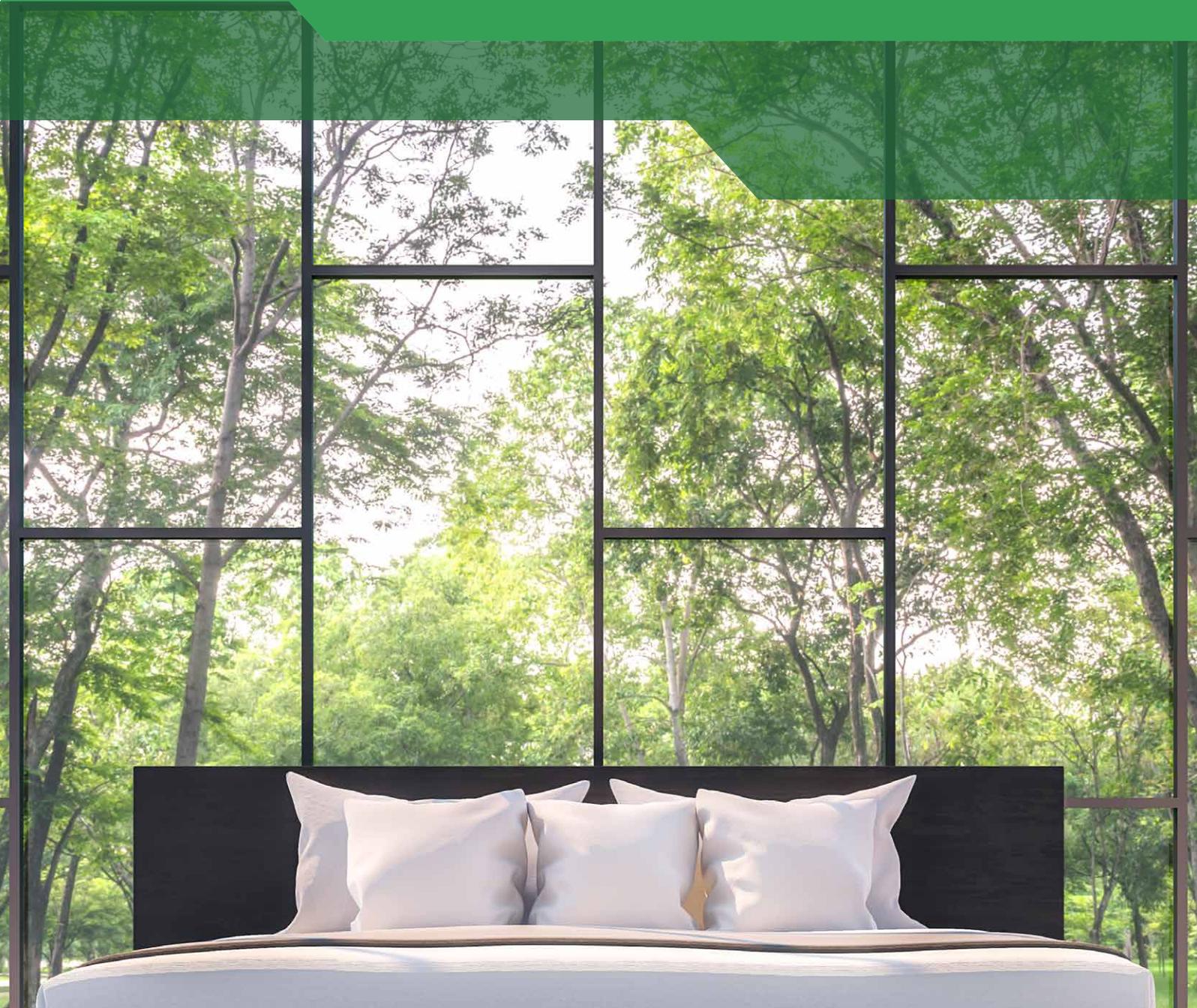


7 Eco-Friendly and Sustainable Initiatives for Conscious Hotels



Criton
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Contents

Introduction: Green is the New Black	3
1. Start Simple by Using Less	5
2. The Three 'R's: Reducing, Reusing and Recycling Waste	7
3. Go Digital with Room Keys	8
4. Incorporate Safer Cleaning Products	9
5. Choose Local Wherever Possible	10
6. Use Eco-Friendly Alternatives	11
7. Give Them an Experience to Remember	12
Conclusion	13



