



WORDS HANNAH BRANDLER

We all want to be good citizens of the world, but how do we reconcile travelling around the planet while at the same time not harming it?

CHOOSING YOUR HOTEL

A property needs to be in a convenient location, at an affordable price and with the facilities and services you require, but once those factors are satisfied, how do you judge whether it is environmentally friendly? Keeping track of a hotel's sustainability progress is not easy, but here are some things to look out for.

There are various certifications and classifications available for properties worldwide, but the global nature of the hotel industry, and the fact that different countries have different standards, can make this a confusing area. Bear in mind also that most hotels have been built by developers, may be operated by a third party, and are then perhaps marketed and branded by one of the well-known chains. In such circumstances, finding out just how green your hotel is can be a daunting task.

First, as a rule of thumb, new hotels will have been built to higher environmental specifications than was required for older properties, and will have better technology at their disposal. Some of these properties will market themselves as having a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating. Awarded by the USGBC (the US Green Building Council), this globally recognised certification must be applied for and covers eco new-builds, renovations and interior fittings.

Marriott International, for instance, is pursuing LEED certification or equivalent at 650 of its newer or refurbished hotels.

Other groups have taken a different route. Accor is a founding member of the Association pour le Développement du Bâtiment Bas Carbone. This organisation is developing a low-carbon building certification (BBCA) accounting for a building's greenhouse gas emissions throughout its lifecycle, from construction through to operation and eventual demolition and recycling. This building standard was applied throughout the construction of the new Jo&Joe Paris-Gentilly.

To meet the targets required by certification boards, hotels need to be rigorous in monitoring their greenhouse gas emissions and waste production. Accor's Gaia tool, launched in 2016, allows its network of hotels to create plans and monitor sustainability progress. Marriott International promises that all properties will have a Serve 360: Doing Good in Every Direction section on the website displaying hotel impact metrics by the end of next year, while IHG's Green Engage platform has four levels of certification and offers hotels "200 Green Solutions" – ways to report and manage their carbon, energy, water and waste. The group says that last year almost 8,000 solutions were implemented globally, with those using the platform avoiding a total of US\$67 million in costs.

Systems, however, are not always centralised. Iberostar Hotels and Resorts has invested more than €33 million into improving energy consumption behaviour across its

Hotel groups are recognising the need to do more when it comes to sustainability – but there are steps we can take as travellers, too

Stay green

PICTURED: 1 Hotel Central Park in New York

100 properties, but has a more localised approach. For example, the Iberostar Selection Cancun has an Intelligent Building System that monitors and controls temperatures in the hotel, while the Iberostar Selection Playa Mita in Mexico installed elevators that collect kinetic energy from a moving lift; this reduced energy consumption by 50 per cent.

HOW TO BE A GREEN GUEST

Other than taking note of green accreditations, guests trying to be more eco-conscious should abide by the “small is beautiful” motto. Budget stays are more sustainable because of their modest nature; smaller rooms and fewer restaurants are conducive to low energy consumption and waste production. Take Accor, for instance, whose 4,800 hotels range from luxury to budget. In terms of food waste alone, the upscale properties average 47 tonnes per year, while its economy hotels pale at 17 tonnes.

When travelling, there can be an element of “out of sight, out of mind”, with guests viewing holidays as a break from conscious eco-friendly behaviour. Booking.com reported this year that 46 per cent of travellers

struggle to make sustainable choices on holiday compared with everyday life. Lights are left on, fresh towels are requested daily and miniature toiletries are relished.

That’s where monetary incentives can come in. As suggested by its name, eco-friendly Hotel Verde in Cape Town (see overleaf) encourages “green” behaviour by rewarding guests with Verdinos, its in-house currency. Verdinos can be used towards your bill or at the hotel bar and deli, or you can donate them to a good cause.

IHG Rewards Club members staying at one of the group’s properties for two nights or longer can choose “A Greener Stay”, opting out of housekeeping services in exchange for points. “It’s a triple win – allowing the hotels to run more efficiently and save costs, enabling guests to lower their travel footprint, and reducing IHG’s overall impact on the environment,” an IHG spokesperson says.

Accor has also incorporated sustainability into its loyalty programme. As explained by the group’s sustainable development director, Arnaud Herrmann, “guests can both earn and burn their points by participating actively in meaningful sustainable causes”, such as a light housekeeping service.

Where hoteliers and guests lose their momentum, governments can steer them in the right direction. The Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism, for example, will begin issuing fines of up to US\$725 from July this year if hotels equip rooms with disposable amenities such as toothbrushes, nail files and shower scrubs. Reception can still provide such products if requested, referring accountability to the guest.

Behavioural changes are paramount to the success of sustainability programmes. As hotel groups strive for loyalty, frequent travellers have a huge amount of power when it comes to driving change in the industry. And many are willing to do so, with 55 per cent of travellers more determined to make sustainable choices than last year according to Booking.com.



