

# WHAT EXACTLY ARE SUSTAINABLE HOTELS?

A sustainable hotel respects the environment and the surroundings in which it is located, is built with natural materials, has efficient lighting systems, generates its own energy, and contributes to the local economy by consuming local products and services. **If it meets these characteristics, we can affirm that it is a faithful example within the category of sustainable hotels.**

Other establishments that also fall into this classification are accommodations that, even though they were not originally designed with these purposes in mind, are adopting appropriate measures to comply with sustainability regulations.

What requirements must hotels meet to be considered sustainable?

The best way to show an interest in sustainability is to make guests aware of the importance of caring for the environment, through the promotion of waste separation, control of electricity and water consumption, among others. As for energy, it should be primarily of solar origin: from the implementation of photovoltaic panels to obtain electricity, and thermal panels to supply hot water. Regarding the building, the rooms should be oriented towards the north to provide them with freshness and the common rooms towards the south to provide them with more luminosity. They must also comply with bioclimatic construction standards, which seek to reduce heating and air conditioning consumption as much as possible. The cleaning products used in the hotel for sheets, towels, bathrooms, floors, and the like should be eco-friendly, 100% biodegradable and concentrated to minimize the damage caused by the use of chemicals in the water. The fact of applying concentrated products implies a reduction of the carbon footprint. The hotel must not pollute the area in which it is located and must respect the tradition of the environment, as well as the culture and biodiversity. Contribute to the development of the community by supporting, for example, local businesses in order to promote organic, seasonal food and products grown by local residents.

Staying in sustainable hotels has become a new vacation model and has been so booming that the United Nations General Assembly designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of the UNWTO at the time, commented in this regard that "it is a unique opportunity to expand the contribution of the tourism sector to the three pillars of sustainability: economic, social and environmental, as well as to raise awareness of the true dimensions of a sector that is often undervalued."

This way of traveling is also known as sustainable tourism, which the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines as tourism that "takes full account of current and future economic, social and environmental impacts to meet the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities".

According to UNWTO figures, tourism is responsible for 5% of global carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. Of this percentage, the carbon footprint of hotel establishments accounts for 20% of the total, including heating and air conditioning, refrigeration of bars, restaurants, and air conditioning of swimming pools.

And that is precisely what sustainable hotels try to fight so that their existence has as little impact on the world as possible. This is a great advantage for them when it comes to attracting the

attention of potential customers.

**Surveys of hotel guests show that they perceive sustainability positively.** All references containing sustainability attributes tend to score higher than other ratings. The indicators most frequently found in guest reviews are biodiversity and sustainable products.

Therefore, a hotel's commitment to one or more of the points mentioned throughout the article is evidence of its willingness to manage its surroundings and the environment in a more respectful way.

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