An element that can be taken for granted? Saving water when traveling

Darmstadt, March 1st, 2018 *** 4 Billion people, which is two third of the world population, live under conditions of severe water scarcity for at least one month per year, according to a study from 2016 by Mesfin M. Mekonnen and Arjen Y. Hoekstra. In the Global Risk Report 2018, the World Economic Forum lists the impact of water
crises as one of the largest global risks. Water scarcities like the one in Cape Town demonstrate how important this resource is and how essential it is to manage it in a responsible way. Tourism plays an important role for the saving of water in the affected areas and hotels as well as tourists can make a major contribution to the conservation of this valuable resource.

Saving water – not only in emergency situations

Currently, private households in Cape Town have to keep their daily usage of water under 50 liters per day and person. This is extremely sparse, as a comparison with Germany shows: even though it is considered one of the countries that are quite economical in the usage of water, Germans still use 120 liters per day. Of course, in regions abundant in water, a restriction such as the one in Cape Town is not necessary. Nevertheless, it is important to avoid wasting water unnecessarily – and to develop an awareness of its value. In everyday life, well known tips may help, such as showering instead of taking a bath, not letting the tap run while brushing teeth, buying water saving appliances and only running the washing machine or dish washer with a full load.
What travelers can do

Besides using water more consciously and reusing provided towels, travelers can make a difference by choosing an accommodation that is committed to a responsible water management. In regions where water is scarce, tourists ought to significantly reduce their consumption. In addition to the usual measures, the Cape Town tourism office recommends that travellers flush the toilet as little as possible, go for a swim in the ocean instead of swimming pools and limit showers to fewer than 90 seconds.
Astronaut-showers and rain water cisterns

Hotels can effectively reduce their water consumption by means of relatively simple measures. For example, the Relais del Maro in Liguria uses special tabs with a reduced water jet and takes the water for the pool and the irrigation of the garden from an Artesian well. Creativhotel Luise sets an example with its astronaut-showers by Orbital Systems. Due to a special technology the water is purified and continually reused in a closed loop, so that instead of 120 liters only 5 liters of water are needed for a shower. In combination with a rainwater cistern for flushing the toilets and irrigating the garden, the hotel saves substantial amounts of water. Nevertheless, Ben Förtsch, head of business at Creativhotel Luise, emphazises that in regions abundant in water it is important to find the right measure. Saving too much water can cause problems as
well. For example the pipes and the sewer start to rust or the sewage plant has to add fresh water to keep the concentration of substances dissolved in it on the same level.

A closed cycle

The situation is quite different for the Zeavola Resort on Phi Phi Island in Thailand. Having to provide its own supply of water, the resort takes it from four deep wells. The water is cleaned and partly desalinated using a reverse osmosis plant. Moreover, at the Zeavola Resort the waste water is collected, intensely cleaned and finally returned to nature by using it for the irrigation of the jungle garden – thus, the Resort has a closed water system. Hofgut Hafnerleiten takes care of its own water supply as well: the water comes from a drinking well that is about 90 meters deep. The wastewater at the Hofgut Hafnerleiten is cleaned in an own membrane system to be used for flushing the toilets and irrigating the garden.
A very conscious use of water

Of course, this approach motivates to closely monitor the water consumption. For example, Zeavola recently installed a filter system that cleans laundry water to the point that 40–60 % of it can be reused in the laundry. This system allows the hotel to save 1,460,000 liters of water per year. Additionally, the Zeavola uses rainwater that is collected by means of a gutter system on the roofs for flushing the toilets, and the condensation water produced by the air conditioning system can be reused as well. Florian Hallermann, the Zeavola’s general manager, has many useful tips: for example, an old hotelier’s trick to place one or two bricks into the toilet tank to reduce its filling capacity. By providing specific information he motivates his employees and guests to pay close attention to their water consumption – since they play an important role in the conservation of this precious resource.

The German Green Pearls GmbH with place of business in Darmstadt, Germany unifies international tourism companies that support environmental protection and demonstrate social commitment. Thereby, Green Pearls is the first holding company worldwide that consolidates sustainable hotels, destinations and restaurants in a global data source.

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