

16 ways to save money and the planet

The Low Harm Hedonism Initiative Industry Handbook



The Low Harm Hedonism Initiative

We help tourism businesses operate in more environmentally sustainable ways.

This handbook includes practical measures that make hotels and restaurants more environmentally sustainable while also reducing operating costs and maintaining guest satisfaction. All practical measures described in this brochure are easy and quick to implement, and can strengthen the pro-environmental credentials of the business.



Protect the environment



Increase profitability



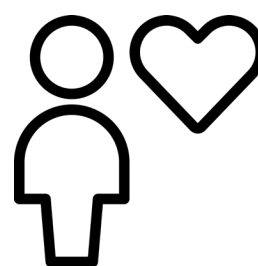
Create a competitive advantage



Save money



Implement with ease



Maintain guest satisfaction

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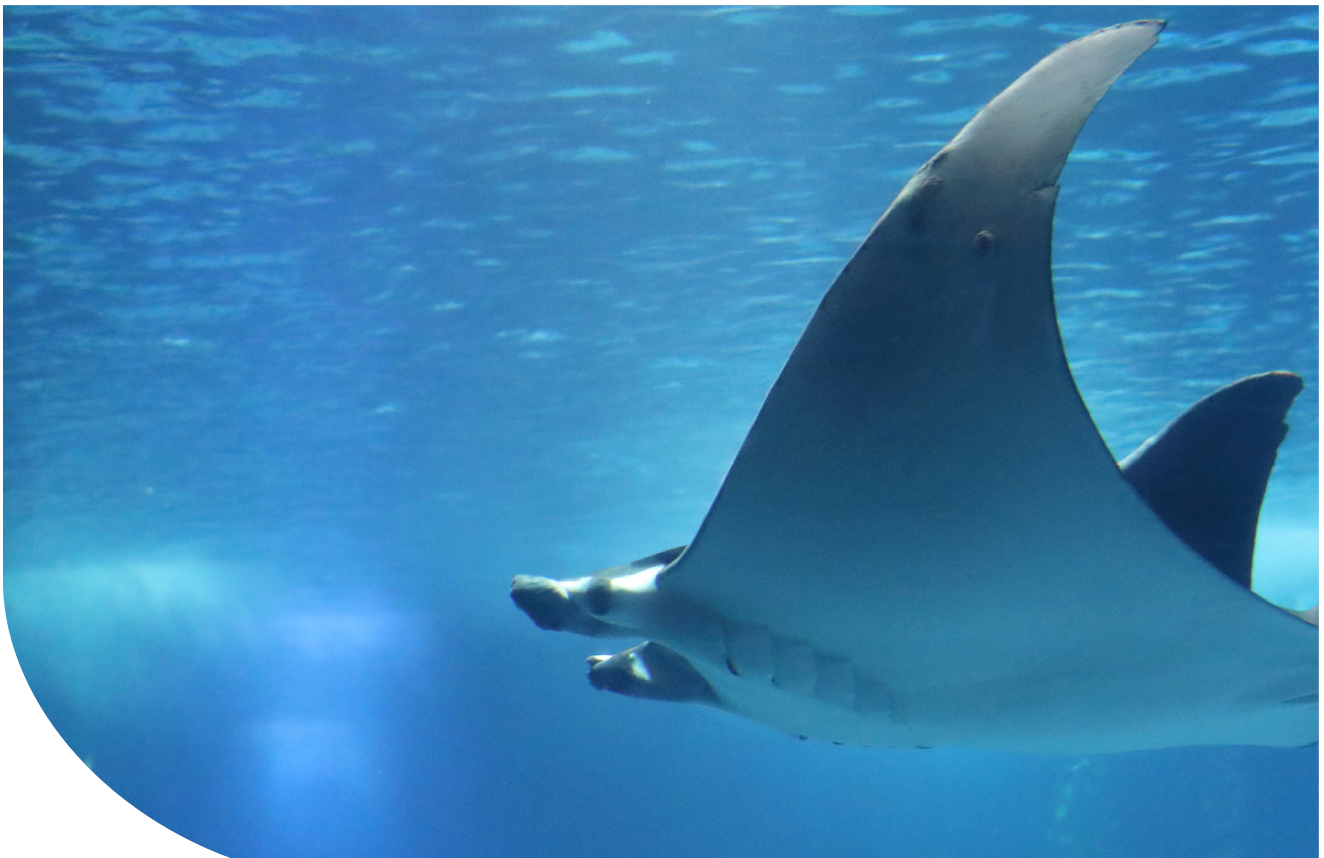
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The environmental footprint of tourism

