoRooms & EcoSuites audit of the Habitat Suites. And while he notes Natalie and the rest of the crew there are certainly ahead of the curve in terms of sustainability, he’s seeing more hotels taking an environmental approach.

“The awareness of the benefits of going green is certainly growing,” Kiec says. “Companies are looking at the triple bottom line: doing what’s right for people, the planet and their profits.”

He says he’s seen more hotels start using dispensed amenities and wireless energy control systems to save electricity. Hotels and guests are also getting more on board with in-room recycling.

“It’s happening everywhere,” Kiec says. “Of course sustainability is going strong in places like Seattle, Chicago, Portland and Los Angeles, but I just checked out a hotel in Jackson, Miss., that’s really taking an innovative green approach to its operations. If it’s happening there, it can happen anywhere.”

From his experience, Kiec says the one piece of advice he’d give to a hotel looking to go green is to get help. Sure, there are a lot of ideas a hotel manager can come up with on his own, but when you try to tackle everything yourself, you can easily get burnt out or fail.

“It takes a holistic approach: You need to get everyone working together to be effective,” he says. “There are so many departments involved, so many people, one person can’t manage it all from scratch. Use the experience that’s out there to speed up the learning curve and avoid mistakes from happening in the first place. That’s what’s going to help you create a successful program. Calling the green gurus at Pineapple Hospitality is a great place to start.”

About Pineapple Hospitality

Headquartered in Saint Charles, Missouri, Pineapple Hospitality(TM) is an EPA ENERGY STAR(TM) partner bringing fresh ideas to hospitality guests’ doors and owner/operators’ bottom lines - including FreshStay(R) (www.freshstay.com), EcoRooms(R) & EcoSuites(TM) (www.EcoRooms.com) Environmentally Sensitive Amenities(TM), EO(R), Neutrogena(R), Earth Perfect, Earth Simple, ecossential elements and greenSPA(TM) amenities, AVIVA and WAVE dispensers, Energy Efficient Lighting and Controls, Custom Linen & Towel Re-Use Programs, Green Earth Key Cards, Sleeves and Folders, Energy Management Systems and Controls, High Performance showerheads, the Nature’s Mist(TM) deodorization system, Zero Odor, and dozens of other products and programs. For more information, please visit www.pineapplehospitality.net, or call us at 636-922-2285.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com>

The URL for this story is:

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article45769.html>

© 1998 - 2010 Nevistas and the author.

Brought to you by Hotel News Resource

Distribute your news on our Network

See what all the buzz is about at:

http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/Info-news_account_info.html