TRAVELLERS

66% happy to pay more if companies can demonstrate a commitment to having a positive environmental impact



58% would pay at least 5% more if they knew there would be a lighter environmental footprint

79% said a hotel with eco-friendly values was valuable to them

BUSINESSES

51% try to hold their meetings in environmentally friendly locations

75% ask if there are sustainable initiatives that could help them decide on a venue



Introduction: Green is the New Black

It seems like no matter where you look, sustainability is becoming one of the most talked about issues facing society. The impact that people, and their actions, have on the environment is becoming clearer by the year and conscious consumption is an integral part of the modern conversation. Once considered 'just a trend', eco-friendly initiatives are increasingly popular and sought-after as solutions to a growing issue. And it looks as though 44% of Baby Boomers and 42% of Generation X agree.

This demographic is well-travelled, well-informed, and continues to put more emphasis on sustainable consumption every year. In fact, they're so passionate that 66% say they're happy to pay more money if companies can demonstrate their commitment to having a positive environmental impact. But it's not just the people who travel for leisure that have a desire to go green. 51% of businesses say that they try to hold their meetings in environmentally friendly locations, and 75% of businesses go out of their way to ask if there are sustainable initiatives that could help them decide on a venue. With statistics like these, it's safe to say that green is the new black. And it's about time.

Whether they're traveling for business or leisure, guests want to feel good about the accommodation they're staying in. And not just in the 'value-for-money' sense. They're increasingly attracted to hotels that are vocal about the sustainable changes they've made (or are working towards). This matters, especially to the 58% of travellers who say they would pay at least five percent more if they knew there would be a lighter environmental footprint.

Location, service, experience, and amenities are a big contributing factor when it comes to where someone might choose to stay, but hotels can make an effort to stand out from the crowd through sustainable initiatives and attract even more guests. A TripAdvisor survey proves this point. According to the survey, 79% of travellers said that finding a hotel with eco-friendly values was valuable to them as they looked for accommodation. And, just as important, those same travellers have shown that they're also more likely to be repeat guests.

As guest's booking criteria begins to shift, so do their travel habits and motivations. For the conscious traveller, a great stay is now determined by more things than a great location and fast wifi connection. A new part of their criteria is whether a hotel takes steps to minimize their ecological impact and what changes they're making. Guests want to feel good about where they spend their money, and they want to support businesses who can manage (and communicate) the effect they have on the environment. Hotels who can successfully capitalize on this momentum will stand out from the crowd and attract even more guests whose values align with theirs.

So, now that you know how meaningful it is to make eco-friendly changes, how can you begin integrating them in your hotel? Start with these 7 initiatives.



35% of a hotel's energy consumption consists of miscellaneous uses

1. Start Simple by Using Less

Sustainable initiatives benefit your guests. They also help minimize your hotel's environmental impact, reduce utility bills, and use resources more efficiently, all while differentiating your brand from competitors. The (eco-friendly) grass really is greener.

And it's good business.



The quickest way to make a difference is to start with energy and resource conservation. These efforts will help the environment, as well as reducing your utility bills. Energy is typically a hotel's biggest expense, and it's possible to lower energy usage by 20-40% by using automatic control systems and occupancy sensors that go into energy-saving mode when a guest leaves their room. Everything adds up, especially when you consider that 35% of a hotel's electricity consumption consists of miscellaneous uses. If you can't afford to update control systems or switch to eco-friendly kitchen appliances, easy changes like LED light bulbs can go a long way in helping reduce energy usage.



Water usage is another great place to implement sustainable changes, especially when you consider the fact that a hotel uses approximately 450-900 litres of fresh water every day for an occupied room. With a statistic like this, it's safe to say that water conservation should be a cornerstone to any hotel's eco-friendly initiative. Re-using towels, installing low-flow showers and toilets, and recycling grey water are all great ways to cut down on costs while benefiting the environment.



