



 Guestline | eBook

# The Hoteliers Guide to Sustainability

April 2023



# Introduction

Historically, tourism and sustainability have not sat comfortably together.

Mass transportation, large visitor numbers descending on natural attractions, and an ever-evolving infrastructure to support the growing demand to travel and explore, including hotels and resorts, have all left their mark on the environment. With the hotel sector accounting for 1% of total global emissions (source: UNWTO), hospitality, like other industries, has a pressing responsibility to manage its impact on our planet.

As the importance of sustainable business practices becomes more and more evident, there is increased pressure on hotels and accommodation providers to adjust

their operations to support this. Given the other challenges the industry faces, this can be bewildering, especially for smaller operators constrained by financial and staffing issues. However, in an industry where 80% of the sector are SME's, each and every business has its part to play in moving the industry forwards on its sustainability journey.

For this reason, we bring you our 'The Hoteliers Guide to Sustainability' designed to support your journey to help save the planet, and ensure you meet the expectations of today's guests. While we are not sustainability experts – there are a number of organisations out there

who can provide the in-depth guidance and support you need - we do recognise this can be a new and sometimes complex path to navigate. Hopefully, this resource will reduce some of the overwhelm and support you wherever you are on your journey.

As time passes, one thing becomes more and more evident. Action is

crucial for the planet and for your bottom line. And we all have a responsibility.

Don't delay. Make 2023 the year you and your team resolve to commit to and embrace sustainability in every aspect of your operation.

Think Sustainable!

**Team Guestline**

[#sustainability2023](#) [#sustainabilitynow](#)  
[#sustainablehospitality](#) [#thinksustainable](#)  
[#sustainabilitymatters](#)

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# 1. Sustainability Explained

The terminology around practices designed to protect the planet can be confusing. While the terms ‘sustainable’, ‘eco-friendly’ and ‘green’ are often used interchangeably, there are subtle but important differences that we need to be aware of.

**‘Green’** is a broad-brush term that refers to all aspects of environmentally-friendly practices and activity.

**‘Eco-Friendly’** means something that causes minimal harm to the environment on use. However, it doesn’t consider the overall impact on the environment involved in producing and transporting these products.

**‘Sustainable’** has a slightly more complex definition. The crucial difference with sustainability is the focus on the future.





Sustainable practices are designed to protect resources for future generations to come. It looks at the whole life cycle of the product or activity, from production through to consumption and ultimately disposal, to ensure that minimal damage to the environment occurs and future generations are not impacted.

As a result, sustainability has a much higher standard and, as an industry, this is where our focus should be.

# 2. The Importance of Action

As awareness increases as to the damage we are doing to our environment, and with tourism identified as a significant contributing factor to this, it is becoming even more critical for hotels to embrace sustainable practices in their operations. The benefits make environmental, commercial and business sense.

## Collective responsibility

To combat the devastating effects of climate change to our planet, research by the ***Sustainable Hospitality*** Alliance found that the hotel industry needs to reduce its carbon emissions by 66 per cent per room by 2030, and by 90 per cent per room by 2050 to ensure that the growth forecast for the industry does not lead to a corresponding increase in carbon emissions.\*

A challenging but achievable target. Given the highly fragmented nature of the hotel industry, the responsibility is on all of us to help reach these targets.

# Attract more guests

Today's guests care about sustainability. They want to know that companies are committed to environmentally sound practices. An overwhelming majority of Millennials and Generation Zero will pay more for products and services that don't harm the environment, deplete natural resources, or negatively affect the lives of people or wildlife. Booking.com's Sustainability Report 2022 reported that 81% of travellers said sustainable travel is important to them and 57% would feel better about staying in accommodation if has a sustainable certification.

The demand for this is growing to such an extent, hotel booking engines, including Google Hotels and Booking.com, have included the ability to filter search returns to only include those with travel sustainable credentials – of which more than 100,000 are now being recognised for their sustainability efforts by Booking.com.

# Increases the appeal of you as an employer

UK Hospitality recently reported that 60% of the workforce under 30 look for solid carbon net zero credentials from their employers. Given the staff shortages the industry is facing, a commitment to sustainable practices is proving important in attracting employees.

