



## **EcoRooms & EcoSuites Certification Recognized by Industry Leaders**

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The AH&LA and AAA have both included the EcoRooms & EcoSuites certification program among those recommended for eco-conscious travelers.

From the very start, EcoRooms & EcoSuites ([www.EcoRooms.com](http://www.EcoRooms.com)) was designed with eight of the most stringent criteria to be truly considered a "green" hotel. Recently, EcoRooms & EcoSuites took the additional step to certify its members who pass a comprehensive audit performed by experts from either the Board of Advisors or EcoGreenHotel ([www.EcoGreenHotel.com](http://www.EcoGreenHotel.com)).

For these efforts, EcoRooms & EcoSuites has now been recognized as a leader in the field of eco-conscious travel by two of the most trusted names in the business.

- On the hotel operator's side, the American Hotel and Lodging Association (AH&LA) has accepted EcoRooms & EcoSuites as one of its recommended green certification programs. These programs help guide AH&LA members toward green certification programs that meet their diverse needs for developing an environmentally-friendly and sustainable hotel.
- From a consumer's standpoint, EcoRooms & EcoSuites has been approved as a resource for the ECO icon in AAA publications. The AAA created the Eco Icon to assist consumers who want to know if a property is making a special environmental effort, as part of their overall travel decision-making process.

"Being recognized by both the AH&LA and AAA distinguishes the EcoRooms & EcoSuites certification program as a go-to-resource for both hoteliers and consumers looking to verify how important the environment is to a property," says Ray Burger, President of Pineapple Hospitality and founder of EcoRooms and EcoSuites. "At EcoRooms & EcoSuites, we're always tried to take a leadership role in the greening of the hospitality industry through education, with a Board of Advisors made up of some of the 'greenest' minds in the industry, and by continually monitoring and updating our criteria for membership based on available technology."

"We're proud to be accepted by both of these groups and we pledge to keep pushing the industry toward a greener future," Burger adds.

The eight EcoRooms & EcoSuites criteria for membership and certification include:

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.
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 – 1.6 or less gallons-per-flush for toilets and 1.5 gallons per minute or less for sinks with water-efficient aerators.
8. 100% Smoke-Free Hotel

### **AH&LA**

One thing there's no denying is that there's no shortage of green certification programs out there for hotels to choose from. The problem is that each program has a different focus, different priorities and different standards.

As the voice of the hospitality industry, and with more than 11,000 members, AH&LA is dedicated to serving the interests of hoteliers on the front line and behind the scenes. So its recommendations of green hotel certifications programs are not made or taken lightly. The association did extensive research amongst the dozens of certification programs to be confident that one of its recommendation programs is right for your property.

"With so many different certification programs out there, EcoRooms & EcoSuites distinguishes itself through its strict criteria for membership and really focusing on the guestroom experience," says Pat Maher, partner, The Maher Group, LLC, an organization that evaluates facilities, recommends eco-friendly products and procedures, conducts energy audits, and develops opportunities for cost savings. Maher also serves as the AH&LA's "Green Guru," providing guidance to the association and answering questions from AH&LA members about sustainability and green initiatives.

"By requiring things like separate recycling containers in guestrooms or amenity dispensers, certified EcoRooms & EcoSuites members are making their guests a part of the greening process," Maher adds. "They are also unique because they require all guest rooms to be 100% non-smoking."

Additional information about the AH&LA's green programs can be found at [www.ahla.com/green](http://www.ahla.com/green).

### **AAA**

As more consumers look for eco-friendly travel destinations, and more commercial builders aim for green building standards for their hospitality properties, in 2009 AAA introduced the ECO icon to designate "green" hotels.

A bright green "ECO" symbol identifies eco-friendly lodgings in the 2010 editions of the AAA TourBook guides. Additionally, travelers will be able to customize their hotel searches on AAA.com to show green properties first in their search results. AAA's 26 TourBook guides include detailed information for more than 31,000 hotels.

"The EcoRooms & EcoSuites Approval and Certification program is approved under AAA's ECO icon program. The travel experts at AAA continually review many eco-programs and are careful to include only those programs that are meaningful and well recognized," says Geoff Sundstrom, Director, AAA Public Relations. "While AAA is not involved in the evaluation of any property's environmental practices, it provides this information from recognized organizations as a service to members."

The ECO icon is one of many used in the TourBook/AAA.com lodging listings as a tool to help members select their ideal accommodations. The symbols depict guest services, leisure activities, in-room amenities and safety features that members say impact their hotel selection and satisfaction.

Additional information and a list of recognized certification programs are accessible at [AAA.com/eco](http://AAA.com/eco).

