



EcoRooms & EcoSuites CERTIFIED

2010-02-08

Embassy Suites Jackson-North/Ridgeland in Ridgeland, Miss., and the Hampton Inn & Suites Chicago Southland-Matteson in Matteson, Ill., are the first two hotels certified

One of the consistent complaints about green products and services is that green is not an easy concept to define, nevermind measure. Anyone can say their product is green, but it isn't always the case. This kind of greenwashing often discourages consumers who are looking for legitimately green products, and ends up hurting the overall cause to protect the environment.

Since its inception, EcoRooms & EcoSuites (www.EcoRooms.com) has been particularly picky about whom it lets in for precisely that reason. Through the years, EcoRooms & EcoSuites has developed a diverse listing of hotels that meet only the most-stringent criteria for sustainability, earning the praise of hotel guests and hospitality professionals.

But understanding that credibility is key to the tens of millions of green consumers, EcoRooms & EcoSuites has begun taking the additional step of auditing hotels that are members of the Web site. Performed by auditors from EcoGreenHotel (www.EcoGreenHotel.com), the Sustainability Audit is a comprehensive review of the hotels 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.
4. The hotel has implemented a Linen and Towel Reuse Program.
5. Guests are provided separate, 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



Only hotels that meet 100% of the criteria will be officially EcoRooms Certified.

The members of EcoRooms & EcoSuites are some of the greenest and most-progressive hotels in the industry, says Ray Burger, President of Pineapple Hospitality, which operates EcoRooms & EcoSuites. Our approved hotels use more sustainable cleaning, paper, and amenity products, empower guests to make a difference with recycling and linen re-use programs, and increase efficiency with better lighting, plumbing, and planning.

But to assure that our approval goes well beyond greenwashing, our new certification program will use third-party EcoGreenHotel auditors to verify our member hotels meet all our stringent criteria. We understand even one bad guest experience could reflect badly, not just on us, but on all of our members in the mind of a consumer, and our certification program will ensure guests receive exactly the kind of green hotel experience they signed up for when they booked their stays.

First Certified

The first two hotels to achieve EcoRooms certification are Embassy Suites Jackson-North/Ridgeland in Ridgeland, Miss., and the Hampton Inn & Suites Chicago Southland-Matteson in Matteson, Ill. Both properties are managed by the Kana Hotel Group.

We began implementing our green initiatives within the past 2 years and we have seen financial results and have received positive comments from our staff members and guests, says Alpesh Patel, Kana Hotel Group's president. We believe it is a winning business strategy that has the added benefit of being the right thing to do for society and our planet.

The new 145-room Embassy Suites Jackson North/Ridgeland is on a journey to go beyond green while also promoting Cultural Sustainability and Environmental Responsibility. Along with meeting the EcoRooms criteria, the hotels green initiatives include:

Paper recycling programs;

Biodegradable 100% recycled room keys;

Energy-efficient CFL lighting in guest rooms and in hotels public spaces;

Carbon Neutral and Hybrid vehicle/transportation service upon request with Concierge Services;

Used kitchen grease recycled into bio-fuels bi weekly by a local company; and

Food not consumed for meetings is provided to hotel associates free of charge or donated to local charities

First, it's simply the right thing to do. We want to be a responsible business, Patel adds. 'Profitability is another reason. Energy costs greatly affect our bottom line; in this tough economic environment, anything we can do to reduce expenses without sacrificing guest satisfaction is very important. The third reason is it's what our guests and team members want. More companies and guests are choosing greener hotels with all else being equal, so this is another competitive advantage that we're trying to achieve for our hotel. And the greening process has been fun and meaningful for our team members.



A complete listing of the hotels green programs can be found at www.greenhotelmississippi.net.

Similar plans are being put in place at the EcoRooms-certified Hampton Inn & Suites Chicago Southland-Matteson, as well as the rest of the 13 Kana-managed properties.

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, Patel says. We believe the hospitality industry is embracing the opportunity and the challenge of sustainable operations, and these two hotels are proving it.

