

Become A Green Traveler TODAY! - By Doug Kennedy

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Having been personally committed to helping save our environment for as long as I can remember, it is exciting to read lately about the numerous hotels and hotel brands that are minimizing their environmental impact, reducing waste, and even introducing 'Green Rooms' as an accommodation type.

While this is all very exciting, there's still the vast majority of hotels that have yet to make any effort to reduce waste or to help guests go 'green.'

Not to worry, today's business and leisure travelers face numerous opportunities every day to immediately reduce their negative impact on the environment. All we have to do is empower ourselves and to each take personal responsibility for the personal carbon footprints we create during our travels.

If you are one of the many guests who are increasingly interested in preserving our environment for our children and future generations, here are some tips that I hope you will live by and also that you will share with others in your personal and professional network.

When preparing and packing for your trip:

Pack your own personal amenities. If you carry on, purchase and re-use 3 oz. containers and refill at home with shampoo, conditioner, lotion, etc... versus buying these products retail in small, wasteful packaging.

When printing airline or rental car confirmations, or other online travel documents, print the first page or two only, and save both ink and paper by reprinting the 'terms and conditions' you won't read anyway.

Print itineraries and confirmations in 'draft' mode, also if you have a color printer set it to black and white or 'grayscale' mode to save colored ink.

Reserve a car with good fuel economy vs. one that is larger than what you need for the trip.

Upon arrival at the front desk:

Tell the front desk to save the key packet and just give you the key. Ask for only one key if you are traveling alone, and be sure to turn it in at the desk for re-use vs. leaving in your guestroom where it might be discarded.

Likewise, if you can find your room on your own ask them to keep their guest room map, along with any unnecessary extra paperwork they are handing out.

If possible, take the stairs or escalator to get to your room versus burning energy to make the elevator run up or down.

Decline welcome amenities you don't want, such as fruit baskets, cookies, or welcome snacks.

In your guest room:

For short trips, contact housekeeping right away to decline housekeeping service and turn-down service during your stay. This will save lots of energy by not having the vacuum running every day as well as cleaning products that would have been used tidying a room that is still immaculate.

Upon entering your room, gather up any room amenities you don't plan on using and set them out of the way, such as soap, shampoo, coffee packets, robes, etc... This will keep them from getting wet on the bathroom counter or otherwise damaged and allow the housekeeper to reuse them for the next guest.

Similarly, take the towels, washcloths, etc... that you will use during your stay and set them aside. Leave all other towels untouched (and set aside) so that Housekeeping will know they were not used.

Use the same amount of towels and linen you would at home. When you are done with a towel hang it up to dry for re-use during short stays.

If you are alone in a room with two double beds, don't mess up the bedspread and sheets on the second bed so that it won't have to be remade.

If you do end up having to use the hotel bathroom amenities, take the remaining portions with you to use again elsewhere.

Drink only tap water during your stay. Or if you don't like the taste of tap water, purchase a water bottle with a built-in filter that can be used anywhere. (Such as a Brita Bottle.) Or if you do end up purchasing water, at least refill your used water bottles at the next water fountain you find. This will save not only on packaging of water bottles but also the fuel used to transportation it for delivery.

For men, fill the sink bowl when shaving versus running the water. For women, turn the shower off when shaving and rinse off later. For either gender, turn the water off when brushing teeth!

During your stay:

Turn the lights and television off when leaving your guest room, especially when you check-out, as the room might not be cleaned right away.

Similarly, turn the air conditional or heat up or down, according to the season, when leaving the guest room so that it doesn't run unnecessary.

During summer months, close the drapes to keep the sun's heat out, during winter month's, open your drapes to help heat the room during the day.

When you go swimming, re-use your pool or beach towels where possible by taking them back to your room and hanging them up at the end of the day.

Tell hotel managers to adjust the air conditioning (summer) or heat (winter) in the public areas, such as the lobby and banquet rooms, according to comfort levels. Experience shows that most hotel public spaces are way too cold in the summer and way too warm in the winter, wasting huge amounts of energy either way.

When ordering room service, tell them not to send any extra food items or condiments you don't need. If you don't use butter, which is particularly wasteful to produce, tell them to hold it. Likewise if you drink your coffee black tell them to hold the cream. If you don't want your side orders of toast, rolls, etc... tell them not to send it.

If you are not very hungry, ask for half-order partitions, if the restaurant is not set-up to bill for half-orders agree to pay anyway. (Either way you are wasting, and better to waste the money you have to pay anyway then to also waste the extra food.)

Ask your room service waiter if the condiments that are sent are going to be reused, if so, send them back. If not, save left over jelly packets and mini Ketchup bottles to take home with you.

At any restaurant or bar:

Order off the buffet or order the specials of the day, as these represent foods purchased and prepared in bulk.

Ask if Salmon is farm raised. Even if you order farm raised salmon for health purposes, ask the waitperson to mention to the Chef the negative environmental impact of farm-raised Salmon and to consider the wild version next time.

Drink draft beer and carbonated soda from the fountain, versus bottles, which saves a ton of energy and fuel to manufacture and transport all that extra packaging. If you do order a bottled soda, beer, or water, drink it from the bottle vs. wasting a cup.

Drink tap water at restaurants versus bottled water, or if you don't want water tell them not to bring you any, especially in areas experiencing a drought.

When you do have to buy bottled water, buy the local brand (that consequently didn't have to be transported as far.)

Don't take extra napkins, if they are given to you anyway save them for reuse later.

Decline stir sticks when ordering a drink at the bar or even a coffee. Likewise, don't take a lid or straw on your beverage when ordering unless you need to.

If you happen upon a hotel making Green effort, reward them with comment cards and feedback. If you are at a hotel that shows no effort, take a moment to fill out the comment card and let them know this cause is important enough for you to change your future travel buying habits.

Where possible, consume foods that are produced locally and thus require less wasteful transportation to reach you, the consumer.

If your hotel is one of the few that have already implemented a guest recycling program, be sure to not only use it but to thank management for their efforts in person and/or on their comment cards. If recycling is not available in your guest room, mention the lack thereof to the hotel management in person or on your comment card.

Avoid the use of Styrofoam cups and containers whenever possible. Carry and use a re-usable coffee mug, especially if your preferred hotel chain only offers Styrofoam in their rooms. If you have to use Styrofoam, ask the server to refill your cup versus wasting another.

By paying more attention to our own individual actions while we are traveling, us Road Warriors can collectively have a major impact when we all take individual responsibility for the waste we create on the road. Best of all, when we reprogram ourselves to be less wasteful when we travel, these actions will no doubt carry over when we are back home. Oh, and if you have other tips and suggestions please send them to me, as I am compiling a more extensive list that will be posted on my personal blog: <http://ontheroad.kennedytrainingnetwork.com>

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