

Responsible Travel Initiatives are Becoming an Expected Practice for Travel Service Providers

By Doreen Pendgracs

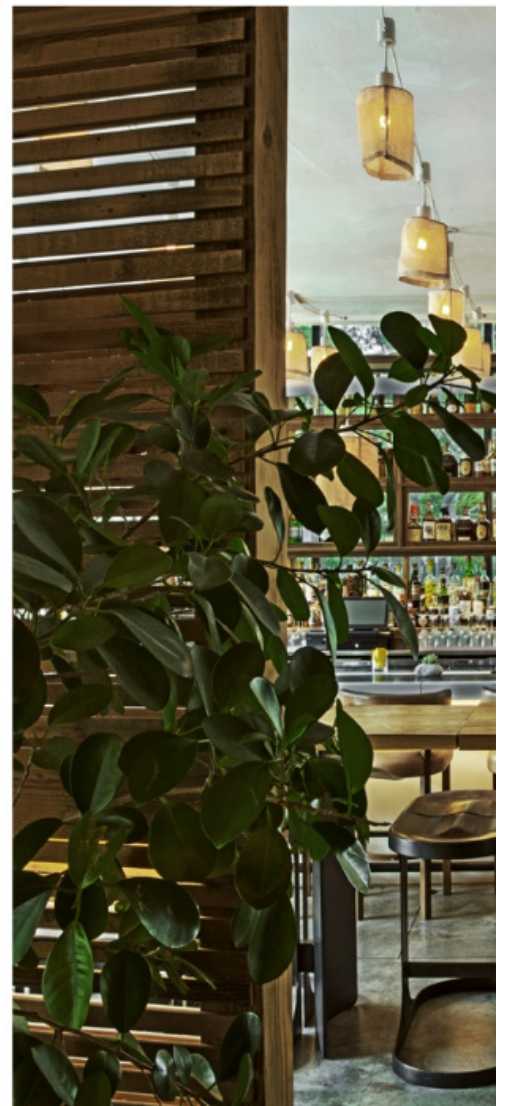
More and more travelers have eco-friendly green travel on their minds. In a 2018 report from booking.com, 87% of travelers said that they want to travel sustainably, while 40% already have and will continue to do so.

Travelers care about the environmental impact they're making when they travel. They're increasingly interested in properties and service providers who share their environmentally friendly practices and initiatives on their websites and often make bookings based on what they read via editorial coverage and consumer reviews.

Green power and practices have become just as important to a growing number of travelers as location and price. In symmetry with grocery shopping habits and the skyrocketing demand for organic, environmentally friendly goods, guests are often willing to pay more for their stay if it includes accelerated green practices and gives them a chance to make their stay carbon neutral.

As a proud holder of the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certification and Green Leader Gold designation from TripAdvisor, Virgin Hotels Chicago offers a "Green Your Stay" option that enables guests to offset the carbon footprint of their stay.

Doreen Pendgracs is a long-time contributor to THOR Advantage who thoroughly enjoys country living and considers herself a biophilic and a chocophile. Find more of her writing and follow her chocolate travels at chocolatour.net.



Hyatt at Olive 8 (right): Wake up refreshed in guestrooms featuring soft linens, large closets, plush robes and eco-friendly touches like water conservation, in-room recycling, and energy-efficient lighting.

1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge (below): Designed by local artists using native greenery and reclaimed materials, nature is home in Brooklyn.



For the past three years, the hotel has been on USA Today's 10 Best list of Eco-Friendly Hotels in the U.S. The key to the property's eco success is its 3P Sustainability Platform, putting an equal emphasis on its people, the planet, and the partnerships formed to operate in the most sustainable way possible in reducing carbon emissions, water consumption, and waste management.

One such partnership is with CleantheWorld.org, providing a meaningful and effective way to recycle unused soaps from guestrooms and get that much-needed soap to impoverished destinations around the world. Clean the World was launched in 2009, and since then has grown to an eco-friendly family of more than 4,000 hotels in North America that have donated more than 30 million tiny soap bars that have been sterilized, reformed, recycled, and distributed to developing countries where personal hygiene is often compromised.

The Hyatt at Olive 8 of Seattle, Washington, is another property with the environment as a key priority. As Seattle's first hotel/condominium building to receive a LEED Silver certification, Olive 8 uses 36% less water and 23% less power than it would without the use of its sustainable practices and seamlessly green building ethos. The property has one of the

largest green roofs in Seattle, providing a much-needed nature-friendly habitat for birds and pollinators such as butterflies and bees.

Human guests are just as happy, with 90% of the hotel's occupied spaces having open views to the outdoors, and more than 75% of regularly occupied areas of the property enjoying a steady stream of daylight. Less electricity used and an increased feeling of connection to the outdoors is a win-win for property owners and eco-conscious guests.

Another trend-setting property with Gold LEED certification for its eco-friendly design and practices is 1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge in New York City. The hotel is designed by local artists using native vegetation and reclaimed natural building materials such as reclaimed barnwood, creating a uniquely inviting green zone right in the heart of America's largest metropolis. As many ingredients used as possible are organic, sustainably grown, and locally sourced for the hotel's farm-to-table cuisine.

1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge prides itself in innovative practices to encourage positive change as part of its core principle. CEO and Chairman of 1 Hotels, Barry Sternlicht has ensured that the philosophy of biophilia—the love and respect of nature and all living things—is the guiding force behind everything at his properties. Their plastic reduction program and use of a Tesla electric house car for guest use are examples of this. 1 Hotels place health and wellness at the center of their operational, design, and construction decisions. They've formed partnerships with several eco-friendly groups and initiatives with a similar mindset such as the Natural Resources Defense Council that receives any residual from 1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge's "Give Green, Get Green" program. In this opt-in program, guests get a \$30 credit for purchases other than room charges and taxes. If not used, the funds go to the Natural Resources Defense Council, a four-star charity mandated to fight climate change by cutting carbon pollution and expanding the use of clean energy.

It's important to note that efforts to improve the eco-friendly sustainability of a property may not achieve immediate buy-in from clients and that determination and a commitment to the environment are necessary to implement positive change. "Changing the habits of guests is a big challenge," says Julian Buffam, a partner in New Castle Hotels & Resorts—a third party management company for a wide range of award-winning properties. "It takes time for changes such as the introduction of hay and paper straws to become fully adopted. But we're committed to replacing plastic with recyclable and compostable options by the end of 2022." ✎

Virgin Hotels Chicago (below): Our groundbreaking Chamber design combines the hallway, closet, and bathroom into one area for living, while privacy doors can be closed to create a personal area for sleeping, working, and playing.