[\\* Sustainable Hospitality Alliance Hotel Global Decarbonisation Report](#)





# Sustainability makes commercial sense

In addition, a commitment to embracing sustainable practices makes business sense for the following reasons:

- Reduction in utility costs. The Sustainable Hospitality Alliance has reported that a sustainable building is at least 20% more resource efficient. Water consumption, at an estimated 10% of hotel utility costs, can be reduced by up to 50% per guest by implementing sustainable practices. Energy, accounting for 3-6% of a hotel's operating cost, also accounts for a large proportion of a hotel's carbon emissions. A focus on effective sustainable energy management can benefit the planet and make commercial sense.
- More and more companies are choosing companies with sustainability credentials for their corporate travel contracts.
- Hotels that hold a green certification lead to increased valuation.
- Governments and cities worldwide are introducing a variety of penalties such as carbon taxes or restrictive water policies, as well as incentives for implementing sustainable practices.

It's clear that a commitment to more environmentally practices will, in addition to protecting the planet, reduce overheads, drive more business and protect against future taxes and penalties.

# 3. It's time to take action

## What can you do to become more sustainable?

Sustainable hotels look to significantly reduce their environmental impact through best-practice in all aspects of their operation - maintenance, guest services, logistics, products, and supplies.

As a result, there are many steps a hotel can take to embrace sustainability. Some can be implemented quickly and relatively easily. Others require a lot more thought, planning and investment. Here we present short-term, medium-term and longer-term actions that can support your sustainability goals.

# Short-Term Actions

- Offer guests the option to reduce the frequency of linen change. This presents a great opportunity for savings in water, energy and detergent use. Incentivise guests to support this by offering loyalty points as a reward.
- Replace toiletries in single-use plastic bottles with natural and organic free-trade soaps and shampoos from certified green manufacturers in biodegradable packaging.
- Recycle/ donate part used soaps and donate used towels and linens.
- Use greener cleaning fluids and microfibre cloths or other chemical-free cleaning methods for cleaning where possible.
- Provide options to recycle for waste.
- Audit supplies to ensure no over-purchasing. A recent report by the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance estimates 18% of food bought by hospitality and the food service industry is wasted annually
- Replace single portions of cereal, yogurt, and jam at your breakfast bar with glass containers to minimise waste.
- Donate unused or leftover food to local and national food banks and programmes.
- Provide vegetarian menu options.
- Provide locally sourced food options, thereby reducing transportation emissions.
- Separate and monitor food waste and install a food waste composter/digestor, which can then support sustainable gardening practices.
- Reduce the use of fertilisers and pesticides on site.
- Where possible, buy produce in recycled, biodegradable, or sustainable packaging.
- Donate furniture, fixtures and equipment to others once no longer using.
- Switch to LED lighting.
- Offer guests access to bicycle rental and/or bicycle parking.
- Replace single-use tableware and cups with reusable ones.
- Provide filtered water dispensers, refillable bottles, and water pitchers for guests and event attendees.

# Medium-Term Actions

- Replace plastic keycards with smart locks, access codes, and keyless entry systems.
- Replace in-room mini-fridges and coffee machines with communal amenities.
- Reduce paper consumption and enhance your guest's experience by implementing contactless check-in and check-out for guests. Welcome Break Hotels installed Guestline's GuestStay, offering guests contactless check-in and check-out and estimate that annual paper savings across the group amount to 1,136 reams of paper...that's the equivalent of 57 trees which don't have to be cut down. Imagine if we all did that!
- Choose furniture made from low-carbon or recycled materials.
- Use electric vehicles for guest transport and add electric vehicle charging stations for guests with electric or hybrid cars.
- Provide employees with access to loans for low-carbon transport methods.
- Reconfigure kitchen layouts so that ovens and heaters are not placed next to fridges or freezers.
- Install timed watering in gardens. Drought-resistant plants and ground cover instead of grass will reduce your water requirements and the need for pesticides and fertilisers.

