

Accommodations

By its very nature, the accommodations sector has a significant carbon footprint. But whether you operate a hotel, bed and breakfast, rustic resort or campground, you have myriad opportunities to make a difference by carefully considering your energy, water, waste, transportation and purchasing decisions. For a quick and easy impact, focus on water-conservation measures. To reduce your emissions while realizing financial benefits, consider upgrades to your lighting, heating, cooling and hot water.

Quick Start



To get your house in order, begin by making a commitment to sustainability and sharing your goal with staff and guests. A clear vision will help you pursue actions that are the right fit for your enterprise. For an example of this, check out [Canadian Mountain Holidays](#).

Case Study: The Guilt-Free Getaway

British Columbia's Sooke Harbour House is saving Earth while saving the owners thousands of dollars in operating expenses. How? The oceanside inn offers an entirely edible, organic and seasonal garden that produces gourmet delicacies while simultaneously saving 10% on kitchen expenses. The owners collect and filter "grey water" from showers and sinks before piping it into the landscape. These and other efficiencies help improve [Sooke Harbour House](#)'s bottom line. Most important, guests continue to return because they value the establishment's luxury accommodations and sustainable practices.

Water

Water is a precious and business-critical resource. Use it wisely, and choose high-efficiency fixtures with care; your guests will expect at least the same level of comfort that they enjoy at home.

- ◆ Fix leaks!
- ◆ Install low-flow showerheads and aerators on all faucets.

Save on Every Drop

A leaking tap will waste up to 200,000 L of water a year. The average cost of water across Canada is 12.5¢ per 100 L. It will cost you about \$5 to install a new washer in that faucet. That translates into savings of \$250 per year.

Switch to a high-quality, low-flow showerhead. Save 115 to 190 L of hot water per day and \$52 to \$87 per year, excluding heating costs.

Build a Dam

Commercial plastic toilet dams are extremely cheap and can save water in reservoir toilets. Don't want to pay a cent? Use an empty plastic pop bottle, fill it with water or sand, and place it inside the toilet tank. Voila! You save up to 18,000 L of water per toilet per year.

- ◆ If replacing toilets, specify low-flow or dual-flush models.

No More Dirty Laundry

Your property may have already implemented a towel and linen reuse program that invites your guests to reduce their own hospitality footprint. If you haven't implemented such a program yet, you may wish to consider doing so for the cost savings alone. Once your program is in place, make sure that your staff is well trained and that the program is consistently applied to avoid the perception of "greenwashing."

- ◆ If guests are staying for three days or more, change their linens every three days.

What's Working

Daily laundering uses large quantities of water, chemicals and electricity. It also adds a great deal of wear and tear to the towels and linens along with slowing down housekeeping staff. A towel and linen reuse policy saves approximately \$1.50 per day per room. In a hotel of 50 rooms, that translates into annual cost savings of \$27,375.

- ◆ Consider a shorter washing cycle to reduce labour costs, energy and water use.
- ◆ Specify natural, biodegradable, dye-free laundry detergents and fabric softeners-and communicate this "back of house" policy to your guests.
- ◆ Opt for alternatives to disposable dryer sheets such as anti-static dryer balls or cloths.

Alternative Transportation

Invite your guests on a vehicle-free vacation. While accessibility varies widely in rural and urban destinations, you can promote sustainable transportation options.

- ◆ Offer your guests complimentary loaner bicycles to enjoy during their stay.
- ◆ Encourage guests to explore your district on foot with reusable local maps annotated with attractions and points of interest.
- ◆ Promote public transit as an alternative to the stress and hassle of parking and driving in an unfamiliar setting. Keep transit information on hand, including route maps, timetables and fares.

Housekeeping

- ◆ Steer clear of chemical disinfectants and bleach-based cleaners that are harmful to fish and wildlife. Use inexpensive solutions made with baking soda, vinegar or other natural ingredients, or specify commercially available non-toxic alternatives.

Try This!

If you are buying chemical cleaners, your money is going down the drain. There are cheaper and less harmful alternatives. Here are a few recipes for basic cleaners.

All-purpose cleaner: Mix vinegar, salt and four tbsp. baking soda in one L warm water.

Toilet cleaner: Brush with baking soda and vinegar, or borax, to disinfect.

Window cleaner: Add one tbsp. vinegar or lemon juice to one L water; wipe with newspapers.

Recycling and Composting

- ◆ To reduce the cost and impacts of waste, place a "blue box" in each guest room.

Try This!

Add a card in each guest room explaining how recycling makes a positive impact on the environment. You might adapt some form of this sample wording:

We thank you for choosing to stay with _____. Please join us in our commitment to a clean environment by placing all newspaper, glass, aluminum and cardboard in the blue box provided. Thank you in advance for being part of the solution.

- ◆ Consider composting your kitchen scraps. Check to see if a commercial organic-waste pickup service operates in your community.

Case Study: Turning "Waste" Into Food

The [Fairmont Royal York](#)-Canada's largest hotel kitchen-generates more than 1,000 kg of food waste daily. Instead of dumping its food scraps, the property composts coffee grounds and vegetable waste for use in a rooftop herb garden. The remaining organic waste is collected daily from the hotel by Turtle Island Recycling and converted into fertilizer. Employing a similar process, The Fairmont Hotel Vancouver cut its landfill waste in half and now saves \$11,112 a year.

Promote the Local Economy

Explore producers, suppliers and expertise in your own community.

- ◆ When possible, seek out locally produced foods rather than products that have travelled long distances.
- ◆ Partner with local businesses and encourage your guests to support them.
- ◆ Showcase the work of local artists in guest common areas.

Case Study: The Ultra-Local Experience

The [Grizzly Bear Ranch](#), a wilderness retreat in the Selkirk Range of the Canadian Rockies, sources as much local and regional food and drink as possible. According to the owners, about 85% of the property's food and beverage needs is either grown or produced in British Columbia.

The ranch has integrated another local company, [Kaslo Kayaking](#), into its guest programs. Plus all paid staff and service providers are sourced as close to the property as possible: the owners sub-contract a local grizzly-bear expert to guide interpretative walks for guests and look to the six families living in their remote area for individuals with skills in carpentry, mechanics and other trades.

- ◆ Feature local and handmade crafts, soaps, candies, baked goods and similar gifts.

Green Your Garden

- ◆ With a \$90 rain barrel, you can reduce water consumption by collecting rainwater to irrigate landscaped areas.
- ◆ Native plants require little water once established, and preserve biodiversity and the authenticity of your region.
- ◆ Use [organic lawn-care methods](#) instead of chemical fertilizers.

Just Keep Swimming

- ◆ Consider replacing chlorine-based pool sanitation systems with greener alternatives, such as a baking soda and rock-salt solution.
- ◆ Cover outdoor pools at the end of the day to minimize heat loss.

Camping Out

- ◆ Create a welcoming environment for tenting—a low-impact alternative to trailer camping. Consider a walk-in tenting area in a highly desirable camping location.
- ◆ Offer walking and cycling paths that connect different sections of the campground with popular destinations, such as beaches, shower/washroom facilities, campground store, marina, etc.
- ◆ Source your firewood from deadfall, blowdown and trees felled for site clearing and trail building.
- ◆ Offer guided walks or partner with non-profit groups to provide education on local flora and fauna, particularly on sensitive species or habitats. For example, check out [Friends of Riding Mountain National Park](#).
- ◆ Use native plants, trees and shrubs for shade and noise shelter. Plants are great insulators that can help moderate cooling and heating for different times of day. To find which species are native to your area of Canada, check out the [Evergreen Native Plant Database](#).