

Responsible hospitality in SA: How hotels can incorporate sustainability

By [Clinton Thom](#)

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Sustainability is a growing priority for almost every industry on the planet right now and hospitality is no exception. That's hardly surprising. Apart from a desire to act as good corporate citizens, it's also something that the industry's customers increasingly demand. In fact, a 2021 study found that 81% of travellers planned on choosing sustainable accommodation in the next year.



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It's not just travellers either. Investors in the hospitality sector also increasingly demand sustainability. That much should be obvious from the uptake of green bonds issued by some of the world's biggest hotel companies. It's a phenomenon which fits in with a broader investor focus on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues. A Bloomberg study found that there are currently \$37.8t in assets under management by funds with a focus on sustainability.

Perhaps most importantly, however, the industry needs to play whatever role it can in operating more sustainably. The sector is, after all, responsible for around 1% of global emissions and must cut its emissions by 66% by 2030 and 90% by 2050 to stay within the goals set out in the Paris Climate Agreement.

Knowing all that, how can hotels incorporate sustainability into their day-to-day operations and beyond?

Small changes make a big impact

When it comes to making sustainability-driven changes from an operational perspective, small changes can make a big difference.

For instance, simply measuring energy and water usage as well as waste can give hotel managers and operators a baseline from which they can start making improvements. Those improvements frequently don't require major retrofits either.

A good example of this is water usage. The Radisson Hotel Group, for example, has, for a number of years now, asked hotel guests to reuse their towels. For each set of towels that's reused, 15 litres of water are saved. That might not seem like much, but for a hotel like the Radisson Blu Hotel Waterfront with 177 rooms operating throughout the year, it can quickly add up. Similar gains can be made by improving energy efficiency and reducing waste and single-use plastics wherever possible.

Taken together, such changes can result in hotels operating in a much more sustainable manner without compromising (and in some cases even improving) the overall guest experience.

Building out sustainability beyond the hotel grounds

Of course, sustainability doesn't start and end at the entrance to the hotel grounds. It also has to extend to the broader world outside the hotel. It's therefore important that hotels work with organisations that are making a difference on the ground in the towns and cities in which they operate.

This could also involve partnering with local city and governmental institutions that are working to alleviate the effects of poverty, for example. Hotel teams should reach out to City Managers to seek out the initiatives that are in need of support.

It's also important to remember that sustainability is about more than just the environment. People play an important role too. "That's why we've partnered with the Cape Town City Improvement District (CCID) and Hope for the Homeless organisation to provide warm blankets to Cape Town's unhoused community, ahead of the cold winter season," says Radisson Blu Hotel Waterfront Training Manager, Porche Benjamin.

Radisson Group hotels in the city including Radisson Blu Hotel Waterfront, Radisson Blu Hotel & Residence, Park Inn Foreshore and Radisson RED V&A Cape Town, for example, will each have a box on display in their lobby area in order to get as many blanket donations from guests and staff as possible.

This shows that hotels aren't just able to drive sustainability through their own actions but can also help their guests participate in sustainability initiatives in the destinations they visit.

Focusing on our collective future

Ultimately, while there are numerous incentives for hotels to focus on sustainability, the most important thing to remember is that such a focus may be critical to a future where hotels, the people in the surrounding communities, and the surrounding environment can all thrive.

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