



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.

WORDS BY TERRI PETERS

GOOD HOTEL SAN FRANCISCO

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF JOIE DE VIVRE HOTELS



San Francisco's Good Hotel has taken an environmentally-conscious approach to its design and operation using recycled materials, sustainably sourced amenities, and community driven initiatives.

Even a hardened design hotel cynic can't help but be impressed by the noble intentions of San Francisco's new Good Hotel, designed as "the first hotel with a conscience". Opened in November 2008 in an up-and-coming part of trendy SoMa (South of Market Street) it sits in the shadow of the award-winning Federal Building, the city's new urban emblem of green building. The Good Hotel caters to the needs of both design-conscious and eco-conscious visitors to the city. The hotel is quickly becoming a design destination, with large minimal and modern rooms, locally designed beds made using reclaimed timber, quirky custom art, and customised vintage and recycled

textiles. Good Hotel employs a free 'philanthropy concierge' who is on hand to advise guests on opportunities to volunteer locally. In partnership with One Brick, a local non-profit organisation, options vary from volunteer gardening at a local park to distributing food at the San Francisco food bank. The Good Hotel is the newest of the forty hotels, restaurants, and spas in the Joie De Vivre Hotels group (JdV), America's second largest boutique hotel collection. There are 16 JdV hotels in the city, and each is inspired by CEO Chip Conley's vision of designing a theme (and often a cult following) using five key words and a magazine. His first hotel, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, is

the hugely popular Rolling Stone-inspired Phoenix Hotel (the five words being: funky, young-at-heart, adventurous, irreverent and hip). Another successful property is the Dwell-inspired Hotel Vitale (urbane, revitalising, modern, fresh, nurturing). Conley calls this method "making an emotional connection with guests by catering to a psychographic rather than a demographic profile". Guests can use the matchmaker service on the JdV website to allow them to select a hotel they believe suits their personality. Good Hotel is inspired by local magazine Ready Made, and the descriptors are hip, happy, humble, conscious and inventive. Good Hotel, formerly known as the Hotel Briton, is



OPPOSITE PAGE (LEFT) The lobby design features fresh bright colours and Apple Macs for guests' use (MIDDLE) Beds are constructed from locally reclaimed wood (RIGHT) Guests are encouraged to recycle THIS PAGE (LEFT): Each room has a custom wall sculpture with an image of local scenery (MIDDLE) 'One Laptop Per Child' netbooks can be borrowed during a stay (RIGHT) Guests can also post passport photos on a noticeboard

a 117-room hotel comprised of two buildings, with 79 rooms in the main five-storey building facing the street, and 38 in a two-storey, retro motel-style building where each room has its own exterior door. The rooms are quiet, with new double-glazing and the opening windows (a rarity in new hotels) allow guests fresh air. The stylish patterned carpet is made of recycled materials and the blankets are made of recycled soda bottles but everything looks minimal and modern, not overtly 'green'. Each room features a custom wall sculpture that shows an image of local scenery, such as Chinatown or Delores Park, and these are actually photographs scanned onto vertical blinds that can be turned to change the scene. The light

fixtures are chandeliers made from recycled glass Voss water bottles and rooms are stocked with books from charity shops, typically handpicked local fiction or travel books.

The bathrooms are unusual incorporating a toilet top sink called "Sink Positive", from Japan which admittedly looks a bit odd but actually saves a gallon of potable water every day. Users wash their hands in clean water and the used water drains through the tank to refill the toilet bowl for the next flush. The hotel uses local "Lather" brand soaps and shampoos, which are PETA-approved and use all natural ingredients.

In-room technologies include all the expected

essentials for business travellers including gleaming white Mac screens in the lobby and free wireless Internet throughout the hotel, which is surprisingly rare in the city. iPod docking stations and flatscreen TVs are standard in all rooms. But it's the unexpected touches that set it apart. Not many hotels offer complimentary parking for hybrid cars, (in a city with extortionate parking), a bike borrowing scheme for guests with local non-profit Pedal Revolution, or locally-designed 'One Laptop Per Child' PCs to borrow during a stay. But then, the Good Hotel goes out of its way to be extraordinary.

And the risk taking seems to be paying off. While at first glance the lobby looks less like a design hotel



ABOVE LEFT: Packaging free, environmentally-friendly toiletries are dispensed in the bathrooms
ABOVE MIDDLE Lights in the guestrooms are made from recycled Voss water bottles
ABOVE RIGHT: Quirky cuckoo clocks are used in place of the usual wallclocks in reception

and more like an upscale Youth Hostel, with the bright colors, table constructed from a skateboard and a bench made of felt blankets, it seems Good Hotel knows their market and is catering to a loyal and important new kind of traveller – the creative business or holiday traveller with an awareness of environmental sustainability. It's no coincidence charismatic General Manager Herve Blondel comes to Good Hotel as the former manager of another JdV property, the Carlton, the first and only hotel in the city to have solar panels installed on the roof and to be certified carbon neutral. Good Hotel is an enjoyable place to stay, even inspiring – because it makes people feel good about giving back to the community, and in choosing "green" options and using less resources. Whether guests have a chance to use all of the "good" resources at their disposal or not, the fact is that these options are presented to them, and guests can

feel as though they are getting added value through added options. The Good Hotel has recently been voted second in a poll to find the best place to work in the Bay Area, and Sales Manager Emily Oestreicher credits this to the generous perks for all employees such as multiple free stays in JdV hotels and passes to the JdV Kabuki Day Spa. The staff are highly motivated and enthusiastic about what they do, because they love their workplace. Training is also provided with JdV University offering classes ranging from wine tasting to Excel spreadsheet training. Good Hotel is the hotel the San Francisco has been waiting for to prove that social and environmental sustainability can work together and that this can create desirable and designer "green" features. The result is a unique offering and broader understanding of hospitality, in a city well known for its open minded, and ecological approach.

EXPRESS CHECKOUT

GOOD HOTEL
112 7th Street, San Francisco,
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Tel: +1 415 621 7001
www.jdvhotels.com/hotels/good

- ➡ 117 guestrooms
- 🍕 Good Pizza
- 🌳 Access to outdoor, heated pool located across the street