### **Freshly Certified**

Aside from the good news from the AH&LA and AAA, EcoRooms & EcoSuites is proud to announce the two latest hotels to achieve certification.

- The Residence Inn by Marriott Gainesville I-75 is the first Marriott branded property and the first hotel in Florida that has been EcoRooms & EcoSuites Certified.
- The Holiday Inn & Suites – West Columbia is the first IHG Branded Hotel and the first hotel in South Carolina to be certified.

"Both of these properties are shining examples of what it means to provide socially responsible travel accommodations," says Burger. "Both are recently constructed properties that have embraced sustainability in every facet of their construction and operations. Their innovative ideas certainly not only meet EcoRooms & EcoSuites criteria, but they are helping push forward new ideas and new technologies that can be implemented throughout the industry –for both new and existing properties."

### **Residence Inn by Marriott Gainesville**

Opened just over one year ago, the Residence Inn by Marriott Gainesville is located on the site of an EPA 'brownfield,' which means the land was once polluted but has been restored to pristine condition with the goal of promoting green development in select communities.

Developed by OTO Development, LLC and operated by Marriott International, the Residence Inn has been recognized by the Florida Green Lodging Program and has been benchmarked utilizing the Energy Star Portfolio Manager.



"We began implementing our initiatives within the past two years and have really received a lot of positive comments from our staff members and guests, as well as financial results," says General Manager Chris Lewis. "We believe that going green is a winning business strategy that has the added benefit of being the right thing to do for society and our planet."

The property was designed from the top down with the environment in mind. Its roofing materials were certified by Cool Roofing Council. Its framing structure was made from 90% post consumer recycled steel. Demolition and construction wastes were recycled. The property is xeriscaped to save water, featuring all native plants, minimal turf areas and a water-saving irrigation system. The developers even bonded a 100+ year old live oak tree to ensure its survival.

"We believe the hospitality industry is embracing the opportunity and the challenge of sustainable operations and are proud to be a part of it," says Lewis. "We are very excited about the honor of being among the first hotels certified by EcoRooms & EcoSuites, but our staff members are even more excited about the honor. The program has been established by some of the [Greenest Hotel](#) owners and managers in the world. It has credibility, and most importantly, it is focused on the guest related initiatives."

"We believe it will provide us with valuable third party credibility with our guests and with meeting planners," Lewis adds.

### **The Holiday Inn & Suites – West Columbia**

Also opened in 2009, the Holiday Inn & Suites – West Columbia is a 122-room hotel in South Carolina featuring many sustainable features to enhance the guest experience.



"We realize that a healthy building is better, not only hotel guests and employees, but also for the environment" said managing partner Hema Patel. "Our goal is to meet the increasing demand of guests who appreciate an environmentally focused design as well as a high level of service."

The hotel design incorporates a state-of-the-art ventilation system to improve air quality by circulating large amounts of outside air into guest rooms; energy recovery technology used to temper outside air with the air exhausted from the hotel; harvesting rain water to reduce the use of potable water for irrigation; installation of tankless hot water heaters and high efficiency fixtures to reduce water usage; and use of low emitting volatile organic compound (VOC) paint, adhesives, and carpets to reduce indoor air contamination.

Ray Hobbs, a Hospitality Industry Consultant at Atlantis Hospitality Group and an EcoRooms board member, noted several other unique green features which stood out to him during his certification audit of the hotel. These include:

- Traction type elevators are more energy efficient and reduce the use of oils and hydraulic fluids;
- All pool furniture is made from recycled "milk jugs, carpets and carpet pads are made from recycled plastic, and room screens are made from recycled aluminum.
- Administration office utilizes a new generation copier to send BEO's and booking documents as emails, eliminating the need for paper distribution.
- Fall/Winter uniforms for the front desk are made from a sustainable "bamboo" fabric.

"Green buildings are crucial in the reducing climate change," says Patel. "Building green can lower CO2 emissions, and at the same time, improve the bottom line through energy and other savings. We all must consider that the planet is an asset that belongs to every living thing and to every living thing to be born."

Along with its EcoRooms & EcoSuites certification, the Holiday Inn & Suites – West Columbia is seeking LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) silver certification for the property.

For more information on all EcoRooms & EcoSuites properties, please visit [www.EcoRooms.com](http://www.EcoRooms.com).

### **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](http://www.freshstay.com)), EcoRooms(R) & EcoSuites(TM) ([www.EcoRooms.com](http://www.EcoRooms.com)) Environmentally Sensitive Amenities(TM), EO(R), Neutrogena(R), Earth Perfect, Earth Simple, ecosystemal 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](http://www.pineapplehospitality.net), or call us at 636-922-2285.

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