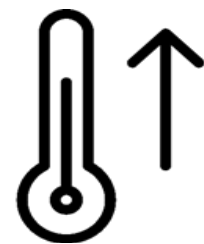
Tourism is one of the most polluting industries, accounting for 8% of total global greenhouse gas emissions¹. Accommodating one overnight guest requires on average 300 litres of water², 272 mega joules of energy³, and produces at least 1kg of solid waste⁴. Changing the behaviour of tourists and employees to be more environmentally friendly is an effective approach to (1) making the tourism sector more sustainable, (2) reducing operating costs, and (3) contributing towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



8% of all global greenhouse gas emissions¹



4th most polluting industry⁵



12.5% contribution to global warming⁶



35 million tons of solid waste annually⁶



300 litres of water per guest per night³

The **UN Sustainable Development Goals** were established in 2015 as an urgent call for sustainability. Throughout this handbook, icons indicate how the practical measures relate to the Goals. [Click here to learn more about the UN Sustainable Development Goals.](#)



Reducing food waste



Why do we need to reduce food waste?

One third of all food produced for human consumption is wasted, equalling the weight of about 180,000 Eiffel Towers⁷. Food waste costs the global economy USD 1 trillion each year and burdens the environment because valuable resources including land, water, and energy are used without creating any benefits for society⁸.

The tourism sector produces large amounts of avoidable food waste. Tourism businesses can save money by reducing food waste and taking a leadership role in driving changes to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 12.3:

"Halve global food waste per capita by 2030"

12%

of served food is
uneaten⁹

>78%

of food waste is
avoidable¹⁰

33%

of food waste in
tourism is plate waste¹¹



Did you know?

If food waste was a country, it would be the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases¹².



Stamp collection game¹³



This practical measure is best used in family hotels that offer all you can eat buffets. When families check into the hotel, receptionists invite them to participate in a stamp collection game and provide them with a stamp collection book. Every time all family members eat up everything they have taken from the buffet, they receive a stamp. At check out, they can redeem the completed stamp collection book for a gift. Optimally, the gift is environmentally friendly, meaningful for children, and serves as a souvenir of the holiday at the hotel.

CASE STUDY

Portoroz, Slovenia

Type: 3* and 4* hotels

Number of restaurant guests per day: 800 - 1,200 diners

Buffet offerings: Four cold starters, three warm starters, three main courses, salads, and desserts

Gift: Inflatable water ball

Result: 34% reduction in plate waste



[Watch a 2 minute video summary of the case study here](#)



“Oh man, you should see their faces after getting the stamp! It was like earning a million Euros or the best toy. They would show the stamp in the booklet to their parents or siblings feeling really proud. Sometimes, they even asked me if I can give them another smiley (stamp) on their hand” - Waitress

Table sign¹⁴



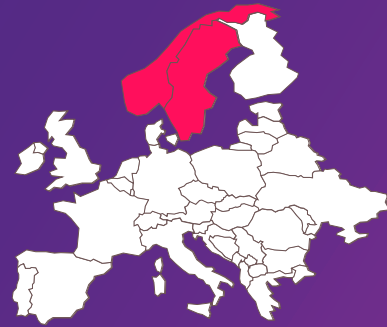
Place a sign inviting guests to visit the buffet as often as they like at the start of the buffet. This removes any ambiguity over how the buffet works. By encouraging guests to visit the buffet as many times as they like, you remove the pressure to overfill the plate when they go to the buffet to serve themselves for the first time.