# Longer Term Actions

- Install solar panels to contribute towards electricity (electricity typically makes up 40% of energy usage in a hotel).
- Reduce energy usage with Energy Star-rated heating and cooling systems.
- Install separate HVAC (heating, ventilation and ac) systems in the lobby and rooms.
- Install double or triple-glazed windows.
- Install a building management system to monitor and regulate your hotels' electrical and mechanical equipment, such as power systems, lighting, and ventilation.
- Install or upgrade to a more efficient chiller.
- Install thermostats with occupancy sensors to adjust heating and AC temperatures.
- Smart showers limit the length of showers to a pre-set time, alerting users when their time is almost over.
- Room sensors automatically detect light levels, increasing and reducing the bulb's brightness.
- Install smart ventilation in kitchens and induction hobs in kitchens.
- Install low-flow toilets (less than 6 litres/flush).
- Upgrade building insulation.

# 4. Considerations

We know embarking on the journey to sustainability can be daunting– where to start, what to do, how much will it cost?

But the costs- both to your hotel and to the planet- of not acting, and not acting now, can be far greater. Here are some key considerations to think about as part of your planning.



# Concern about the investment required

Managing and operating your property in a sustainable way can involve an initial investment as you look to install more energy efficient appliances, or reconfigure your property to support more sustainable practices. However, the longer-term commercial benefits will soon offset any investment. These include the potential estimated reduction in energy costs of 20-35% (source: Green Energy Network), increased guest appeal, and avoidance of government penalties and taxes for unsustainable practices.

# Concern about the time involved

The additional workload a sustainable 'project' may entail may not seem a priority given the current staffing crisis. However, building a sustainable operation is no longer a 'nice to have' and should not be viewed as a one-off project – it needs to become a way of life ingrained into every aspect of your operation. Failure to act will run the risk of alienating guests and making your brand irrelevant in the eyes of the consumer. The time to act is now to both help the planet and your bottom line in the long term.

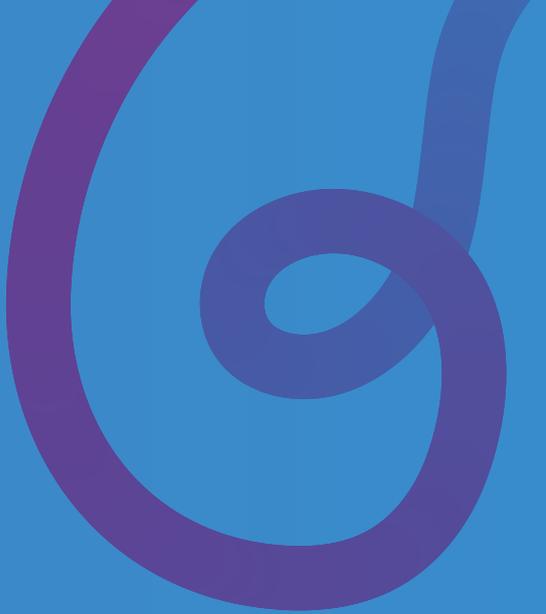
# Avoid 'Greenwashing'

'Greenwashing' is a term used for businesses that profess to be greener or more environmentally friendly than they actually are. As consumers become savvier about sustainable practices and hotels tackle sustainability more aggressively, greenwashing activities will be easier to identify. Combat this by making real changes to your operations, get certified and don't damage your reputation by claiming to be greener than you are.

# 5. Encourage a sustainability mindset!

Sustainable practices within hotels need to become a way of life with company-wide buy-in. It's important to get your whole team involved. Here are a few fun and interactive ways to engage your teams and get them to think about sustainability with everything they do. Tackle the challenges individually or combine them, awarding points over a month (or penalties for those who don't conform!) with rewards for the most sustainable team member.