Water and energy conservation is increasingly becoming standard in hotels around the world, especially in places where resources are scarce. Guests are starting to expect to see requests to reuse towels, and they'll feel validated in their choice to book with you when they do. Plus, if there is any new technology or initiative they should know about, a hotel branded app can easily provide a tutorial or push notification to inform them of any measures your hotel is taking.



2. The Three 'R's: Reducing, Reusing and Recycling

Thanks to a massive shift in guest's perspective on the environment, recycling programs in hotels are now the norm rather than the exception. But the green initiative doesn't stop there (we'd have a very short eBook if it did!). Hotels can go beyond 'just' recycling paper and plastic and look for creative ways to reduce waste that guests will notice - and appreciate.

One of the biggest ways you can make an impact when it comes to reducing waste is to replace small, single use toiletry bottles with refillable pump bottles. Marriott is a great example of how this seemingly little change can have a massive impact. So far, about 1000 of its hotels have added refillable toiletry bottles to their bathrooms. This prevents about 500 million smaller bottles from going to landfills every year. That adds up to about 1.7 million pounds of plastic, and a 30% reduction from their current plastic usage.

Looking for smaller steps you can incorporate in your hotel? You can:

- place recycling bins in each room to make it more convenient for guests to use
- make sure bins are visible (and accessible) in all public areas
- introduce filtered water dispensers and begin phasing out bottled water, and
- reduce the amount of paper you use and have guest information stored in your own hotel app.

Just as every single LED light bulb makes a difference to your hotel's energy bill, every eco-friendly initiative adds up over time. What might seem like one small step now could be a giant leap down the road.

3. Go Digital with Room Keys

Obviously, every guest has to be able to get into their room. And this eBook is about finding eco-friendly initiatives that can also enhance the guest's experience. Cross both of those things off the 'to-accomplish list' at the same time with digital room keys.

Typical key cards are made of a PVC (polyvinyl chloride)-based plastic, which is made through an incredibly toxic manufacturing process that has a terrible impact on the environment. Some hotels are switching from PVC cards, which have a very short life span, to new keys made of wood, paper, or other types of plastic. But each of these still takes a toll on the environment. A mobile app is more durable, harder for a guest to lose, and easily the most sustainable option for a hotel looking to make eco-friendly changes. Plus, it provides an even better guest experience as guests can check-in using their own phone, and they'll never have to look through every pocket to find their key. It's probably already in their hand.





4. Incorporate Safer Cleaning Products

With so many guests coming, going, and coming back again, hotels tend to be high-traffic places. To look pristine through it all, many rely on heavy grade cleaning products that tend to contain chlorine bleach, petrochemicals, and harmful ingredients. Those industrial-strength cleaning products also contribute to harmful indoor pollution, as well as negatively affecting the environment. You, and your guests, can breathe easier by switching to eco-friendly cleaning products.

Depending on the size of your hotel, cleaning

can apply to many different things besides roomkeeping. Big changes can be made by limiting chlorine in pools by switching to saltwater, or using an ozone laundry system that relies on oxygen and electricity instead of chemical laundry products. Not every hotel has a pool, and not every change has to be big to make an impact. With the rise of sustainability, there are now so many 'green' or natural cleaning products available that have been proven to perform just as well as their industrial counterparts. As a bonus, they tend to be less irritating on the skin for both guests and employees.

5. Choose Local Wherever Possible

Using local produce and ingredients just might be one of the best eco-friendly initiatives your hotel could make, for several reasons. Incorporating local products, especially when they're in season, is a significant point of difference that makes your hotel stand out to potential guests. And, when you've done the gastronomic experience well, it will keep guests coming back because of the unique opportunity. At the end of the day (or night), that's what they're here for.

Not only does local produce enhance guest experience, but it also marks your hotel's noticeable shift towards more sustainable food choices. With food travelling less distance to get to your kitchen, there's less air pollution and the ecological footprint is smaller. It doesn't have to be organic to make a difference. Although that certainly helps, for both the environment and credibility. Providing a varied menu that focuses on food from the area is a

memorable experience for your guests that can't be replicated anywhere else. Seasonal menus can help create intrigue with constantly rotating dishes made from local ingredients, while reducing your impact on the environment at the same time.

