

Going Green

Minimum standards toward a **sustainable** hotel



Surfers Paradise Resort, Queensland, Australia:
The saltwater lagoon provides sand beaches, waterfalls,
an artificial coral reef and a haven for local fish species.





Kasbah du Toubkal, High Atlas Mountains, Morocco: Considerately restored to its former splendour using traditional techniques and local materials, the Kasbah both respects and adds value to the local community. Photograph: Alan Keohane, www.kasbahdutoubkal.com

What does it mean to be a sustainable hotel?

While the term ‘green’ in business originally related to environmental issues, it has evolved to embrace all aspects of sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR). To be properly ‘green’, a company now needs to incorporate sustainable thinking in its decision-making at all levels throughout the organisation.

In the past, corporate philanthropy, or ‘giving back’ to the community, used to be the way a company looked to enhance its reputation externally. Today, even the most basic level of acceptable business practice requires a more sophisticated approach. Companies are judged on their accountability, transparency, business ethics, socio-economic awareness and resource-efficiency as well as their financial results.

Businesses today are under external scrutiny as never before. Shareholders, investors, employees, customers, environmental and ethical groups - and the general public - expect companies to be exemplary across the ‘triple bottom line’ of economic, social and environmental management. If they are not, pressure groups and the media are willing and able to expose their weaknesses. As our understanding and knowledge grows about issues such as global warming, climate change, human rights injustices and the causes of poverty, the world looks as much to the business community as to governments to provide solutions.

Integrating responsible practices into your hotel or resort operation will benefit your business in many ways. ‘Admired’ companies attract investors, enjoy better customer and guest loyalty and are able to recruit and retain high-calibre, motivated employees. This helps them improve their market share and position. Hotel owners and operators that understand the environmental and socio-economic context in which they operate are

better placed to manage risk and maintain their licence to operate. Resource-efficient hotels not only improve their bottom line by eliminating wasteful practices, but also lighten their load on the planet, something we all urgently need to do.

The strategies and approaches presented in this paper will help to increase the sustainability of hotel operations by minimising their negative impacts on the surrounding ecosystems and cultures while increasing their positive contributions to biodiversity conservation, cultural heritage preservation and community development.

These practical steps are intended to guide hotel managers toward a more sustainable operation.

- 1/ **Policy and framework**
- 2/ **Staff training and awareness**
- 3/ **Environmental management**
- 4/ **Purchasing**
- 5/ **People and communities**
- 6/ **Destination protection**

1/Policy & framework

You will need commitment from everyone, from the top down.

2/Staff training & awareness

Success will depend on the 'buy-in' and continued motivation of your staff.

- + Designate or appoint a senior member of staff responsible for environmental management. They should have the awareness, knowledge and skills to implement best practices to regional and international standards.
- + Identify a person from each department who will be part of the hotel's environmental working group or 'green team'.
- + Institute ways to measure your progress – for example through indicators such as water use in litres or cubic metres per guest per night, energy use in kWh per guest night and waste in kg per guest night.
- + Draw up responsible business policy to which the entire operation can commit.

- + Launch a responsible business programme to staff and solicit feedback.
- + Maintain staff awareness of the programme through regular meetings, posters and information on notice-boards etc.
- + Encourage motivation through competitions, suggestion boxes and reward staff for successes each month.
- + Include a module on your responsible business policy and programme in all staff induction and refresher training.
- + Communicate results to staff as you progress the programme.

3/Environmental Management

Aim for the highest environmental standards in terms of biodiversity protection, hygiene, safety, indoor air quality and overall environmental management.

- + Assess your current environmental impacts and determine potential primary, secondary and tertiary impacts and their significance. List possible mitigation and management alternatives and describe which ones will be used.
(Much of the information on your resource use, waste and use of chemicals can be found in utility and purchasing bills.)
- + Install meters for each department and for specific items of equipment that are high energy and water users.
- + Measure and monitor your progress on a regular basis. This can be daily, weekly or monthly, depending on usage and your department.
- + Set measurable short and long term targets for improvement and take corrective action when they are not met.
- + Work with other hotels and local businesses to improve environmental standards in the local area or destination.
- + Inform guests, vendors, and local stakeholders about your environmental policy, programmes and successes.

ENERGY

- ✓ Identify the key areas of energy use and the fuel sources.
- ✓ Install meters in each department and fit sub-meters for high energy-consuming items.
- ✓ Designate members of staff who will be responsible for collecting energy data.
- ✓ Identify simple changes in routine that can be made to save energy (such as turning off lights and running equipment such as dishwashers and washing machines at full loads).
- ✓ Check and maintain all equipment regularly to ensure it is functioning efficiently.
- ✓ Identify and implement low-cost measures such as fitting energy-efficient light bulbs and motion detectors, improving insulation and using heat recovery techniques etc.
- ✓ Use bicycles and environmentally preferable vehicles around the resort (e.g. electric from renewable sources, hybrid or biofuels) and encourage guests to use greener vehicles.
- ✓ Calculate your energy usage and assess it against available industry benchmarks (e.g. **benchmarkhotel**) in terms of kWh per guest night or CO₂ generated.
- ✓ Monitor your performance continuously and set realistic reduction targets based on your results.