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- Encourage a paperless office! Ask teams to become 100% digital or if they have to print, print double-sided on recyclable paper.
  - Reduce the brightness of your monitor. Did you know that by switching the monitor brightness from 100% to 70% can save up to 20% of energy?
  - Make end-of-day unplugging of electrical appliances and screens a habit for all.
  - Encourage car-share for the daily commute to work.
  - Offer a vegan option at lunchtime.
  - Install a 'Green Initiative' ideas box.
  - Go plastic free and provide branded reusable water bottles for staff.
  - Clean and update your inbox. Yes, digital pollution is a thing! One email with an attachment (around 1 MB) represents 3.5 g of CO<sub>2</sub>. Delete irrelevant emails and unsubscribe from needless newsletters - simple actions that can all help.



## 6. Next steps

At the heart of working towards a more sustainable operation should be a well thought-out plan that involves all teams, with measurable objectives, regular evaluation, and feedback. Although it can seem overwhelming, approaching this in bite-size chunks can help immensely.

# Stage 1: Appoint a 'Green Team'

We recommend appointing a 'Sustainability Manager' within your operation to champion, own and manage your sustainability programme. This does not need to be a full-time role but it does need to be taken seriously with time allowed during their working day to work on managing the sustainable action plan.

The Sustainability Manager should head 'sustainability team' with representatives from each department to meet regularly and champion and action sustainable initiatives within their department. It is imperative, the 'Sustainability Team' are supported and motivated by senior management for success.

# Stage 2: Establish your hotels' current sustainability status

A task for the Sustainability Manager and team. Start with an analysis of energy consumption, food and beverage wastage, water consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> per customer. Identify areas for improvement and where you could start implementing some of the initiatives mentioned in Chapter 3. To get a complete picture of your hotel's current sustainability, you should calculate your **carbon footprint** using this handy tool.

# Stage 3:

## Set Objectives & Timelines

Make sure they are realistic but stretching. Monitor and revisit on a monthly basis. Get everyone involved.

# Stage 4:

## Design an Action Plan

Review the short-, medium- and long-term actions outlined in Chapter 3 and design an action plan with timelines and owners.

# Stage 5:

## Review, track and monitor your progress regularly

All practices and operations need to be designed with sustainability in mind. As teams embrace environmentally friendly practices in their day-to-day work, build commitment and momentum by monitoring and reporting progress and communicating achievements and improvements.

# Stage 6:

## Get help from experts as needed

There are a wealth of organisations, including many specifically to support the tourism and hotel sectors, designed to assist your journey. See Chapter 7 for organisations to help you on your way!

# Stage 7: Get certified!

As sustainability increasingly becomes a deciding factor for many in their choice of accommodation, seeking certification by a recognised body will instill confidence in guests that you are complying and adhering to rigorous environmental standards. Ensure any certification is promoted as part of your marketing just as you would with any other certification or award.

For more information about any of the above, the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance has created a number of resources to support hotels and accommodation providers wherever they are on their journey. We recommend their guide, 'Pathway to Net Positive Hospitality' as an invaluable resource to help you plan, measure, and track your sustainability efforts.

# 7. Institutional Support

Wherever you are on your sustainability journey, support is at hand! Your personal objectives and the financial and staffing resources you have available will shape the support required. Here are some of the organisations designed to provide guidance and advice.

# Sustainable Hospitality Alliance

Bringing together the hospitality industry to have a lasting positive impact on our planet and its people. Members make up 30% of the global hotel industry by rooms, with a combined reach of over 35,000 properties and 5.5 million rooms.

[www.sustainablehospitalityalliance.org](http://www.sustainablehospitalityalliance.org)

# GreenGlobe

Founded 29 years ago, Green Globe is now the world's leading certification for sustainable operation and management of travel & tourism worldwide.

[www.greenglobe.com](http://www.greenglobe.com)

# Green Tourism

Green Tourism promotes greener ways for businesses and organisations to operate by offering members advice on all aspects of running a sustainable operation.

[www.green-tourism.com](http://www.green-tourism.com)

# Fifty Shades Greener

Provide education, certification and consultancy to hotels, tourism destinations, governments and educational providers. Also offer a qualification in environmental sustainability management for hoteliers

[www.fiftyshadesgreener.ie](http://www.fiftyshadesgreener.ie)

# Earth Check

EarthCheck is the world's leading certification, consulting and advisory group for sustainable destinations and tourism organisations.