EcoRooms & EcoSuites is the only certification program that requires 100% compliance with all of these criteria, Patel adds. It is a very selective process. We believe it will provide us with valuable third-party credibility with our guests and with meeting planners. All the criteria are important, but mandating 100% non smoking rooms is a very important and distinguishing advantage.



New Advisor



Scott Parisi

As the EcoRooms certification program rolls out with the aid of auditors from EcoGreenHotel, it was a natural partnership for EcoGreenHotel President Scott Parisi to join the illustrious EcoRooms & EcoSuites Board of Advisors.

Parisi is a veteran hospitality professional specializing in multi-property management. He brings with him more than 15 years of experience with major hotel chains, such as Intercontinental, Starwood, Hilton and Choice Hotels. Parisi served as General Manager of the United States first L.E.E.D. certified and "Environmentally Friendly" Hotel the Sheraton Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia.

Through EcoGreenHotel, a firm that performs sustainability analysis of hotels and creates custom plans for properties to develop and implement environmental management systems, Parisi is particularly proficient in finding local, state and government programs that offer loans, credits and rebates available to owners, developers and operators of hotels.

I am honored to be participating as a board member for EcoRooms, says Parisi. Every day my team and I are working directly with hoteliers on becoming more sustainable, so we see and hear firsthand what solutions are cost effective to implement in today's environment.

The EcoRooms Board of Advisors is made up of hospitality industry leaders from every facet of hotel operations. Together, they've developed EcoRooms criteria for membership, and continuously work to update and enhance it. The Board works to spread the green message and share new ideas and new technologies to push for a greener industry.

Along with working together on EcoRooms certification, Burger and Parisi also have teamed up for the EcoGreenHotel.com store, a comprehensive online resource for greening your hotel from events and meetings, to guestrooms, to food-and-beverage operations.

Ray and I are always passing ideas back and forth and networking with strategic partners who share our goals, says Parisi. The technology is moving so fast, with new vendors entering the market on a daily basis, it can confuse hoteliers. Through EcoGreenHotel, Pineapple Hospitality and other partners we work with, we can help hotels see through the static and protect them from greenwashing.

Green the World

Although greenwashing generally has a bad name, in one case we'll make an exception: Clean the World.

Founded in February 2009 by Shawn Seipler and Paul Till, Clean the World (www.CleantheWorld.org) is a not-for-profit organization that collects, recycles and redistributes soap and shampoo products that are discarded by hotels every day. The recycled soap products are donated to domestic homeless shelters and impoverished countries suffering from high death rates due to acute respiratory infection and diarrheal disease often caused by poor hygiene.

Since its inception, Clean the World has been steadily increasing its services and operations to accommodate rapidly expanding community needs, awareness and donations, and has accepted in-kind donations of more than \$150,000. In the process, Clean the World has put more than 21,000 soap bars and 50 gallons of shampoo and conditioner back into human use, simultaneously eliminating more than 4 tons of waste.

Right now, Clean the World is concentrating on moving hygiene products and medical supplies into the Haiti Relief Effort. In partnership with Corporate Aviators Responding to Emergencies (CARE) and other shipping and international aid partners, Clean the World is providing help daily.

To promote its mission, and because of the shared goals of caring for the environment and all of its people, Clean the World has become a partner of EcoRooms & EcoSuites.

Even before the tragedy in Haiti, we were just getting a tremendous response from our friends in the hospitality industry, says Peter Olsen, Communications Director for Clean the World. Hotels are the cornerstone of our ability to deliver soap and shampoo products to people in need. Even in this terrible economy, people are willing to participate in this important mission.

Partially used amenities are processed by Clean the World at their recycling facility in Orlando, Fla. At the facility, Clean the World employees and volunteers clean the collected soap and sterilize it using a proprietary steaming process. The soap is then packaged and sent by cargo plane or boat for distribution in Haiti and other countries abroad.

Currently, Clean the World has plans to open nine recycling centers in major cities around the U.S., which will geographically cover about 65 percent of all hotel rooms in the country. In the long-run, Clean the World would like to be able to cover the entire U.S.

Its just amazing. Around the world, theres a desperate need for soap, says Olsen. What were throwing away today could be saving lives in other countries.

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/article43631.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