

Starting Fresh

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EcoRooms & EcoSuites (www.EcoRooms.com) rings in the New Year with new Web site, logo, properties and advisors.

EcoRooms & EcoSuites, the premier certification and marketing resource for green hotels in the U.S. and abroad, has unveiled a newly-redesigned logo and Web site. The new look highlights the growing role of sustainability in the hospitality industry while also offering travelers a more user-friendly online experience, helping them more quickly and easily locate the greenest hotels on the planet.

'We expect 2009 to be a huge year for EcoRooms & EcoSuites, and in the growth of consumer awareness regarding green lodging options,' says Ray Burger, president of Pineapple Hospitality and founder of EcoRooms & EcoSuites. 'As consumers continue to become more knowledgeable about green travel, we've changed the look and feel of our logo and Web site. We've added new properties to our directory, streamlined our rigorous 'Significant 7' criteria to becoming a member, and we recently added a new member to our Board of Advisors.'

Green MVPs

As we're in the midst of the 'awards season,' it's fitting that three of the newest additions to EcoRooms & EcoSuites already come laden with hardware.

While EcoRooms & EcoSuites' Significant 7 criteria for membership are the most stringent and most credible of any certification program in the world, these newest members - The Proximity Hotel (Greensboro, N.C.), Seaport Hotel (Boston) and Inn by the Sea (Cape Elizabeth, Maine) - not only meet the rigorous standards, they are raising the bar. And for their efforts to offer guests a luxurious, yet eco-conscious place to stay, these three hotels have won numerous environmental and design recognitions.

'We excited to have the Proximity Hotel, Seaport Hotel and Inn by the Sea join our ranks,' says Ray Burger, president of Pineapple Hospitality and founder of EcoRooms & EcoSuites. 'These three facilities have incorporated some of the most-forward thinking eco-friendly designs and programs that the industry has seen. They are most deserving of all the recognition they've been receiving and we're proud to have them aboard.'

Seaport Hotel

In a city that's home to the Green Monster, Matthew Moore says it's an honor to be named as one of the city's Top 5 Green Hotels.

'I believe the Seaport plays a role in identifying and sharing best practices in an effort to make our industry's carbon footprint a little smaller,' says Moore, Seaport director of rooms and environmental programs. 'Our green philosophy here is a holistic approach that looks at every aspect of our organization and operation and tries to find a way to make it more sustainable and environmentally friendly. No initiative is too small or too large to take on.'

Some of the Seaports' sustainability initiatives include:

Electrolyzed water system for cleaning - avoids the use of toxic chemicals

Ozone laundry system - reduces the amount of detergent they use

Recycling goals - the hotel has an annual recycling rate of 44%, and provides in-room recycling bins

Space age composting - food and prep waste is managed using the BioX Decomposing System that converts organic waste to liquid

Energy offsets - Seaport purchased enough renewable energy credits to offset all of the electricity used in the guest rooms, lobbies and elevators in 2008.

The Seaport Hotel also recently became the first hotel in the U.S. to implement an innovative, chlorine-reducing water treatment system to its indoor pool that will reduce the property's use of chemicals and provide a superior pool experience.

The system, developed by Grander Technology, conditions water through its structure- enhancing and preserving processes. The molecular structure of this water stimulates beneficial bacteria growth while simultaneously limiting the development of pathogenic populations. This restores the natural microbiological equilibrium of pool water without an overdependence on chemicals like chlorine, and improves the air quality throughout the hotel.

'We believe green is the ethical approach to running a business, as we live in this world with limited natural resources,' says Moore. 'It is paramount that we continue to improve the safety of the work place in which our employees work, and it is also important to provide access to an environment in which guests can leverage their environmentally friendly philosophy.'

Proximity Hotel

Luxury and sustainability come together at the year-old Proximity Hotel in Greensboro, N.C., which recently earned LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification from the U.S. Green Building Council this fall, making it the highest-rated green hotel and restaurant in America.

Examples of why this property excels include:

The building uses 41% less energy than a conventional hotel/restaurant by using ultra efficient materials and the latest construction technology.

The sun's energy heats hot water with 100 solar panels covering the 4,000 square feet of rooftop (enough hot water for a hundred homes). This heats around 60 percent of the water for both the hotel and restaurant.

Geothermal energy is used for the restaurant's refrigeration equipment, instead of a standard water-cooled system, saving significant amounts of water.

Abundant natural lighting, including large energy-efficient 'operable' windows, connects guests to the outdoors by achieving a direct line of sight to the outdoor environment for more than 97 percent of all regularly occupied spaces.

Water usage has been reduced by 33 percent by installing high-efficiency Kohler plumbing fixtures, saving two million gallons of water the first year.

Air quality is improved by circulating large amounts of outside air into guestrooms.

Even more, a green roof is in the planning stages, the elevators generate electricity as they descend, rooms are filled with locally commissioned art, furniture is made mostly from sustainable materials and bicycles are available for guests to use.

"It's good karma and good business," said owner Dennis Quaintance at the LEED status presentation ceremony. "It's an urban legend that it costs too much to employ green-building practices."

Quaintance said the hotel is already seeing a return on investment thanks to tax credits and energy savings.