CASE STUDY

Norway & Sweden

Type: 14 hotels, combination of 3* and 4* hotels

Result: 21% reduction in plate waste



Welcome back!
Again! and Again!
Visit our buffet many
times. That's better
than taking a lot
once.



Did you know?

Self-serving buffets create less waste than trolley cart buffets¹⁵.



Plate size¹⁴



Many hotels and restaurants like to offer their guests large plates at the buffet. Large plates tempt patrons to take more food from the buffet than they can eat. Uneaten food left behind often has to be disposed of into landfill where it creates dangerous greenhouse gases. A simple way to reduce plate waste is to **replace large plates with slightly smaller plates** which are still big enough for patrons to take a reasonable amount of food. The savings associated with the reduced food waste outweigh the cost of purchasing new plates. The smaller plate size does not prevent patrons from going back to the buffet multiple times. Guests will never leave hungry.

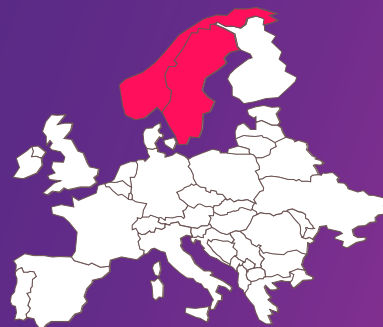
CASE STUDY

Norway & Sweden

Type: 14 hotels, combination of 3* and 4* hotels

Plate size reduction: 24cm to 21cm

Result: 21% reduction in plate waste



Discount¹⁵



Everybody loves a discount. A simple way to reduce plate waste generated at all you can eat buffets is to offer a 20% discount for eating up all the food taken from the buffet. Patrons can be informed of the discount with a simple sign placed in the middle of the dining table.

CASE STUDY

Taiwan

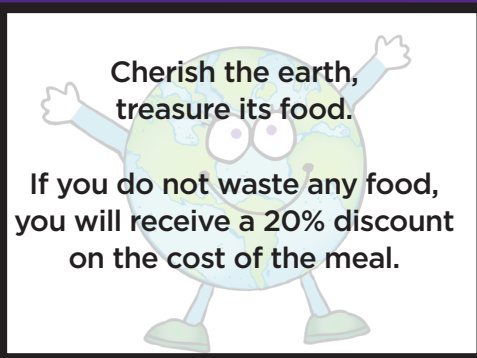
Type: Large, all-you-can-eat restaurant

Buffet offerings: Meat and vegetables cooked at the table

Dining cost: USD \$12 - 15

Discount offered: 20%

Result: 12% reduction in plate waste



Did you know?

Charging people for uneaten food is ineffective in reducing food waste¹⁵.



Small, transparent bins¹⁶



Food waste is not only created by patrons not eating up what is on their plate. Food preparation in the kitchen also creates a substantial amount of food waste. A simple way of reducing the amount of food preparation waste generated is to **replace large, intransparent food waste bins with small, transparent bins** in the kitchen. The small bins make kitchen staff more aware of what they are disposing of. If they throw away too much food, they are "punished" by having to go and empty the bin more frequently.

For every US\$1 invested in programs to reduce kitchen waste, restaurants save \$7 in operating costs on average¹⁷. The World Wildlife Fund has developed a comprehensive toolkit on how restaurants can reduce kitchen waste, [click here to learn more about the toolkit](#).

CASE STUDY

United Kingdom

Type: 5* hotel

Bin size used: 20 litres

Result: **73%** reduction in kitchen waste



"It's different to having a little tub that you can see, it is clearly labelled 20 litres and when it fills up – oh God, I got to get another one and oh my God! I have gone through four of these in a day, yeah it definitely makes people more aware."

- Junior Sous Chef

"Really it's like an eye opener. Before, we knew there is a lot of wastage. We never realised, we thought always there is a waste, but when we start measuring, we realised, really it's like ...really! This much waste!"