‘Guests can earn and burn points by participating in meaningful sustainable causes’

What’s crucial, says Gloria Fluxa, vice-chairman and chief sustainability officer of Iberostar, is that guests “do not underestimate the power of small steps”, whether that be using reusable water bottles, keeping informed about green activities (beach clean-ups, for example), or ordering sustainable fish in a hotel’s restaurants – Iberostar is the first chain in Southern Europe to be certified with the Marine Stewardship Council. Fluxa adds that sustainable measures are “not taking away the excellence of the experience”, instead making it more enriching.

Disposable plastics have been a great source of shame for hotels and customers alike. “Single-use plastic is a topic our guests are increasingly concerned about”, says Hemma Varma, senior manager of social impact and global responsibility for Europe at Marriott International. The group will remove plastic straws and stirrers from all properties by July this year, eliminating more than one billion straws per year and about a quarter-billion stirrers when fully operational.

IHG has also eliminated an average of 50 million straws annually →

LEFT: Paper straws are used at Marriott’s St Pancras Renaissance
ABOVE: IHG staff clean up the Thames in partnership with the Rivers Trust



I FEEL
SLOVENIA

www.slovenia.info

SLOVENIA. MY WAY OF TRAVELLING AROUND.

Find your favourite trail, climb towering peaks, dive into crystal clear waters or have a one-on-one with pristine natural surroundings.

Now even easier: On the 15th of July, British Airways will launch a new flight route between London Heathrow and Slovenia’s capital, Ljubljana. The route will run until 2nd of September with a flight time of just a little bit more than 2 hours.

Slovenia’s small size means that you can easily use Ljubljana, as a base for exploring the country’s beautiful and varied natural landscapes, from the snow-capped Julian Alps in the north to the Mediterranean coast in the south.

#ifeelsLOVEnia
#myway

Bled, Slovenia

from its properties, and uses recycled plastic to its advantage. The group is working with supplier Ege to trial its 100 per cent recycled yarn carpets, crafted from industrial nylon plastics and fishing nets salvaged from the ocean.

Iberostar has gone one step further with its Wave of Change initiative, which focuses on the conservation of oceans through the elimination of single-use plastics, promotion of sustainable fishing, and improvement of coastal health. Oceans have “always been a part of our DNA”, stresses Fluxa, with 80 per cent of its properties located on a seafront. The chain has already replaced all single-use plastic products in its 40 Spain hotels.

“We intend to become single-use plastic free up to the limits that the legislation allows by the end of 2020,” she says – legislation differs in the 19 countries in which the chain operates – but she stresses that “we’re doing our homework and want to move towards a circular economy”. How is Iberostar doing this? “We did an extensive audit of products internally and looked at how they could be substituted and the operational implications of this,” Fluxa explains.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Just as guests can apply pressure from outside, hotel employees have an influence internally. As Fluxa puts it: “The most important stakeholder for this movement is our staff. If they don’t understand [the framework], they won’t be able to explain it to guests.” Iberostar staff have accordingly been trained by NGO Fishwise about the responsible consumption of seafood.

➔ CONTINUED ON PAGE 74

Iberostar has replaced all single-use plastic products in its 40 Spain hotels

5 ECO-FRIENDLY HOTELS



The Brando, Polynesia

Located on the small Tetiaroa atoll, this luxury resort – Marlon Brando’s former private island – honours its natural surroundings through the use of local or certified renewable materials. A deep seawater air-conditioning system runs cold ocean water throughout, providing low-energy cooling for all buildings and reducing energy demands by almost 70 per cent. The resort is fully biofuel capable and is close to achieving its goal of net zero carbon impact. thebrando.com

1 Hotel Central Park, New York

This 18-storey hotel boasts a three-storey living green façade. Interiors feature reclaimed barn wood and antique bricks, room keys are crafted from recycled wood, and glasses and carafes are made from recycled wine bottles. Showers have a five-minute timer to encourage mindful water use. 1hotels.com

Islas Secas, Panama

This island resort’s four villas were built with sustainable wood. Its

energy is entirely solar generated, its food waste is turned into fertiliser, wastewater is reused for irrigation and there are no single-use plastic water bottles. Flights there aren’t quite so eco-friendly but a staff rotation schedule minimises boat trips from mainland Panama. islassecas.com

QO, Amsterdam

This IHG hotel is an architectural eco feat, with almost one-third of the concrete used sourced from Amsterdam’s Shell building. Its façade is built from thermal panels that react to the outdoor climate to regulate the indoor temperature. An aquifer thermal energy storage system stocks unused heated water underground until it’s needed up top, while a greywater scheme means all water is reused to flush toilets. qo-amsterdam.com

Hotel Verde Cape Town Airport

While only 400 metres from Cape Town airport, an undeniable source of pollution, this hotel decked out in 220 photovoltaic solar panels is certainly eco. Rooms have LED lights and spectrally selective windows, which let in daylight but block heat. A greywater system saves, on average, 6,000 litres of water per day, and the gym equipment pumps power back into the hotel. On checking out, guests get a certificate to show their carbon offset. The neighbouring wetlands are home to more than 100 types of vegetation. verdehotels.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The Brando; Hotel Verde Cape Town Airport; 1 Hotel Central Park



ST. ERMIN'S HOTEL
AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION
HOTELS

Business & leisure in equal measure

Business stays like *nothing else*

Exactly like *nothing else*



sterminshotel

St. Ermin's Hotel, 2 Caxton Street, London SW1H 0QW
+44 (0) 207 222 7888 www.sterminshotel.co.uk

MARRIOTT
BONVOY™



360° Take a virtual show round visit www.sterminshotel.co.uk/tour

FUELLING CHANGE

SUSTAINABLE AVIATION

Continued from page 32



→ financed by the automotive industry. Now the auto industry is reaching what is required, there will be a need to add a lot of money dedicated to the aerospace industry. The step-change required is enormous.”