In light of the hotel's achievements, a picture of the Proximity will be on the front cover of the 2009 North Carolina Travel Guide.

Inn By the Sea

Having just completed a multi-million dollar renovation that enhanced the guest experience as well as its environmental standing, the Inn by the Sea is a Maine DEP certified Green Lodging, has received a Legislative Sentiment as an Environmental Leader, and was selected one of TripAdvisor's Top Ten Green Hotels worldwide.

During its redesign, the Inn worked with a LEED consultant on the spa addition, used recycled rubber for the cardio room floor, low VOC paint, sealants and wall coverings and recycled sheet rock. The salinated pool is heated with solar panels, and an air to air heat exchanger saves energy. Guests are wrapped in bamboo towels, use 'green' recycled paper key cards and are surrounded by indigenous landscape. The inn's sheet and towel program donates savings to the endangered monarch butterfly.

'We are honored to be among the green elite listed on EcoRooms & EcoSuites,' says Rauni Kew, who handles Marketing and PR Green Programs at Inn By The Sea. 'Your significant 7 is terrific and gives both travelers and properties a good start for what is expected of a hotel.'

New Board Member

EcoRooms & EcoSuites' Board of Advisors is a panel of some of the greenest minds the hospitality industry has to offer. With decades of combined experience, the Advisors have helped shape the Web site's criteria for membership and assist both members and the public on best green practices.

So it is with much delight that EcoRooms & EcoSuites announces that Doug Gamble has joined its Board of Advisors.



**Doug Gamble,
EcoRooms'
newest Advisor,
is a Managing
Partner with the
Q Hotel & Spa.**

Gamble is a Managing Partner with the Q Hotel and Spa in Kansas City, Mo., one of the greenest hotels in the entire Midwest. Since coming to the hotel, located in the heart of Kansas City's historic Westport Entertainment District, Gamble has helped initiate a 38-point sustainability program. The plan includes Green Seal-approved cleaning products, the virtual elimination of plastics, the use of water-saving aerators for every device handling water, and bulk, bio-friendly bathroom amenities. The green hotel also recently instituted an extensive guestroom recycling program.

'I'm very honored to serve on EcoRooms & EcoSuites' prestigious Board of Advisors,' says Gamble. 'Since we took over operations of the Q Hotel, we've done a lot of experimenting with sustainable operations and instituting green policies. We've seen how a lot of little things - like turning off the lights in the lobby during the day, offering bicycles to guests for short trips and adding bulk amenity dispensers to our bathrooms- have added up. It's better for the guests, better for the environment and better for the hotel's bottom line.'

'I hope to bring this kind of open-mindedness and go-for-it attitude to the Board of Advisors and the rest of the industry to help make this entire planet a little healthier and happier,' he adds.

Going Green on the Road

These three new properties join EcoRooms & EcoSuites at a time when travelers are finally beginning to exhibit an increased environmental awareness while on the road. Previously, most travelers - even those who recycled and conserved resources at home - would 'splurge' while out of town and not worry about the footprints they were leaving behind.

But a recent study from Deloitte finds that 'U.S. business travelers are increasingly making daily choices to reduce their environmental impact, and they have specific expectations about the green practices hotels should be adopting today.'

The study finds nearly seven of 10 business travelers (69 percent) say they always turn off the lights and one out of three (31 percent) always adjusts the heat/air conditioner when leaving the room.

More importantly, 34 percent of respondents say they 'seek out hotels that are environmentally friendly,' just as 38 percent have researched green lodging facilities either online or by asking friends and relatives. Similarly, 28 percent say they would be willing to pay 10 percent more to stay in a green lodging facility.

In fact, according to the study, the top five environmental actions business travelers expect lodging facilities to be taking are:

Recycling (77 percent),

Using energy-efficient lighting (74 percent),

Using energy-efficient windows (59 percent),

Placing cards in rooms to let guests request that sheets/towels not be changed (52 percent), and

Using environmentally safe cleaning products (49 percent).

Not coincidentally, these five actions are all key parts of EcoRooms & EcoSuites' criteria, showing that guests get exactly the environmental programs they are looking for from EcoRooms members.

'If you look at what guests are looking for, in each case what they want will actually save you money by greening and streamlining your operations,' says Burger. 'While our criteria may look rigorous now, as more hotels catch on to the benefits of implementing a green program, these will be the minimum of what hotels will be doing in the future. Our current and new partners have already shown how you can go above and beyond.'

EcoRooms Criteria

EcoRooms & EcoSuites Web site approves and certifies the greenest hotels that have implemented our 'Significant 7' 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.
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.

There is no such thing as 'green enough.' Even the members of EcoRooms & EcoSuites are constantly innovating to reduce their carbon footprint and environmental impact. If you have a great new green idea or innovative solution, let us know. Maybe you can be the next EcoRooms member, or even become one of the industry-leading Board of Advisors. Find out more at www.EcoRooms.com.

About Pineapple Hospitality

Headquartered in Saint Charles, Missouri, Pineapple Hospitality(TM) is The Co-Founder and Host of the ANNUAL GREEN HOSPITALITY CONFERENCE, 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) and greenSPA(TM) amenities and AVIVA dispensers, Energy Efficient Lighting and Controls, Custom Linen & Towel Re-Use Programs, Green Key Cards, 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.

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