- Assistant Head Chef

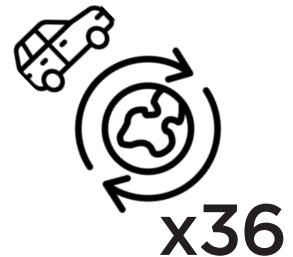


Offer recycled serviettes¹⁸



The production and washing of cotton serviettes used at buffets use a huge amount of water, energy, and detergent. Cotton serviettes provided to hotel guests at breakfast buffets in Europe alone cause carbon emissions equivalent to a car driving around the world 36 times per year¹⁸.

An easy way to save money and to protect the environment is to provide guests with recycled paper serviettes which use less water and produce fewer carbon emissions. To avoid limiting the freedom of guests, have a few cotton serviettes available at the buffet. Use a table sign to inform guests that your restaurant offers recycled paper serviettes for environmental reasons.



CASE STUDY

Bohini, Slovenia

Type: 4* hotel

Number of rooms: 96

Result: 95% reduction in cotton serviette use



[Watch a 2 minute video summary of the case study here](#)



Reducing the consumption of animal products



Why do we need to reduce the consumption of animal products?

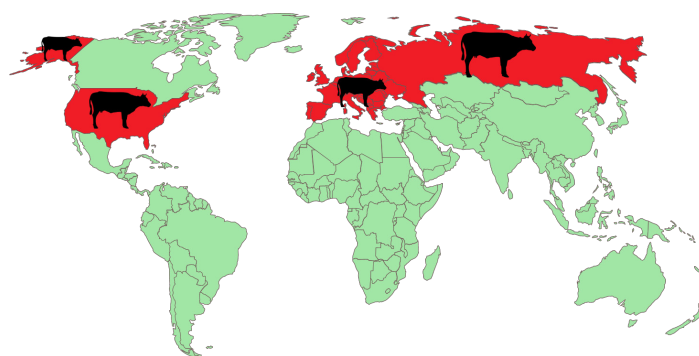
Animal agriculture has a large environmental footprint, accounting for **56% of all greenhouse gas emissions** produced by the global food system¹⁹. We use **83% of our entire farmland** to produce meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products¹⁹. This makes animal agriculture a leading cause of deforestation and biodiversity loss. Growing feed crops and creating grazing land is responsible for more than **90% of the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest**.²⁰

The consequences of consuming animal products are also shown in our oceans. **Fishing nets make up 46% of plastic waste** in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch²¹.

Despite these negative environmental impacts, we consume only 18% of our calories from animal products¹⁹.

Tourists eat more than **200,000,000 meals per day**, many of which include animal products²². Serving more plant-based dishes is one of the most effective ways for tourism businesses to protect the environment.

Animal agriculture covers the size of USA, Europe, & Russia



Did you know?

Over the last decade, the Brazilian Amazon released more carbon than it stored because of continuous forest degradation and deforestation²³.



Increase plant-based options²⁴



Many restaurants claim to offer plant-based options even when the only available dishes without animal products are fries or salads. Not surprisingly, these dishes do not get guests excited about ordering a plant-based option. Offering delicious plant-based options encourages guests to choose a dish free from animal products. More and more restaurants offer exciting new dishes such as scrambled tofu, banana pancakes, cauliflower wings, or plant-based pizzas and burgers. "Veganising" classic meat dishes is also a fun experience for chefs, who learn about new ingredients and cooking techniques.

CASE STUDY

Kings Camp

Timbavati, South Africa

Type: 5* hotel

Number of rooms: 20

Wild Dreams Hospitality, a consulting company, specialises in helping businesses to cater for guests following a plant-based diet, helped Kings Camp to create a plant-based option for every single item on the breakfast menu.

Result: Kings Camp sold more plant-based than meat dishes and received positive feedback from guests, including meat eaters.

