



## **Entering the Smoke-Free Zone**

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Whether by law or by choice, more hotels finding happier guests by eliminating smoking rooms. The most recent study from the American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation finds that 35 states and 430 cities have adopted indoor smoking bans for businesses, restaurants, and – in some cases – hotels.

But one of the odd side effects from the growing nationwide trend to eliminate smoking in public places is that the smell of smoke can sometimes be *even more* noticeable now – just because we have grown less accustomed to it. So when travelers do have the unfortunate experience of getting, or even just being near, a smoking room, it's a shock to the system.

Isolating a few scattered rooms, or even a single wing of a hotel, simply isn't enough to combat the lingering effects of smoke as it permeates through walls or adheres to clothing or upholstery.

That is why FreshStay.com will only list hotels that are 100% smoke-free as part of its industry-leading directory of [non-smoking hotels](#). Reaching the growing audience of socially responsible travelers, members of FreshStay.com have eliminated smoking not just in guest rooms, but also all meeting rooms, restaurants and other public spaces.

"The difference between a non-smoking room and a 100% [smoke-free hotel](#) can make all the difference to a health conscious traveler, or to the growing number of Americans who suffer from allergies, asthma and other sensitivities," says Ray Burger, Founder of FreshStay. "Members of FreshStay.com consistently receive outstanding feedback from their guests, which is why we always say Frequent Breathers prefer FreshStay. Those guests are then more likely to return because they know their room will be clean and smoke-free every time – guaranteed."

### **Smoking Limits**

Another study from the American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation reports Wisconsin and Michigan are the only two states with laws prohibiting smoking in hotels and motels. Twenty-five other states have laws that limit the percentage of rooms in which smoking can be allowed. Here are the percentages of rooms required to be smoke-free in those states.

- 100 percent: Michigan, Wisconsin
- 80 percent: Arkansas (only if there are more than 25 units), Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska (see story), New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio
- 75 percent: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Washington
- 65 percent: Montana
- 50 percent: Arizona, Louisiana (casinos and gaming centers excluded), Rhode Island
- 35 percent: California

Source: *Lincoln Journal Star*

### **FreshStay Members Speak Out**

The Mediterranean Inn has been smoke-free since it was built in 2002 in the Queen Anne neighborhood of Seattle, just steps away from the Space Needle. The hotel's 180 guestrooms feature a number of modern amenities, including a kitchenette and a rooftop deck to check out a 360-degree view of the city.

"You can't beat the fresh air in the Pacific Northwest, so besides being smoke-free, all guestrooms have windows that open as well as ceiling fans," says Stephanie Steadman, Regional Director Sales & Marketing for the Mediterranean Inn. "Our target market is our guest – we really listen to what they have to say and regarding this issue the overwhelming majority of people want a smoke free environment."

As a member of FreshStay.com for four years now, Steadman says that guests really enjoy the smoke-free atmosphere. It also makes a big difference from an operations' standpoint.

"We find that by prohibiting smoking, we get less wear and tear on the furniture, carpeting, drapes and bedding. We can pass those savings on to our guests," she says. "Everyone - guests and employees alike feel healthy and are happier in a smoke free environment."

Likewise, one of the newest FreshStay.com members has found that eliminating smoking can make a big difference.

"We care about the health and comfort of our guests and future guests," says Kristi Warnecke, Executive Housekeeper for the Best Western River North Hotel. "We went completely smoke free one year ago. It was important for us, because there are so many health risks associated with smoking."

"Our guests are thrilled we went smoke free. We have heard nothing but great comments and positive feedback," Warnecke adds.

The Best Western River North Hotel has 150 newly renovated guest rooms. Located in downtown Chicago, the hotel offers free parking, restaurant and lounge, room service, sundeck, workout room, and indoor pool. Being smoke-free highlights the hotel's emphasis on providing a safer, healthier environment to our guests.

"By going smoke free we hope to appeal to all markets and reach out to new guests," Warnecke says. "By working with FreshStay.com we hope to reach out to more potential guests."

Finally, the newly renovated Varden Hotel in Long Beach, Calif., is protecting its investment by being smoke-free. The European, boutique-style hotel was originally built in 1929, and has been a prominent visual feature of downtown Long Beach for 80 years. The 35 guestrooms blend historic design and architecture with modern conveniences like flat screen HDTVs, designer lighting and furniture, and state of the art individual climate controlled heat and air conditioning.

"After our extensive renovation, the Varden's unique design is planned to evoke the casual elegance of an upscale, boutique hotel," says the Varden's Charles Knowlton. "We've incorporated historic and contemporary details with all the modern conveniences anticipated by today's traveler."

But despite its historic roots, the Varden is bucking tradition as a smoke-free property. With 300 thread count sheets, super-plush linens and pillow-top mattresses, it makes sense to keep its property in great shape by eliminating the harmful effects of smoke. Plus, many of the hotel's updates have been "green," with mini rain showers and low-flow Toto toilets in every room. Each hallway has 5 old airshafts, which have been transformed into natural light sources, reducing the need for additional electrical power during the day. With such a focus on keeping the environment healthy and clean, the hotel had to do the same for its guests.

"Both smoking and non-smoking guests prefer the non-smoking environments," Knowlton says.

### **FreshStay in the Press**

The New York Times recently ran an article outlining the growing trend toward better indoor air quality in hotels. While this starts by being smoke-free, many hotels are taking the extra step of offering hypoallergenic rooms, with air quality enhancements and special cleaning services.

Because many of its hotels do offer this kind of service, FreshStay.com was a big part of the article, with FreshStay's Ray Burger being quoted extensively:

"The trend toward improving [indoor air quality](#) is part of the larger green movement that began with nonsmoking rooms," said Ray Burger, founder of Pineapple Hospitality, which administers a "green" hotel certification program and operates Freshstay.com, an online booking site for smoke-free rooms. The Web site plans to add icons soon for hypoallergenic rooms, and to show what chemicals are used in cleaning products, paints, sealants and bath products.

The article states 38 percent of hotels offer some kind of allergy-friendly service in guest rooms, a 14 percent increase in the last two years, according to the 2010 Lodging Survey prepared for the American Hotel and Lodging Association by STR, a hotel research company.

Check out the complete article from NYTimes.com: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/11/business/11allergy.html?emc=eta1>

### **About Pineapple Hospitality**

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