

Where lush is the new luxe

The next generation of green hotels

Environmental consciousness has been increasing its footprint on the hotel industry for some years. Yet the hotels which take it seriously are putting sustainability into much more than the laundry. From organic menus to skygardens, the next generation of green hotels is breathing new life into being eco-friendly.

Seeding new growth

Demand for green hotels has been driven by the worldwide rise in environmental concern and its impact on travel and tourism. Travellers' growing interest in sustainability has spurred more hotels to achieve green certifications and gain an advantage over their competitors.

This trend was confirmed in the 2013 'Global Hotel Industry Survey' by Timetric and MarketResearch.com. The survey revealed that both buyers and suppliers of accommodation see environmentally friendly initiatives as the biggest emerging trend in the global hotel industry. More hotels are now actively focused on reducing their environmental footprint and creating green products and services for their guests.

While 'green accommodation' is still in its infancy, corporate travel procurement is increasingly being influenced by environmental consciousness.

What defines a green hotel

Properties that can genuinely call themselves a 'green hotel' need to pass the test of a formal green hotel certification programme. The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) has been developed by a group of 27 organisations to provide a common

language around sustainability in tourism. The criteria takes into consideration the many guidelines and standards that exist worldwide, focusing on:

- effective sustainability planning.
- reducing negative impacts on the environment.
- enhancing cultural heritage and incorporating it into hotel operations, design and facilities.
- maximising social and economic benefits for the local community.
- New blooms in next-gen green hotels.
- Over the past decade, green hotels have traditionally focused

on elements such as recycling, water and energy conservation, natural cleaning products and composting methods. Yet in the new generation of green hotels, you'll find a lot more than just a card on your pillow asking you to spare water consumption.

While many urban hotels are now doing an impressive job of reducing their carbon footprints, some of this is behind the scenes and may not be obvious to guests. Recent years have seen the blossoming of many new eco features such as:



- paperless guest registration eg. Using tablets, ipads and smartphones.
- sustainable furnishings utilising natural and/or recycled materials.
- larger windows to invite in more natural light.
- organic amenities in recyclable or biodegradable packaging.
- conservation shower heads and pressurised toilets.
- energy efficient appliances.
- menus featuring all-organic food.
- recycling of kitchen grease into bio-fuels.
- green garden walls to control hotel temperature.
- solar power to conserve energy.
- internal and rooftop gardens.
- rain water and sun harvesting facilities.
- carbon neutral hybrid transportation services.
- saltwater pools.

A thriving example of 5-Star sustainability: PARKROYAL on Pickering Singapore

Opened in early 2013, this highly awarded green hotel has set a new benchmark for environmentally conscious accommodation.

The property punctuates its urban hospitality with self-sustaining sky gardens, cascading vertical greenery, plant species and waterfalls. Awarded the Building and Construction Authority's Green Mark Platinum, Singapore's highest rating for green buildings, this 367-room oasis features:

- lush foliage constituting 200% of the total land area
- 70% energy savings on hot water generation
- reduced water usage through rain water harvesting and use of NEWater
- light, motion and rain sensors regulating the use of natural resources
- use of natural ventilation where possible to reduce the building's cooling requirements.

- 20% reduction in power compared with the Singapore code, via sun harvesting and LED bulbs.
- 20% reduction in external heat transfer.
- 60kWp solar cells powering Singapore's first zero-energy sky gardens, comprising 15,000m².
- four times the greenery provision requirement for maximum rating.
- construction material award winning Cobiax technology using 'void formers' rather than traditional concrete.

Belinda Morris, Associate Director of Business Development – Industry Partnerships, Pan Pacific Hotels Group, says 'the hotelin- a-garden design concept is a prime example of how hotels can integrate cutting-edge environmentally friendly practices and technologies into a practical hotel space. And our customers love it.

Greening the way for the future

The larger hotel chains are proving to be the most active and innovative in environmentally conscious accommodation.

According to the Green Travellers' Guide, other regional leaders in eco accommodation include Kimpton Hotels in the US; Langham Hotels in the UK and Taj Hotels, Resorts & Palaces in India.

Thushara Liyanarachchi, Regional Director of Sales (Australia and New Zealand) for the Taj Group, says there is a definite change in the mindset of customers.

"Travelers are increasingly opting to stay 'guilt free' and willing to pay a reasonable premium to do so."

Hotels that respond to this demand will have an advantage over others. Corporates are also insisting that they partner with hotel companies that have an environmental management plan. This has led to hotels adopting environmental programmes in a structured manner," she says.

"An increasing majority of today's travellers are knowledgeable of the impact of their travel and the personal carbon footprint they create. They see sense in staying at a hotel that has a comprehensive environmental management programme that can be measured for impact.

Thushara adds that in terms of eco technology and products, a 'green revolution' is imminent. "While several renewable energy sources have seen technological improvements over the last few years in terms of efficiencies and costs, it is clear that several green technologies will become more affordable in the very near future," she says. "That is when the 'green revolution' will actually take place!"

Within five years, nine certified Taj hotels have:

Saved enough resources to electrify 53,490 homes by conserving 174,766,344MJ of energy



Filled 338 Olympic-sized swimming pools through water conservation



Reduced CO₂ emissions to take approximately 6,675 cars off the road



Filled nearly 186 shipping containers by reducing 7,172,259.2 litres of waste