[Click here to learn more about Wild Dreams Hospitality](#)



For your **Hot Kings Camp Breakfast** please select from the following:

Big 5

2 eggs (of your choice), bacon, sausages, grilled tomato and hash browns

Vegan Big 5

Scrambled tofu, bacon, veggie sausages, grilled tomato and hash browns

Eggs Benedict

Toasted English muffin topped with ham or salmon, poached egg & Hollandaise

Vegan Benedict

Toasted English muffin topped with vegan Ham, scrambled tofu & cashew hollandaise

Kings omelette

Hickory Ham, creamy cheddar cheese, Tomato, fried onions and mushrooms with hints of basil

Vegan omelette

Chickpea based omelette with cheese, tomato, fried onions and mushrooms with hints of basil

Menu design¹⁵



Describe plant-based dishes using words that highlight the taste and local origin of the ingredients: **melt-in-the-mouth, sweet sizzling, crispy, rich, slow-roasted, tangy, local, field-grown, garden, fresh, and seasonal**²⁵. Label one plant-based dish as **'chef's recommendation'** and place plant-based dishes at the top or bottom of the full menu²⁶.



Did you know?

Listing plant-based dishes in a separate section on the menu is ineffective in reducing guest consumption of animal products²⁶.

MENU

CHEF'S RECOMMENDATION

YOGI BOWL (VG)

Risotto style brown rice, quinoa and 3 lentil, smoked eggplant with crispy buffalo cauliflower, fresh tomato and pomegranate salad, spiced roasted peanuts & beetroot labneh.

PUMPKIN PIE PANCAKES (VG)
Fluffy pancakes with honeycomb and native wattleseed cashew cream, healthy Nutella sauce, homemade gingerbread soil, crushed meringue, choci bark, fresh berries.

LOADED CROISSANT
Maple Drizzled Bacon, Mozzarella, Poached Eggs & Avocado Stacked on a Crisp Croissant

OMELETTE WITH HAM
Served with Sourdough, Ham, Cheese, Tomato

EGGS BENEDICT
Poached Eggs Served on Sourdough with Spinach, Hollandaise & Salmon

SNICKERS ACAI BOWL (VG)
Blended with homemade peanut butter, cacao powder & almond milk, topped with crunchy granola, fresh fruits, raw snickers bar & caramel sauce.

VG = Vegan friendly

MENU

LOADED CROISSANT
Maple Drizzled Bacon, Mozzarella, Poached Eggs & Avocado Stacked on a Crisp Croissant

OMELETTE WITH HAM
Served with Sourdough, Ham, Cheese, Tomato

EGGS BENEDICT
Poached Eggs Served on Sourdough with Spinach, Hollandaise & Salmon

VEGAN DISHES

PUMPKIN PANCAKES (VG)
With honeycomb and cashew cream, Nutella sauce, gingerbread, meringue, chocolate, berries

YOGI BOWL (VG)
Brown rice, quinoa, lentils, eggplant, cauliflower, tomato and pomegranate salad, peanuts & beetroot labneh.

SNICKERS ACAI BOWL (VG)
Blended with peanut butter, cacao powder & almond milk, topped with granola, fruits, snickers bar & caramel sauce.

VG = Vegan friendly

Dynamic norms²⁷



Provide guests with information about the growing number of guests who have ordered plant-based dishes in recent years. Highlighting that an increasing number of guests behave in a certain way is effective in encouraging behaviour performed by the minority, such as ordering plant-based dishes.

"The number of our guests who order a plant-based dish has increased from 15% to 20% over the last 4 years. This means 1 in 5 guests order a plant-based dish in our restaurant nowadays."

DEMAND FOR PLANT-BASED PRODUCTS IS ON THE RISE

A growing number of consumers want to eat plant-based dishes when they go on holiday or visit restaurants. Aruba, an island in the Caribbean, saw an opportunity to capitalise on this growing segment. With the help of Meredith Marin, co-founder of Vegan Hospitality, the island transformed itself into a plant-based oasis. Meredith developed plant-based menus, trained chefs and educated service staff to understand the needs of plant-based guests. Tourists started flocking to Aruba to experience its authentic plant-based dining scene.

[Click here to learn more about Vegan Hospitality and Aruba's transformation](#)



Did you know?