[www.earthcheck.org](http://www.earthcheck.org)

# Conclusion

Exploring and implementing a more sustainable approach to running your hotel is a wide and complex area. Given other pressing operational requirements, it can never quite make it to the top of your to-do list. But with governmental and social pressure to take action, guests increasingly factoring sustainability into their travel choices, and competitors keen to demonstrate and showcase their efforts to support the planet, hotels that don't act and don't act now will be left behind.

Here at Guestline we, too, are embarking on our journey. We are long-time advocates of remote working and have invested in hybrid company cars for our employees. Recycling stations can be found throughout our offices and we have recently installed solar panels on our roof. Transformation will not happen overnight- but it's important to untangle the overwhelm, design an action plan and start the journey. We all have a part to play in this.

So, we encourage you, if you haven't already, to commit to positive action in 2023. Set stretching yet achievable goals to start with. Get everyone involved. Track and communicate progress. Work to create a sustainable mindset making everyone aware of the part they have to play in this.

**Good Luck!**  
**Team Guestline**

[#sustainable2023](#)



# Advice & practices in hospitality

'We urge hospitality businesses to step up and limit their environmental impact. Some of our simple tips include understanding your waste streams and how to reduce them, help employees own sustainability in their role, measure your emissions, and use your voice to motivate others'

Robert Godwin, MD Lamington Group and room2hotels

'Our 'Go Green, Skip the Clean' initiative encourages guests to skip a daily room clean by offering loyalty points in return for every day they skip the clean. These can be used across the group for accommodation bookings, in our restaurants etc. By lowering daily cleans we reduce chemical use, save energy from less linen being laundered, and lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from less deliveries and pick-ups of clean/dirty linen. It's really working well!'

Anthony Aitchinson, Cluster Sales & Marketing Manager  
- Novotel Glasgow & Ibis Glasgow Centre

'We are working to reduce printing. We use LED lights and sustainable toiletries. Guests are encouraged to reuse towels. We use a QR code for room service breakfast ordering instead of door hangers.'

Ellie Sanders – Reservations and Revenue Manager, Lace Market Hotel, Nottingham

'Start off by measuring your carbon footprint to help you manage and measure the change on your journey to net zero. Progress can only be made if leaders in the business support this and get behind it to make it a core value of the company.'

Magaly Etter, Supply Chain Officer, Whatley Manor Hotel

‘Just like you can’t eat an elephant whole, hotels should approach sustainability in bitesize pieces. It’s an exercise in continuous improvement and the new benchmark of quality.’

Deborah Heather. CEO, QIA Services

‘We have recently introduced electric car charging points within our main car park in a continued effort to support a cleaner environment. All light bulbs throughout the estate are energy efficient and we now ensure all water bottles within the accommodation are reusable glass bottles to save on plastic waste. We also reuse the horse manure (of which we have plenty) as a nutrient-rich fertiliser!’

Helen Filshie, Front of House Manager, Ingliston Country Club

# Advice & practices in hospitality

81% of travelers confirmed that sustainable travel is important to them (Booking.com Sustainability Report 2022)

38% of travellers indicate that they actively look for information on the sustainability efforts of a property before they book (Booking.com Sustainability Report 2022)

Global carbon emissions have increased by 50% since 1990 – and the hotel sector accounts for around 1% of these (Sustainable Hospitality Alliance)

The hotel industry must reduce its absolute carbon emissions by 66% by 2030 to ensure that growth in the sector is sustainable. (Sustainable Hospitality Alliance)



## At Guestline, being bold is one of our core values which we live and breathe by

After being one of the first PMS in the cloud, that is integrated with our own channel manager, and PCI compliant, we bring payments into the core of our systems alongside availability, rates, restrictions, and inventory. GuestPay is the result of a Guestline partnership with Trust Payments (TRU//ST) to build a single payment solution, that combines operational and payment systems into one centralised hub, ensuring a seamless and swift flow between the booking stage and the payment into the hotel's bank, freeing the time and talent hoteliers need to find and delight their guests through frictionless technology and great service.

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Future proof the planet.