

## LEED Gold-Certified E'Terra Inn is Natural Fit for Niagara Reserve - By Glenn Hasek

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With its six suites, the E'Terra Inn here serves as one of the best examples of sustainable building in Canada and the United States.

Ninety-five percent of products and materials used throughout the inn were made in North America, and the property is one of the first in the world to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold status. It was awarded that designation in 2005 by the Canada Green Building Council.

E'Terra sits within the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve, at the tip of the Bruce Peninsula separating Georgian Bay and Lake Huron. The luxury property primarily consists of wood, glass, stone and copper. Laurie Adams, the owner of the inn, takes an 'Environment, Economics and Ethics' approach to operations. The life cycle of every item purchased is scrutinized by Adams and her team—even supplier manufacturing processes are questioned.

'About 80 percent of our suppliers have some kind of environmental policy,' Adams says.

Opened on May 25, 2007, Adams says response to E'Terra so far has been exceptional. Even though business has been slower this winter, the other seasons have provided nonstop activity. The inn specializes in corporate retreats, eco-tourism, spa treatments and food and beverage options that emphasize organic, healthy ingredients.

### **Guest Health a Priority**

Minimizing environmental impact and creating a healthy atmosphere for guests and staff are priorities. Great care was given to minimizing radio wave and electrical pollution in the building. Guests looking for wireless Internet service will not find it here, although hard-wired service is available. Green cleaning products are used and all body care products are organic. Construction materials and every other item in the inn were looked at for potential off-gassing. Hardwood floors are featured.

When considering the current location for the inn, how to manage sewage waste was a challenge. The inn sits in a protected, natural area and there is no access to a public treatment system. To solve this problem, engineers created a septic type of system that uses natural bacteria combined with gray water to break down the waste. The waste disintegrates in large plastic storage tanks.

To ensure the most efficient use of water on-site, rainwater is collected in a 6,500-liter cistern and is later piped into the inn's plumbing system. When guests flush a toilet, it is rainwater that makes that happen. Through a closed-loop system, rainwater is also used for refrigeration cooling and humidification.

E'Terra does not air-condition its guestrooms and public spaces. The inn is surrounded by trees, which helps keep it cool during the summer months. Air is also drawn into the inn at a temperature of 55 to 60 degrees from concrete storm tiles that sit below ground level. To heat the inn, propane condensing boilers heat water that is fed through copper heating coils. Water for kitchen and guestroom use is heated by a solar water heating system.

'In the summer, we have more hot water than we need,' Adams says.

### **Local Renewal Energy Purchased**

The inn's owner says she is considering the installation of solar cells to generate electricity but for now the inn purchases the equivalent of 100 percent of its electricity consumption through a Green Tags program. Local wind turbines supply power to more than 1,000 homes in the area.

A swimming pool on the property doubles as a fire tank. A saltwater chlorination system keeps the pool water clean. To help heat the water in the pool, Adams says she is considering using some of the hot water from the solar water heating system.

To minimize waste created during construction, 75 percent of excess materials were recycled and used in the parking lots and nearby road. To help minimize energy consumption, compact fluorescents are used in some areas of the inn and Adams intends to replace those as LED alternatives become available.

All of the efforts of Adams and her eight employees have resulted in significant media coverage and speaking opportunities. E'Terra has been featured in Home and Décor, Spa Life Magazine, Toronto Living Magazine and many other publications, and Adams was a guest speaker at last fall's International Eco-Tourism Society Conference.

This article first appeared on the Green Lodging News website. To sign up to receive the weekly Green Lodging News newsletter, go to [www.greenlodgingnews.com](http://www.greenlodgingnews.com). Glenn Hasek can be reached at [greenlodgingnews@aol.com](mailto:greenlodgingnews@aol.com).

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