



A Quick Guide For Hotels

HOW TO EASILY COMPLY WITH THE GREAT LAKES FRIENDLY HOTELS CRITERIA



Mandatory Criteria

FOLLOW ALL 7!

- 1. No plastic beverage bottles or plastic bags are sold or used onsite.** Plastic bottles and plastic bags are among the top items collected at trash cleanups. If individual containers are needed, glass bottles and aluminum cans are both more Great Lakes Friendly options. Many water and soda brands now offer aluminum alternatives that are affordable. If you need to provide a bag to customers, please make it paper or encourage customers to bring their own!
- 2. No expanded polystyrene is used anywhere onsite (aka Styrofoam).** EPS (aka Styrofoam) is an inexpensive form of plastic typically used in disposable products such as cups, plates, and clamshells. It is commonly found during beach cleanups and negatively impacts marine life and ecosystems as a whole. We recommend using paper-based or aluminum alternatives for take-out. Filling reusable items should be encouraged when possible, which will also lead to greater cost savings. Avoid bioplastic options touted as compostable.



- 3. Toiletries (shampoo, conditioner, shower gel, lotion, etc.) are not packaged in small plastic bottles.** Millions of small shampoo, conditioner, and lotion bottles are tossed in the trash at hotels every year. Some states have even passed policies banning these small bottles. To help reduce single-use plastic pollution and save money, use reusable shampoo, conditioner, and lotion bottles. They can be mounted on the shower wall or they can be placed on bathroom countertops. If single-use is necessary, bar soap packaged in paper is a more Great Lakes Friendly alternative.
- 4. Cups, utensils, straws, and other accessory items in rooms are reusable or made from naturally occurring materials and are not packaged in plastic.** Not all hotel guests need disposable accessory items in their room. Instead of handing single-use foodware items packaged in plastic, provide reusable silverware or glass cups. This will reduce the use of disposable items, elevate guest experience, and save you money. If single-use is needed, provide wood, paper, or bamboo utensils, straws, or other accessory items for those that need them. Make sure they aren't packaged in plastic! Bioplastics are not acceptable alternatives.
- 5. Water refill stations are available for guests onsite.** Reusable items are growing in popularity among eco-conscious guests and make the biggest impact for a clean beach and ocean by tackling pollution through source reduction. By offering water refill stations to guests, you are encouraging Great Lakes Friendly behavior. Depending on the size of your hotel, you can offer refill stations on every floor or you can simply place a glass jug full of water in the lobby for guests to use. Take this criteria a step further by offering reusable water bottles to guests upon arrival.

6. If your hotel has a restaurant or cafe, make sure they are a registered Great Lakes Friendly Restaurant (GLFR).

Surfrider's GLFR program recognizes restaurants that are committed to cutting out single-use plastic and offers a simple, straightforward framework to help them make sustainable choices for our ocean. It is important to note that even though the GLFR Program permits plastic for takeout only, the GLFH program does not allow single-use plastic cups to be used in waterfront or beach bars. Visit the [OFR webpage](https://www.surfrider.org/OFR) for requirements.

7. Proper solid waste recycling procedures are followed and bins are amply provided for guest use.

Proper recycling can help divert waste from the landfill to live a second life as something new. If you sell or serve any plastic, aluminum cans, or glass, please provide recycling containers that are easily visible for customers. Ensure that cardboard and any other delivery packaging are also recycled. Most cities and states have recycling mandates so please check with your municipality and/or waste hauler for local requirements.



Optional Criteria

CHOOSE AT LEAST 3!

1. Coffee and tea stations do not use single-use pods or plastic packaging in rooms. Not all guests make coffee in their room. For guests that do, choose to provide coffee makers that don't require single-use disposable packaging or pods. Provide a drip coffee maker or french press with coffee grounds or loose leaf tea packaged in paper or aluminum. If you must use machines that require coffee pods, make sure they are the kind that can be reused. Take this criteria a step further by offering complimentary coffee in the lobby and urge guests to use their own coffee cup.

