

GREEN HOTELS: A Paradigm shift towards saving environment

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Abstract

An ecological Hotel is one which is fully integrated into the environment without damaging the environment. The motive of these environment friendly properties is to save water, save energy and reduce solid waste while saving money to help protect the earth. However, they follow a strict green guidelines to ensure that the guests are staying in a safe, nontoxic, and energy efficient accommodation. The purpose of this study is to determine if green hotels actually benefitted from undertaking environmental practices and introducing these practices in marketing strategies. The paper includes an introduction about Green Hotels, its characteristics, architecture and also discusses about various issues to deal with while adopting the approach.

Keywords: *Eco Hotel, Green Hotel, Environment friendly, Nature hotel*

1. Introduction

A **Green Hotel** is an environmentally sustainable hotel or accommodation that has made important environmental improvements to its structure in order to minimize its impact on the natural environment. The basic definition of an eco-friendly hotel is an responsible lodging that follows the practices of green living. These hotels have to be certified green by an independent third-party or by the state they are located in. Traditionally, these hotels were mostly presented as Eco Lodges because of their location, often in jungles, and their design inspired by the use of traditional building methods applied by skilled local craftsmen in areas, such as Costa Rica and Indonesia [3].

These improvements can include non-toxic housekeeping practices, the use of renewable energy, organic soaps, energy-efficient light fixtures, and recycling programs. It is beneficial for these hotels to get certain certifications in order to be environmentally compliant. One beneficial certification specifically for hotels is the LEED certification. A LEED-certified hotel provides benefits to the environment through energy efficient practices. An eco-hotel should follow a set of best practices in order to do their part to benefit the environment. Some of these best practices include serving local organic food in restaurants, reusing linens when a guest is staying for more than one night, and incorporating in-room recycling and composting programs. Hotels that have these certifications and best practices can attract environmentally conscious travelers and stand out from other hotels.

1.1 Characteristics of Green Hotel [1]

Green hotels follow strict green guidelines to ensure that their guests are staying in a safe, non-toxic and energy-efficient accommodation. Here are some basic characteristics of a green hotel:

- Housekeeping uses non-toxic cleaning agents and laundry detergent
- 100% organic cotton sheets, towels and mattresses
- Non-smoking environment
- Renewable energy sources like solar or wind energy
- Bulk organic soap and amenities instead of individual packages to reduce waste
- Guest room and hotel lobby recycling bins
- Towel and sheet re-use (guests can tell housekeeping to leave these slightly used items to reduce water consumption)

- Energy-efficient lighting
- On-site transportation with green vehicles
- Serve organic and local-grown food
- Non-disposable dishes
- Offers a fresh-air exchange system
- Grey water recycling, which is the reuse of kitchen, bath and laundry water for garden and landscaping
- Newspaper recycling program

2. Things to do to make Green Hotels

2.1 Involvement of Staff [2] [7]

- Create a 'green team' at your hotel with the goal of continual improvement and scheduled re-evaluation and reporting.
- Create an incentive program to encourage your staff to participate in and improve upon environmentally-friendly practices.
- Regardless of your hotel size, consider writing an Environmental, Social and Governance Report to help focus in on areas for improvement and as a format for communicating your green practices to your guests.
- Provide yearly staff training on green practices throughout the buildings and grounds and post informational posters in break rooms and guest areas.
- Educate your staff to:
 - Turn off lights and turn down heating/air conditioning in unoccupied rooms or employee-only areas
 - Continually check for and respond to leaking faucets and toilets
 - Close/open drapes to reduce the need for heating/air conditioning
 - Continually check for and power down unused hotel equipment (i.e., kitchen exhaust fans) that have been left running
 - Report opportunities to reduce resource consumption
 - Make sure all rooms have linen reuse cards for both towels and sheets

2.2 Water and Energy Utilization [6]

- Consider buying carbon offsets - TerraPass and Green-E have joined together to offer some good options. The Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative can help with determining the carbon footprint for meetings, events and hotel stays. Other options for tracking emissions: Carbon Disclosure Project, WWF Climate Savers, The Climate Registry, and Energy Star Portfolio Manager
- Implement best practices no- or low-cost energy-efficiency measures by the EPA.
- Start a linen (both towels and sheets) reuse program in all guest rooms. One example: Project Planet Program.



