

Holidays Must Get Greener

Holidaymakers traditionally leave their cares at home and a survey in November 2007 suggests that this now includes care for the environment. The recent survey by Luxique, a leading [boutique hotels](#) and luxury hotels booking website, found that while many people think hotels should do more to protect the environment, only a tiny percentage actively seek out a green hotel.

Nearly 1,200 travelers were asked the question how could hotels do more to reduce their carbon footprint and the most popular were:

Make better use of solar power (41%)

Waste less food (32%)

Stop giving away free shampoo and shower gel (14%)

Turn the heating/air conditioning down (7%)

Of the big up-scale hotels, the Hilton and Marriott groups scored highest in the green stakes. But even if a chain of hotels were to base its reputation on an environmentally friendly policy, 84% of people asked said they would not be willing to pay a fee to join the club.

Green Hotels are environmentally-friendly properties whose managers are eager to institute programs that save water, save energy and reduce solid waste whilst saving money and help protect our planet. But there are also little things that we, the consumer can do to save our planet. Read on to find out more.

Things you can do

Many of the things you can do to be greener on holiday will be the same things you can do at home, but there are also some extra things like avoiding gifts made from endangered species. Here are some suggestions:

*Making the most of locally produced food and drink, and local activities and attractions will support people in the area you are visiting and reduce the need for further environmental impact from transport

*Switching off any air conditioning, heating and lights when you're not using your accommodation will help reduce climate change effects

*Try not to waste water – some countries suffer from water shortages and saving water can help avoid damage to natural habitats.

Helping Endangered Species

Some gifts and foods available in some countries can be made from endangered plants or animals, for example, animal skins, ivory, orchids, caviar, or coral.

It may be hard to tell the difference between permitted and non-permitted goods, or to find out when you buy something whether it came from an endangered source. For example it is difficult to know if turtle shell has come from an environmentally harmless source.

Check before you buy, but if in doubt avoid animal and plant gifts. Find more details of products to avoid and illegal trade hotspots by visiting [Souvenir Alert](#) or CITIES websites.

Make a positive contribution to the place you're visiting. There are ways in which your holiday can help support local people and the environment:

*Some organisations and companies offer holidays which aim to minimise impacts on the environment - they can help find accommodation with low energy needs and activities that benefit local communities

*There are many opportunities to volunteer and help with projects that conserve and improve habitats and nature reserves

*When you are away, or if you are looking for somewhere to visit in the UK, you can support projects or attractions which protect wildlife, such as nature reserves and conservation projects

The wider issue

While we would like to think that Mother Nature has finally gotten to the travel industry, I personally cannot help but be cynical about their collective environmental epiphany. Do hotels really care about the planet or about attracting more eco-friendly consumers who, it just so happens, tend to be more upscale and affluent? And as for the little card they leave by the bed suggesting you reuse your towels and forgo clean sheets?

I'm sure the fact that they stand to save millions each year on laundry suds by not having to do all that washing anymore has nothing to do with it. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for trying to protect and preserve our natural resources. I think it's great that hotels are encouraging their guests to be a little less self-indulgent and more planet-aware. I'm just not buying their motivation behind it.

In the end, I suppose the fact that hotels are pushing more environmentally benign practices is more important than why they are doing it. So, with that in mind, let me offer a few additional suggestions to facilitate the greening of the travel industry:

1. If we are really concerned about our own personal carbon footprints then tour/holiday operators perhaps could give travelers the chance to pay for their own flight emissions.
2. Eliminate hotels' obscene Internet access charges for guests who agree to receive an electronic copy of their bill instead of a long paper printout. Entire forests will be saved!
3. Hotels could rig their plumbing and lighting so that guests must listen to pre-recorded environmental messages from Al Gore before opening a faucet, flushing the toilet, or turning on a lamp.
4. Replace the tiny liquor and wine bottles in the mini-bars with full-size ones to lessen the burden of all those little plastic containers on community recycling efforts. Of course, the hotel should absorb the cost of the bigger bottles as their way of "paying" the world back for its plastic footprint.
5. Hotels should stop offering pay-for-view movies. This only encourages guests to watch television, which in turn causes more electricity consumption.
6. Permanently set all televisions in hotels to the Discovery Channel and allow guests free viewings of [An Inconvenient Truth](#)
7. Tell USA Today (or any other newspaper) that you (the hotel) are no longer willing to accept free bulk deliveries of the newspaper and stop selling newspapers and magazines in your gift shops. If guests are in need of news, they can get it on the Internet thanks to your free online access. More forests will be saved!
8. Encourage hotel guests to take home bathrobes free of charge. Otherwise hotels will have to wash them repeatedly, thereby undermining their water saving efforts.
9. Hotels should offer special discounts to guests who agree to take showers together. This, too, will aid their water conservation efforts.
10. Install solar power which is renewable, profitable, clean, and provides low maintenance electricity

Who knows? Maybe one day we will witness the spectacle of Paris Hilton accepting a Nobel Prize on behalf of the hotel chain whose name she bears.

About the Author

I'm a keen traveler and enjoy staying in luxury [boutique hotels](#) but I am now concerned my carbon footprint needs reducing. Whilst [Luxury hotels](#) are the best holidays money can buy, they are also arguably the worst for the environment. I have written this to help myself and likeminded travelers and also the travel industry as a whole so together we can all help save our beautiful planet when traveling.