2. Concessions and pre-packaged food items are not sold or distributed in plastic packaging, including in room mini bars. This includes any food sold or displayed that is pre-wrapped in plastic such as chips, candy, sandwiches, or grab-and-go snacks. While these items might be convenient, the amount of plastic quickly adds up. Food packaging pollution is on the rise and is now one of the top items found at cleanups. Instead, look for packaging that is paper or aluminum, or try setting up bulk bins for concessions with paper bags or reusable containers. You can also avoid pre-packaging foods by displaying them un-wrapped in a case. When customers order, place these items into paper, aluminum or reusable containers. Rather than selling bags of chips, try making your own and offering them in paper bags. There are so many ways to get creative, reduce your plastic use, and enhance customer experience.



3. Room keys are reusable or made from naturally occurring materials. Replacing single-use plastic key cards with reusable keys or those made from naturally occurring materials is an easy way to reduce plastic waste and appeal to eco-conscious guests. Depending on your hotel's capabilities, you could use metal keys that are reusable, switch to cardless entry, or offer keys that are made from bamboo, paper, or hay. If your keys are reusable, make sure there are clear bins in the lobby for guests to return their keys.

4. Energy efficiency efforts are in place. At minimum, rooms must have signage that reminds guests to turn off lights when leaving the rooms. Conserving energy will lower your carbon footprint and help to lessen the impacts of climate change. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNTWO), hotels are some of the most energy-intensive buildings in the world. Thankfully, there are a number of options for energy and cost savings for both equipment and lighting. Examples include, switching to LED lighting, motion sensor lighting, installing solar panels, using Energy Star certified appliances, updating insulation on windows and doors, and providing group shuttles to airports and attractions. At minimum, we ask that hotels include signage that reminds guests to turn off lights when leaving the rooms. This small action will save you money and encourage Great Lakes Friendly behavior.

5. Water conservation and pollution mitigation efforts are implemented. At minimum, rooms must have signage which asks guests to consider using their towels and linens more than once in the rooms. You can conserve water, minimize pollution, and save money by installing low-flow faucets, toilets, washing machines, and dishwashers. Make it a company policy to use a broom, rather than a hose, to clear sidewalks, driveways, loading docks, and parking lots to reduce urban runoff. Outdated septic tanks can also present a potential hazard for wastewater pollution by leaching nitrogen into groundwater supplies and local waterways. Ensure your systems are up-to-date and reflect local standards. At minimum, we ask that hotels include signage that asks guests to consider using their towels and linens more than once. This small action will save you money and encourage Great Lakes Friendly behavior.

6. Onsite gift shops only sell or provide sunscreen that is reef friendly. Chemical sunscreens have been known to negatively impact marine life. This has even led to bans on the sale and use of chemical sunscreens in some states and island communities. Unfortunately the terms “reef friendly” and “reef safe” are not regulated so it’s important to actually check the “active ingredients” label on the back of your sunscreen. Examples of active ingredients to avoid in sunscreen are Oxybenzone, Octinoxate, Nanoparticles or “nano-sized” zinc or titanium, and any form of microplastic, such as “exfoliating beads.” See Surfrider’s [guide](#) for more information.

7. Inspired by Surfrider Kaua’i Chapter’s Ocean Friendly Visitors Program, solo trash cleanup kits are available for guests. Doing a solo beach, city, or lake cleanup is a fun way for guests to protect the environment and contribute to Surfrider’s pollution research. Hotels should provide guests with complimentary “cleanup kits” consisting of a bucket or reusable bag, reusable gloves, and trash grabbers. Go to cleanups.surfrider.org to learn more.

8. Hotel landscaping follows Surfrider’s Ocean Friendly Garden Program criteria or there is an Ocean Friendly Garden onsite. Surfrider’s Ocean Friendly Gardens (OFG) program offers simple and beautiful nature-based solutions to protect clean water and support resilient coasts and communities. Visit the [OFG webpage](#) for requirements. Hotel grounds with golf courses are not eligible for this optional criteria.

9. Outdoor light pollution is minimized. Animals and plants rely on the Earth’s natural light cycle for reproduction, nourishment, sleep, and protection. When buildings such as hotels contribute to light pollution, it can disrupt marine life. Thankfully, there are many ways you can ensure your hotel lighting is Great Lakes Friendly. You can install shielded lights that are warm colored or have lower lumens and mount lights as low as possible. Also consider adding timers or motion sensors to your lighting onsite. See [DarkSky International](#) for resources about light pollution and their [DarkSky Approved programs](#).