Fig 1. Green Hotel Practices

2.3 Recycling and Waste Management [5] [6]

- Provide guest room recycler baskets for newspaper, paper, and glass, aluminium, cardboard, metal and plastic.
- Provide recycling bins both in public areas (i.e., poolside), in the kitchen, and in the back office (including one at each desk) to make recycling as easy as possible.
- Seek out ways to recycle or donate hard-to-recycle items (such as Styrofoam, packaging peanuts, planting pots, toiletries, bubble wrap, plastic bags, used mattresses, cooking oil (biodiesel), furniture, flooring) in your area and create a visible storage bin with signage to encourage employees and guests to throw these items into the separate bin.
- Learn about local hazardous waste collection (i.e., paint, coating, printer cartridges, mercury CFL bulbs, electronics, and batteries) and keep a separate bin to store these for drop off.

2.4 Building Maintenance

- Include filter changes, refrigerator coil cleaning, thermostat calibration, water leak checks, and damper adjustments in your ongoing maintenance plan. At least quarterly, check that all building energy and water equipment are functioning properly.
- Track energy, water and waste use monthly through an internal tracking system or through Energy Star Portfolio Manager (waste tracking feature). Make repairs or replace equipment when usage changes indicate problems. With waste, the best way to reduce it is to analyse several days' worth of waste and look for specific ways to reduce it going forward.
- If available, schedule an energy audit through your local energy provider - or through a local energy auditor (aka energy consultant).
- Conduct or schedule a water audit.

2.5 Food Services

- If your hotel has a restaurant, consider transitioning it into a Certified Green Restaurant. Buy organic, locally-grown food and/or plant an organic garden to provide fresh produce for your guests. Look for foods with the labels: USDA Certified Organic, Food Alliance Certified, Rainforest Alliance Certified, Protected Harvest Certified, and/or Fair Trade Certified. Offer vegan options.
- Take steps to reduce food waste.

- Try to avoid buying overharvested or endangered species fish using guides such as Seafood Watch. Look for the Marine Stewardship Council Blue Label for fish that are safe to eat.
- Quick water and/or energy savers

2.6 Garden

- Consider planting a wildlife habitat on your property. Basic elements include fresh water (i.e., a bird bath and, if in a yard, water low to the ground); plants and feeders that provide nourishment for birds, insects, etc.; and rocks, trees, bushes and/or bird houses for shelter and nesting.
- Purchase plants that are native to your area, learn how to attract hummingbirds, butterflies and birds

2.7 Purchases

- Create a green purchasing policy for cleaners, sanitizers, paints, pesticides, office supplies, etc. throughout the hotel. The U.S. EPA provides a Safer Choice guide for businesses and a guide for purchasing energy-saving products.
- Choose low VOC paint, sealant, primers and adhesives.
- Buy environmentally-friendly paper (copier paper, toilet paper, facial tissue, paper towels, etc.):
- With high post-consumer recycled content
- Made without the use of toxic chemicals such as chlorine or mercury
- Certified by the Forest Stewardship Council or guaranteed to contain no fiber from endangered forests
- Lightweight
- Minimize the amount of paper used for each guest and in the office (i.e., reduce paper size of invoices, etc.). Print with soy-based inks.

2.8 Guests and Guest Rooms [2], [4] [8]

- Stock a central library with local green guides, hiking and biking guides and information about the local environment and conservation efforts. Include a book swap section.
- Offer discounted rates to sustainable living/environmental organizations who would like stay at and/or hold meetings at your hotel.
- Donate leftover guest amenities, old furniture and appliances to charities.
- Donate used soap and shampoo to people in need through local shelters or organizations such as Clean the World.

Conclusion

Green Hotel is such an approach of Hotel which are fully integrated into the environment. They are designed in order to save and protect environment. The paper gave an introduction about Green or Eco Hotels explaining all the characteristics possessed by them. The major motive of this paper is to explain various methods which can be adopted to make a regular Hotel as Green Hotel. Some of them includes Training of staff, Recycling methods, waste management and many more are explained in detail.

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