WATER USE

- ✓ Identify the key areas of water use and how reductions can be achieved.
- ✓ Implement immediate water savings through changes in routine (e.g. reducing washing/rinsing cycles in laundry).
- ✓ Check regularly for leaks from cisterns, taps and pipes and that plugs in basins fit properly.
- ✓ Install sensors, low-flow and other water-saving fittings in kitchens, guest bathrooms and public washrooms.
- ✓ Use opportunities to divert and capture rainwater for reuse.
- ✓ Minimise water use by recycling grey water for gardening, washing floors, flushing toilets, etc.
- ✓ Assess your water use against industry benchmarks (such as **benchmarkhotel**) if available.
- ✓ Monitor results continuously, report on progress and take corrective action as necessary.

WASTE

- ✓ Identify the different waste streams you create (e.g. glass, paper, plastic, aluminium and other metals, cooking oils, cardboard and organic waste), which departments are responsible for what, and how the waste is currently dealt with.
- ✓ Calculate the amount in weight for each waste stream and identify measures to reduce, reuse and/or recycle each one.
- ✓ Draw up a waste management plan with specific reduction, reuse and recycling targets to be met by a specific time.
- ✓ Minimise packaging and other waste reduction measures.
- ✓ Ensure that effluent from wastewater treatment system complies with all relevant local, regional and international water quality standards.
- ✓ Monitor results continuously, report on progress and take corrective action as necessary.

4/Purchasing

Work with your suppliers over time to green your supply chain.

- + Source products which are the most sustainable in their manufacture, use and disposal.
- + Review all the products and services you purchase and identify where more sustainable alternatives are available.
- + Examine how your suppliers select their suppliers so that you can help develop a fully sustainable supply chain.
- + Integrate sustainable criteria into your purchasing policy and procedures.
- + Encourage local businesses to cut down on transport energy by sourcing locally.
- + Buy as much seasonal and local produce as possible.
- + Buy products in bulk and reduce packaging where possible.
- + Challenge suppliers and other business partners to improve their practices.
- + Give preference to 'fair trade' products (such as coffee and tea) or eco-labelled goods where possible.
- + Never purchase or sell items made from protected wildlife or illegally-traded species and inform your guests if there are any such items that may be offered for sale outside the hotel.
- + Recognise suppliers' efforts through special events, promotion and longer-term contracts.

5/People & communities

Look at the world outside your hotel and how you can take a more responsible, leadership role.

- + Be fair, honest, open and transparent in all your dealings with customers, employees and suppliers and respect their human rights at all times.
- + Be sensitive to the needs of those you employ and in the surrounding community such as respecting their local culture heritage and traditions.
- + Identify ways in which the local community can benefit from the presence of your establishment.
- + Develop and support tourism-related businesses in partnership with the local community.
- + Use locally provided services where possible.
- + Train local workers and in order to phase them into management positions over time.
- + Employ local people where possible.
- + Support local community development projects with money, time and under-utilised resources.
- + Provide ways for guests to volunteer for local conservation or community development projects.

6/Destination protection

Maintain a 'sense of place' that supports the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, heritage, aesthetics, and the well-being of its citizens.

- + Support conservation and cultural heritage preservation projects through financial and in-kind support and volunteer programmes.
- + Use native plant species for landscaping and natural insect control measures such as fish and other animals.
- + 'Showcase' the local culture and heritage through produce, art and handicraft of local communities.
- + Contribute to habitat restoration efforts when possible.
- + Utilise guidelines and training programmes to improve behaviour and increase awareness with regard to recreational activities.
- + Require the use of guides in sensitive areas.
- + Provide guests with lists of products and souvenirs to avoid.
- + Work with local people when developing cultural attractions.
- + Educate guests and local people about different cultures and acceptable behaviours.
- + Design an interpretive guest education programme to revolve around specific themes, with clear messages relating to local environmental and cultural issues.
- + Respect locally determined limits on scale and activities with regard to tourist interaction with local people.
- + Choose an efficient mode of transport, such as buses and trains to decrease energy consumption and emissions.
- + Provide 'no vehicle' zones.
- + Consider the use of non-motorised transportation and electric motors to decrease pollution and noise.
- + Train staff in the proper maintenance of vehicles and boats and mandate maximum speeds.

About the International Tourism Partnership

The International Tourism Partnership (ITP) was founded by HRH The Prince of Wales to inspire global leaders in the travel and tourism industry on a non-competitive platform, to share knowledge and resources, develop policy and actively implement programmes and initiatives that have a positive impact on social, economic and environmental issues.

Now in its 15th year, the ITP assists the industry to make a valuable contribution to the countries and cultures in which they operate, to their customers, their shareholders and future generations. It is a key programme of the International Business Leaders Forum.

www.tourismpartnership.org

International Business Leaders Forum

International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) is the operating name of The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum: a company limited by guarantee registered in England 2552695. Registered Charity No 1024119. Registered Office as postal address.

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