Serving 100g of tofu instead of beef saves the equivalent amount of CO₂ as driving **130km**¹⁹.



Plant-based default menu²⁸

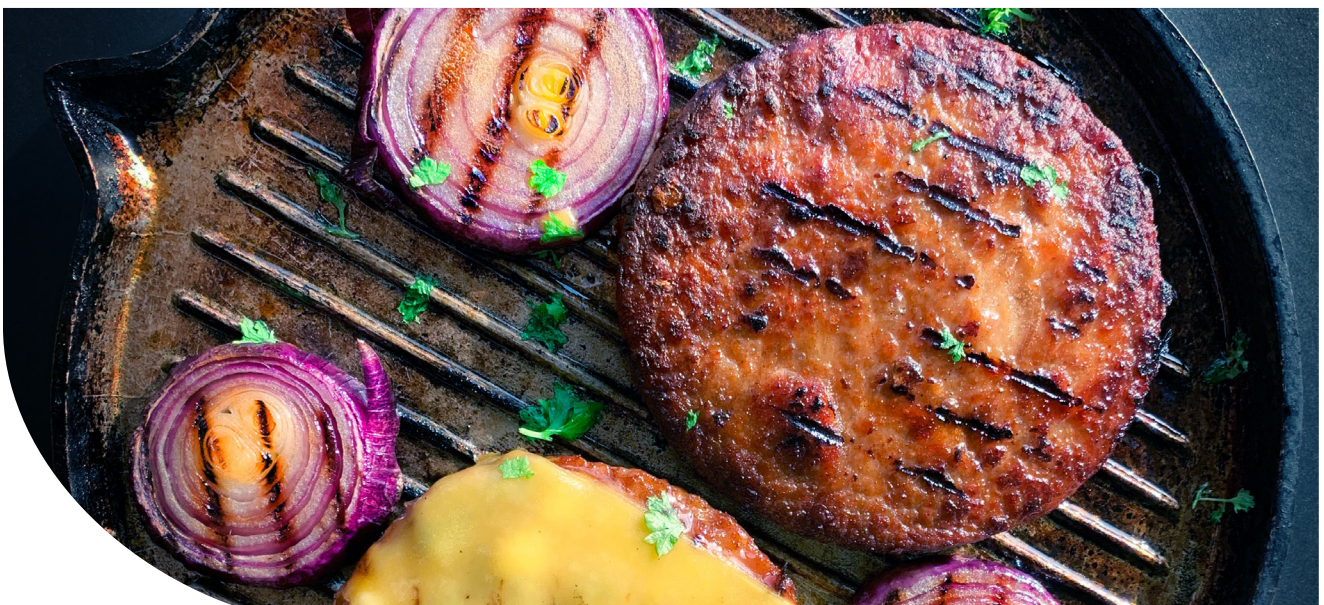
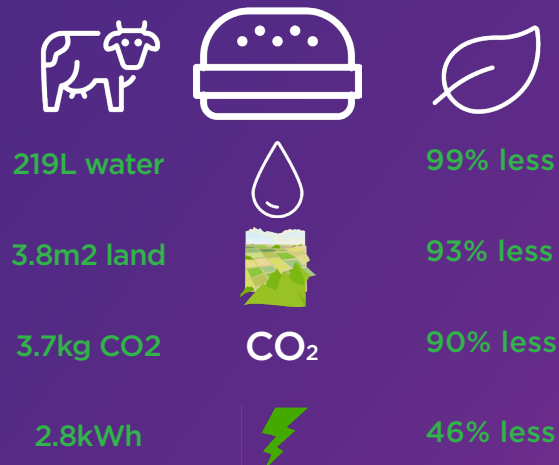


Standard menu designs make it difficult for guests to order a plant-based option. We all want to fit in and guests may think that it is not normal to order a plant-based dish when they are not listed on your menu or in a separate section. Providing all guests with a menu which includes only plant-based options and a note stating that animal-based dishes are available upon request may remove these barriers and boost your sales of plant-based dishes.

