

Special Advertising Section

GLOBAL BUSINESS TRAVEL

TOP TRENDS IN GREEN TRAVEL Corporate mandates and bold private initiatives rank high on the list

By Joe Mullich

However businesspeople travel — by plane, train, or even by limo — they're giving greater thought to the environmental impact of their journeys and finding new ways to reduce their carbon footprint. "Green is the wild, wild west," says Pat Charla, founder of Limousine Environmental Action Partners (LEAP), an organization that provides green standards for chauffeured vehicles. "It is changing all the time because every day people are coming up with great new ideas." And there are certainly new sheriffs in town, in the form of stricter government regulations, firmer corporate mandates and more public pressure for

sustainable practices. Here are several ways that the sustainability movement is changing business travel around the globe, and in turn, making the globe a greener place.

Green Gets Guidelines

The annual Hotel Association of Canada survey found the number of business travelers who said they were aware of their companies having a "green" accommodation policy that should be used whenever possible doubled over the past year — from 5 percent to 11 percent. This was followed by a new survey of 71 North American and European travel managers by AirPlus International, a global travel payment solutions provider, that found 17 percent of companies have implemented policies controlling the carbon footprint of managed travel — and another 17 percent plan to do so in the coming year. "In their RFPs (Request For Proposal) companies are probing deeper, asking questions about the green initiatives of their supplier's suppliers," says Kimberly Wilson Wetty, co-president of Valerie Wilson Travel in New York. "On a day-to-day basis, businesses really want to do business with people who are creating a greener and healthier environment."

Rewarding Eco-Behavior

"A lot of hotels are doing little twists on the idea of rewarding guests for green behavior," says Patricia Griffin, founder and president of the Green Hotels Association. "I know of one hotel that reimburses guests for the fare if they take mass transportation to the hotel and then lends them a bicycle during their stay." Perhaps the most extreme step was taken by one Danish hotel — it offered guests a \$36 meal voucher if they rode an exercise bike for 15 minutes, which generated electricity for the building.

Eat Your Greens

A new *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* survey of 383 Taiwan residents found that over 90 percent were willing to pay more for menu items produced by sustainable restaurant practices, sentiments that were similar to those the researchers found among U.S. residents (though the study points out that sustainable practices are not necessarily more expensive). Business travelers can also find restaurants that cater to their desire

for eco-friendly grub: A new Australian-based restaurant chain, Otarian, which has eateries in New York and London, bills itself as "the first ever low-carbon restaurant chain." The menu lists the carbon-impact of every item, similar to how many restaurants now list calories and grams of fat.

Sustainable Hotels Bring More Smiles

An analysis of Travelocity website's user reviews

found that 94 percent of green hotels got at least three smiley faces (out of a possible five) compared to only 84 percent of non-green hotels. Industry observers believe one reason is that green hotels often turn the lower energy costs into extra amenities. "All of our landscaping, while lush, is water efficient. We purposely selected landscaping that requires minimal water," says the director of sales and marketing at Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel & Casino, Jeremy Marquard. "We have a Green Committee, which meets monthly to discuss our sus-

tainability and seek ways to increase our efforts in the operation."

"Stealth" Green Phones

A study by ABI Research found that 40 percent of consumers would prefer to have green cellphones — as long as they don't cost more and provide the same functionality. The biggest challenge, says ABI analyst Michael Morgan, is determining whether a cellphone is green. "It's not simply a matter of whether the materials the cellphone is made of are recyclable, but whether green practices are followed along the entire supply chain and life cycle for those components," he says. Because of this challenge, many phone companies are introducing "stealth" green phones — phones that have green elements, like recycled materials or non-toxic paint, but aren't promoted as green. In Morgan's view, the biggest advance in green won't be how phones are made but the new initiatives to encourage people to recycle their phones.

Recycling Saves Lives

You probably never gave any thought to those little slivers of soap you left behind in your hotel room on your last business trip. But a non-profit organization called Clean the World found a way to keep them out of landfills — and use them to reduce deadly diseases worldwide. The discarded soap and shampoo products are recycled and given to homeless shelters as well as impoverished people around the globe. Last year, the organization distributed more than 230 tons of hygiene products to countries including Haiti, El Salvador, Swaziland, Mongolia and Romania. Hand washing with soap significantly reduces the impact of acute respiratory infection and diarrheal disease, which kill 5 million people a year, mostly children under 5-years old.

Latest in Limos

Limousines may not be the first thing to come to mind when you think of environmentally-friendly transportation, but that may soon change. In June, Green Globe International, which operates green certification programs in 83 countries, added the Limousine Environmental Action Partners (LEAP) certification to its portfolio. Developed three years ago, the LEAP standard has been embraced by a growing number of limo companies around the United States and is now drawing interest in Europe. LEAP founder Pat Charla says these European limo firms have been operating in the green for decades, but they want the certification to attract the attention — and business — of traveling U.S. businesspeople. Green limousine companies have also sprouted in Australia, which, as Charla notes, has lagged behind Europe in embracing green initiatives.

"Zero" Is the New Black

After years of efforts, companies are beginning to reach the lofty goal of completely offsetting the environmental impact of their travel. A.T. Kearney, the global consulting firm, announced that it has become carbon neutral — zero impact — across all its operations by developing advanced tools to calculate carbon emissions from airline, hotel, car, rail, public transportation and taxi use. "We go down to the unit, employee and project level," says Margaret Hansen, A.T. Kearney's director of corporate travel.



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