As with SAJE, that could mean it is business aviation that pioneers the new technologies. Of the 170 or so companies working on projects, about 40 per cent are for business and general use, not commercial.

What other steps are airlines taking? Qantas has pledged to eliminate 75 per cent of onboard waste by the end of 2021 and use 100 million fewer single-use plastics by the end of 2020. Etihad, Portugal's HiFly, Delta Air Lines, Virgin Australia and others have made commitments to reduce plastic waste.

Carbon offsetting schemes are offered by several carriers. The concept sees airlines promise to invest in environmental projects such as tree planting. However, they are criticised by some as an excuse to keep polluting, and there is no industry-wide body to monitor airlines' overall programmes. BBC research found that only about 1 per cent of flyers were willing to pay more for them.

Qantas bucked this trend, with 10 per cent of passengers offsetting. Andrew Parker, its group executive for government, industry, international and environment, said: “We've been carbon offsetting for a decade; we now have the largest airline offset programme in the world.” Projects involve improving water quality in Australia's Babinda Reef, and funding rangers who prevent deforestation.

Making aviation sustainable can feel like one flight forward, two flights back. Still, there are signs of progress. In the words of Emma Thompson: “We're often involved in situations where we will be hypocritical. But if we don't address this, we are failing our children and our grandchildren.” **BT**

STAY GREEN

MAKING HOTEL STAYS MORE ECO-FRIENDLY

Continued from page 38



→ Other companies have launched imaginative initiatives to get employees on board. Scandic, the largest hotel operator in the Nordic market, has involved staff in its sustainability endeavours since 1993, when a team member's “hang up your towel” policy became standard practice worldwide. Last year, it wanted to “add a fun spin” to its efforts, according to Vanessa Butani, Scandic's director of sustainable business, with 18,000 team members participating in a “sustainability hackathon”. Staff submitted 400 social and environmental ideas, which were voted on before facing a jury.

Turn off the Tap, the winning environmental idea, will pilot this summer in Norway. Guests are advised to switch off the tap when brushing their teeth, aiming to save more than 200 million litres of water per year.

Accor similarly engages staff through its Acting Here app for employees, which launched in April last year. The app includes both educational and activity elements, allowing staff to receive rewards for publishing selfies of their sustainable actions, or doing quizzes to boost their knowledge.

CUTTING FOOD WASTE

While sustainable initiatives may seem altruistic, there is a financial incentive, too. Accor's food and beverage accounts for half of its waste, 40 per cent of its global water consumption, and is the second-largest contributor to its carbon footprint.

In fact, one-third of all food produced in the world is lost or wasted. To address this, chains such as Accor and IHG have partnered with Winnow, a company using smart meter technology to record and analyse food waste. Winnow's co-founder,

Marc Zornes, says: “Although the scale of the problem is enormous, it presents a huge opportunity for businesses to recover value and become more efficient.” Through Winnow's real-time reports, “businesses and chefs can adjust their food purchasing decisions accordingly, reduce their spending and tackle a fundamental problem of food waste: overproduction”.

Accor's Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit piloted the system in 2015, resulting in a 50 per cent reduction in food waste within four months, and estimated annual savings of more than US\$60,000. In fact, charity WRAP and the World Resources Institute found that a typical food manufacturing, retail or hospitality business could achieve a 14:1 return on investment by reducing food waste. Such technology will prove useful in helping Accor to achieve its aim of reducing food waste by 30 per cent by next year.

Scandic is working with digital platforms Karma and Too Good to Go to sell leftover food at half the cost price. Last year the group saved more than 125,000 portions of unsold food using such digital platforms.

It's not all about technology. Accor's Novotel Nantes Carquefou creates puddings from breakfast pastries, while the Pullman Auckland uses peel from juiced oranges to make marmalade. Through a combination of behavioural changes, technology and creativity, it is entirely possible to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 12.3, the reduction of global food waste by 50 per cent by 2030.

Cooperation between companies will be crucial in meeting targets. “Fully aware of our environmental footprint, we are convinced that eco-responsible hotel management is a collective concern,” says Accor's Herrmann. Its Planet 21 online platform shares studies, research and best-practice analyses regarding sustainable development in the hotel industry. IHG, meanwhile, is a founding member of the International Tourism Partnership, which brings hotel companies together for collective action on social and environmental responsibilities.

And in the meantime, there's plenty of small steps you can take yourself to travel more sustainably – see Smart Traveller, page 88, for more tips. **BT**