But what happens to the food that doesn't get eaten? Embrace it! Not literally, of course, but with a composting program that is both eco-friendly and a great talking point with your guests. On average, hotels waste about 35% of all the food they purchase. A composting program can help divert 50% of that away from a landfill while providing fertile soil for landscaping projects, or even an on-site herb garden. Adding a sprig of 'home-grown' rosemary to a guest's gin and tonic not only amps up the flavour of their drink, but it enhances their trip by providing a unique experience that's a bit outside-the-box. It's those outside-the-box moments that inspire memories and recommendations to friends.

Hotels waste about **35%** of all the food they purchase





6. Use Eco-Friendly Alternatives

Making sustainable changes usually sounds like a lot of work. Honestly, sometimes it can be. But it can also be as easy as swapping out bottled water and making your guest directory a lot more modern.

The easiest place to start? Reduce waste and provide a higher quality experience, all in one, by swapping bottled water for conveniently located water filters, complimentary refillable bottles, or place pitchers of water throughout the hotel for easy hydration. If you can upgrade plain water by adding slices of local fruit, even better.

The second alternative to consider is going digital with your guest book or directory. [A branded mobile app](#) can save stacks of paper while putting everything from check-in to room service in one place. Easy accessibility helps enrich your guest's experience, plus you won't have to print out hundreds of new copies every time you need to fix a typo. It's good for the environment and great for your guests.



60% of American travellers took 'responsible' trips

7. Give Them an Experience to Remember

Guests choose a hotel for lots of different reasons, but they want a memorable experience no matter what. Eco-friendly trips are exactly what they're looking for, judging by the [60% of American travellers who took what they described as a 'responsible' trip](#). That's a huge number, and it clearly shows that the desire for a unique trip is there.

Capitalize on that desire and stand out to potential guests with distinctive options that allow them to see their destination in a new, and even more memorable way. A fantastic opportunity to do this is by offering your guests access to bicycles and local guides. This helps elevate their experience in a few ways. You'll be able to help your guest do what they came for, which is to explore a new destination and have a great time doing it (and even better photos to look back on). And you can even go one better by offering a [mobile-friendly guide](#) with hints, tips, and local trips to get the most out of their adventure with custom recommendations they shouldn't miss.

An initiative like making bicycles available for guests goes to show that not every eco-friendly effort needs to be about just reducing impact on the environment. While bicycles go a long way in reducing carbon footprint, they're also a fun and easy chance to simply have a great experience. And do a bit of good for the environment at the same time. It's changes like this that will help you stand out, inspire guests to book their stay with you, and keep them coming back for more.



Conclusion

As guests become more aware of their environmental impact, they become increasingly discerning about where they choose to spend their money. They're looking for businesses that care about their effect on the planet and if a hotel can demonstrate shared values through green initiatives, then they'll have earned a loyal guest.

But it's not just guests who want to align themselves with sustainable companies. Employees, and people who want to be your employees, care as well. In that sense, being proactive about your eco-friendly initiatives (and how much you talk about them) can be a huge boost to your hotel's recruitment strategy.

Sustainable initiatives can sometimes feel like a lengthy checklist, but by incorporating them into your hotel's day-to-day operations and sharing your efforts with your guests, you can engage them in the process while making them easier to accomplish. Guests play a massive part in any hotel's sustainability initiative, so encouraging them to make eco-friendly choices like reusing towels are a simple way to show them your values and commitment. They'll continue to feel like they've made the right choice to stay with you, and go above and beyond to help support your green efforts.

One of the simplest ways for a hotel to make the shift towards sustainability is to start with the easy wins. Switching to energy-efficient appliances, like automatic room temperature and lighting, are a great way to reduce your energy use without impacting a guest's experience. But your guest also wants to feel like they're part of the experience. That's when unique eco-adventures and locally sourced food helps round out the equation. Plus there's the savings side of it as well. Well-executed changes mean you can expect to see lower costs and less waste in the long run, especially if there was an up-front investment.

Brand loyalty is based on shared values, and incorporating eco-friendly initiatives into your brand can help you gain guests and convert them into loyal fans. The kind of fans who refer their friends and family. By highlighting the sustainable practices you've added to your hotel, it becomes even easier to build a better, more connected relationship with guests. One that will give them a long-lasting impression, and they'll always associate that positive experience with your brand.

Your competitors will be green with envy.



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