PLANT-BASED MEAT IS ON THE RISE

The number of available plant-based meat products grows year after year. For almost every imaginable meat product, a plant-based alternative exists including: burgers, sausages, fish, chicken nuggets, salami, ribs, and a Christmas roast. Companies use different ingredients to imitate the taste, smell, and look of meat including vegetable proteins, seitan, coconut oil, and mushrooms. Plant-based meat products have a lower environmental footprint than meat products. Chefs around the world use plant-based meat to create alternatives to their signature dishes.

Battle of the burgers²⁹



Reducing room and towel cleaning



Why do we need to reduce room and towel cleaning?

Room cleaning requires a large amount of resources including water, energy, and chemicals. Hotels wash between 2kg to 6kg of bed linen and towels per room every day, using up to 100 litres of water in the process³⁰.

Reducing room cleaning and laundry are effective strategies for tourism businesses to save costs and protect the environment. A hotel with 150 rooms can conserve 800,000 liters of water and 540 litres of detergent per year with a towel and linen reuse program³¹.

35 litres

of water used per
room clean³²

100ml

chemicals used per
room³²

1.5kWh

electricity used per room
clean³²



Room cleaning upon request³³



Change the hotel's standard procedure from cleaning rooms daily to cleaning rooms upon request at no additional cost. Inform guests about the cleaning procedure in the hotel during check-in. Ask guests to place a 'Please clean my room today' sign on the door handle if they wish the room to be cleaned.

CASE STUDY

Ljubljana, **Slovenia**

Type: 3* hotel

Number of rooms: 192

Result: 63% reduction in daily room cleaning



[Watch a 2 minute video summary of the case study here](#)

"We will be cleaning the rooms upon request. This means that we will not automatically clean your room every day. But if you would like us to clean your room, we are happy to do so. All you need to do is to place the 'Please clean my room today' sign on the outside handle of your door."



Drink voucher³²



Provide hotel guests who waive their daily room clean with a voucher for a drink to be used at the hotel. Inform guests about the cleaning procedure in the hotel during check-in. Ask guests to hang the 'no clean sign' on the door handle if they wish to waive their room clean and receive a drink voucher. Advise the cleaning staff to slide a drink voucher under each door with a 'no clean sign'.

CASE STUDY

Slovenia

Type: 4* eco hotel

Number of rooms: 192

Guest nationality: Slovenian, Italian, Croatian

Result: 42% reduction in daily room cleaning



[Watch a 2 minute video summary of the case study here](#)



"If you would like to opt out from cleaning on any given day, please just place the "no clean" door sign on the outside of your hotel door. The cleaner will then not clean the room and will slide one or more drink vouchers under your door. With each voucher you can get one free drink at the hotel bar. We are happy to pass on the savings from not cleaning the room to you."

Lapel pin³⁴



Inform guests with information about the hotel's efforts to reduce its environmental footprint and invite them to join the hotel's commitment by signing a card during check-in. Provide guests who sign the card a lapel pin which they can attach to their clothes to demonstrate their commitment to reusing their towels.

CASE STUDY

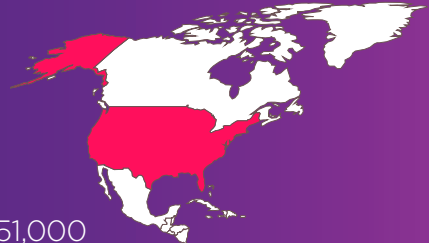
California, United States

Type: Hotel

Result: 11% increase in towel reuse

Estimated savings per year:

147,000 towel washes = 2.65 million litres of water = USD\$51,000



Our hotel is a steward of the environment.
We have a number of efforts in place to
care for our planet ranging from water
and energy conservation, recycling and
low-emission vehicles to eco-conscious
options for resort guests.

I care about the environment at home and
when I travel. As a friend of the earth, I will
do my best to save water and energy by
re-using my towels during my stay.

