

13: Ecotels

This chapter will help you to:

- Understand the concept of sustainable hospitality and the nature of environmental management systems.
- Review the important certifications and environmental considerations.
- Learn about the environmental initiatives of some of the international hotel brands.

Environmental considerations

The primary goal of luxury hotels is to give their visitors the best possible service in the most comfortable environment. Reaching the necessary high standards in, for example, heating, cooling, lighting, ventilation, cleaning, and laundry means that they have very high levels of energy and water use. The hospitality sector has historically had a dramatic environmental impact through energy and water consumption, use of consumable and durable goods, and solid and hazardous waste creation.

That is changing as hotels try to become more eco-friendly and make their operations more sustainable.

- **Eco-friendly** can be defined as actions taken to reduce detrimental environmental effects.
- **Sustainability** can be defined as adopting holistic policies and measures to reduce adverse effects on the physical, social, and natural environments. The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defines it as “*fulfilling current demands without jeopardising future generations’ ability to meet their own needs*”.

Because the public’s perception of global warming is changing rapidly, the tourism sector must quickly change to green practices using new technologies and intense employee training. Environmentally responsible hotel management includes solid waste management (e.g. waste reduction and recycling) and natural resource (e.g. water and energy) conservation.

Sustainability refers to an ecosystem's ability to retain its core functions and processes, and to retain the balance between activities and the supportive environment in which they interact without negatively influencing one another. Standard practices associated with sustainability in the hospitality industry include:

- reducing water and energy consumption by implementing energy-saving technological systems and renewable energy,
- reducing plastics, especially in packaging and disposable items,
- food wastage management,
- using products made from recycled material and which are recyclable,
- a responsible purchasing policy,
- carbon emission control, and
- responsible consumption.

When it comes to being sustainable in the tourism and hospitality businesses, a well-known term is "green hotels". Green innovation has emerged since the late 1990s, looking to safeguard the environment and the local communities – protecting nature and honouring cultural diversities. Nowadays, being green is crucial to tackling the environmental emergency to preserving the planet's resources. In addition, adherence to green practices within hotels is becoming increasingly popular and a fundamental requirement to remain competitive within the market.

There are two main approaches to environmental management: **reactive** and **proactive**. A reactive approach covers the strategies used to respond to external pressures, whereas the proactive approach covers strategies that are voluntary responses for reducing the environmental impact. Guests' attention has considerably moved towards sustainability and environmental issues, and there is a trend for people to orientate towards environmentally friendly products and services. Sustainability has been adopted by the big chain hotels because they want to show their respect and support towards the environment in different methods throughout the hotel departments.

Most housekeeping departments have adopted green cleaning methods, and hotels have chosen to go with environmentally friendly chemicals such as products made from plant fibres, products that are hypoallergenic, dye-free, and fragrance-free. Some luxury hotels have achieved the commitment of no longer having single-use plastic items, and for this the guest room amenities like toothpaste in a tube has been replaced by toothpaste tablets; shaving foam comes in a soap form which can be rubbed to make foam, plastic water bottles have been replaced by glass bottles and are refilled from the water station.