



SAN FRANCISCO GOES GREEN

From the boutiques to the big brands, hotels across San Francisco are taking sustainability increasingly seriously, finds **Terri Peters**.

As you might expect from a city long associated with the hippy movement, San Francisco is streets ahead of most other US cities in its approach to sustainability. 'Green' buildings, recycled materials and local and organic practices are plentiful. The city's taxis are Toyota Prius hybrids, there is a city-wide ban on plastic bags, and recently San Fran's largest convention centre was fitted with solar panels.

Whilst government is imposing sustainability through tighter building regulations and local directives, there is also increasing demand for sustainable goods and services from visitors who are choosing environmentally friendly transportation, conference facilities, and hotels. "San Francisco is at the cutting edge of the environmental movement," according to Joe D'Alessandro, President and CEO of the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau. "It's really part of the city's personality."

Green tourism may be on the increase, but like all US cities, San Francisco is suffering from falling occupancy levels and room rates due to the recession. According to research on the SFCVB website from PKF Consulting, in February 2009, the occupancy rate for hotels in San Francisco was only 57.6% (with an average price paid \$153.03), compared with 73.9% (and \$192.56) in February 2008. This is bad news for a city with tourism as its largest industry.

Nevertheless San Francisco's laid back attitude, vibrant mix of cultures and stunning natural resources will continue to attract people to the city – around 16 million visitors each year, generating around \$8 billion for the local economy according to SFCVB.

Boutique hotels are part of the city's charm, with recent expansion into the SoMa (South of Market Street) district. Here there have been several exciting new offerings such as the Good Hotel. With a focus on social sustainability and philanthropy, the Good Hotel is a unique property, with a local vibe. It shares its 'green' philosophy with its sister Joie de Vivre property, the Hotel Carlton, the city's first hotel with solar panels. Herve Blondel, General Manager of the new Good Hotel and former GM of the Hotel Carlton, says "It [green] may be a big word but if you look at San Francisco, we don't have landfill and the goal by 2020 or earlier is not to send any trash outside the city. Everything will have to be recycled." In fact, JdV plans to make all their properties LEED® certified by 2010.

It's not just independent hoteliers such as Joie de Vivre who are taking sustainability seriously in San Francisco. The InterContinental San Francisco, which opened in February 2008, has also announced plans to achieve LEED® certification by early 2010. Working in conjunction with the U.S. Green Building Council, the hotel is applying for certification in the "existing build operations and maintenance" category (EBOM) and will be evaluated on every facet of the property from construction and design elements to the types of amenities used in hotel guestrooms. "From working with local organic and sustainable farmers at our restaurant Luce, to our comprehensive recycling program throughout the property, we are constantly striving to run our business as efficiently and responsibly as possible for both our guests and our community," says General Manager Peter Koehler.

HOTEL FRANK SAN FRANCISCO



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF PERSONALITY HOTELS

Thomas Schoos has redesigned San Francisco's Maxwell Hotel as Hotel Frank, using bold graphic prints contrasted with rich textures and fabrics.

The transformation of Personality Hotels' historic hotel in Union Square, San Francisco is complete, with the final stages of the ambitious \$10 million renovation project finished in March 2009. The hotel, built in 1908 and until last year known as The Maxwell, has been completely renovated with designs by celebrity interior designer Thomas Schoos. Schoos' key concepts are bold, graphic prints and luxurious interiors with rich textures and fabrics. Located next to San Francisco Westin Hotel, a city landmark that is currently undergoing its own \$40 million renovation, the Frank offers 153 guestrooms in arguably the city's most sought after tourist neighbourhood.

Schoos is known for his plush, glamorous interiors at restaurants such as Table 8 and Tao in Los Angeles. With Frank, he doesn't disappoint. From the outside, there is little evidence of Schoos' bold transformation of the hotel, but when guests step into a stylish, laidback lobby area with textured sofas covered in crocodile print vinyl and bold monochrome custom carpeting, the classic, distinctive look embodies the intent of the new Frank. "The clean and modern look of houndstooth has withstood the test of time, and continues to re-emerge in fashion and design which meshed well with the simple, yet distinctive, concept envisioned for the hotel," says Schoos. In the large guestrooms, the houndstooth carpeting

creates a bold and graphic backdrop. Soft emerald-green furnishings, such as the elongated headboards and the sheer green curtains, add an accent colour. The rooms are minimal and flexible, allowing guests to sleep, entertain, work and relax in a luxurious environment. Sofas covered in the same signature green or white leather furnish the rooms, creating areas to lounge and relax. Schoos has designed a two-sided, flatscreen TV / mirror rotating on a central pole which inventively divides the room. The renovation included new additional soundproofing in the walls enabling the historic building to perform to modern expectations. Standard room amenities include complimentary high speed wireless throughout the



hotel (surprisingly a rarity in San Francisco) a pillow bar (guests might not even have known they needed one), 32 inch flatscreen televisions, and iPod docking stations. On the walls, vintage 1930's artwork is displayed in teak frames. Schoos explains: "Each photograph is off-centre and cut at an atypical angle, literally representing fragments of San Francisco's past."

The two penthouse suites have been radically renovated, with roof decks affording skyline views of the city, and large areas for entertaining. Rooms have been swapped around, walls moved and removed to create an open plan feeling that is also cosy and inviting. The Skyline Loft features space for entertaining, dining and a large roof deck. Like a more extreme version of the other rooms at Frank, the penthouses are opulent and spacious, decorated with original art and glass sculptures. Schoos has retained selected original features such as the grey

stone fireplace for cosy winter evenings. The more private areas are just as theatrical, with an enormous walk in shower, and a bathtub on a marble pedestal in the corner of the bedroom. The Urban Loft also has luxurious open spaces for dining and lounging and the living room provides an additional sleeping area if required with a pull out sofa. A low wall with quilted green headboard divides the bedroom and bathroom areas allowing an open plan layout. There is plentiful natural light throughout, with a new skylight in the bathroom over an enormous stand-alone tub. There are two large terraces, with rooftop views of the city, the second, made totally private by the slightly unsettling adjacency of a ten storey high blank concrete wall that is the back of the Westin St Francis. In the heart of the city, Personality Hotels has recycled a charming historic hotel into a fashion-forward, luxurious boutique hotel proving newness isn't everything – Frank has soul.

EXPRESS CHECKOUT

HOTEL FRANK
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↗ 153 guestrooms
+ Penthouse Lofts & 'F' Room
meeting room, opening soon