☐

Yes

☐

No, thank you

Social norm³⁵



Social norms are unwritten rules and expectations for how to behave in different social situations. Tourists rely on external cues to understand which behaviours are socially acceptable when travelling or staying in a hotel. Hotel managers can leverage social norms to entice guests to reuse their towels. Simply placing a sign in the bathroom which states that the majority of guests who stay in this room reuse their towels to protect the environment is an effective measure to increase towel reuse rates. When using social norms to trigger a certain behaviour, use a comparison group which is as relatable as possible to your guests. For example, refer to "guests in this room" rather than "our guests".

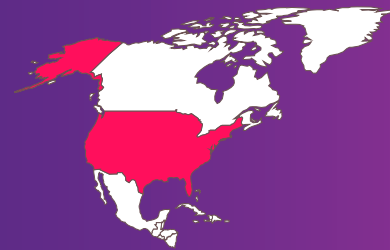
CASE STUDY

United States

Type: Midprice hotel

Number of rooms: 190

Result: 10% increase in towel reuse



JOIN YOUR FELLOW GUESTS IN HELPING TO SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT

Our recent study suggests that 75% of the guests who stayed in this room participated in our new resource savings program by using their towels more than once. You can join your fellow guests in this program to help save the environment by reusing your towels during your stay.

If you choose to participate in this program, please drop used towels over the curtain rod or the towel rack.

If you choose not to participate in the program, please place towels on the floor.

See the back of this card for more information on the impact of participating in this program.

DID YOU KNOW ?

If most of our guests participate in our resource savings program, it would save the environment 270,000 litres of water and 39 barrels of oil, and would prevent nearly 1,800 litres of detergent from being released into the environment this year alone.

Visible shower meter³⁶



Who doesn't love a long, hot shower when returning from a day exploring a new city, hiking or skiing? While a long shower may feel rejuvenating, the environmental footprint of showers is substantial. One shower uses 8 litres of water on average, and water scarcity is a problem for more and more communities around the world. Providing hotel guests with real-time feedback on shower duration and energy consumption with a shower meter is one effective way to reduce shower time. The shower meter is easy to install and uses a sensor to detect shower duration, water temperature, and humidity. A display provides hotel guests information on shower duration, water and energy consumption.

CASE STUDY

Switzerland

Type: Combination of 3-4* business and leisure hotels in Switzerland

Number of rooms: 269

Result: 11% decrease in energy consumption

The shower meter pays for itself in just over 2 years.



Recycling sign³⁷



Recycling offers great potential for hotels to become more environmentally friendly. Hotels in the United Kingdom alone would save 113,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases and more than 700,000 per year by recycling³⁷. A sign next to the bins in the room with information about the negative consequences of not recycling and specific guidelines on how guests can recycle their waste during their stay encourages guest to recycle.

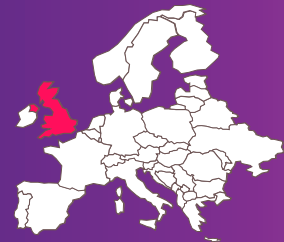
CASE STUDY

United Kingdom

Type: Midscale hotel

Number of rooms: 434

Result: 22% increase in recycling rate



Think about what we will lose if we don't recycle



By not recycling, we waste over 12.5 million tonnes of paper and cardboard – the equivalent of 300 million trees every year in the UK alone.

We waste energy which results in more greenhouse gas emissions.

If we don't use materials more than once, we will not preserve our natural resources.

Please see overleaf for specific information on how to recycle.

Think about reasons to make a difference



You can use the bin that you find in this room for recycling your waste.

Remember to sort the different materials: newspapers, magazines and assorted paper, plastic containers and bottles.

Throw your waste in the relevant bin (paper, plastic and/or glass)

Please don't place mixed material in the bin (e.g., products made with more than one type of material)

Get in touch

We would love to hear from you if you

- would like to test new interventions in your business;
- have implemented one of the interventions included in this brochure;
- have any questions or feedback regarding this brochure.

Join our [Low Harm Hedonism Facebook Community](#) to hear from other tourism businesses who have implemented the strategies included in this brochure.

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THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

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Web links

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