Life cycle assessment vs. comfort? 
Guests’ influence on sustainable hotel practices

Darmstadt, September 13th 2018 *** “The guest is king” – a principle providing great comfort for hotel guests. Nevertheless, wishes and demands by guests can impact hotel practices strongly in some cases. The life cycle assessment, in particular, can suffer from guests’ longing for alleged comfort: coffee machines with aluminum capsules, daily towel exchange, and single-packaged hygiene products. Occasionally, the green philosophy of the Green Pearls® hotels collides with guests' preferences. Some partner Green Pearls® partner hotels report how to deal with the challenge of keeping guests’ requests and the sustainable alignment balanced.
No benefits for the environment

In many hotels you can find various environmentally harmful practices. A common example is coffee machines with aluminum capsules. Aluminum is the most energy-intensive metal to be processed and the capsules produce heaps of waste – thus, they are anything but eco-friendly and energy-efficient. Exchanging towels and linens daily is gradually declining – even in hotels that are not explicitly sustainable. A good thing since laundry uses up many resources, and, besides, when the textiles consist of synthetic materials micro fibers detach while washing and pollute the oceans. Minibars such as small refrigerators are energy-wasting and small snack packs, single-wrapped soaps and disposable toothbrushes produce excessive trash. In addition, care products and cleaning detergents often contain liquid or micro plastics.
Alternate ways exist...

Current trends show that guests increasingly demand sustainable actions from hotels and also provide suggestions to the hotel to become (more) eco-friendly. Even though the Green Pearls® hotels are pioneers in terms of sustainability and environmental protection, dedicated guests can be found recurrently. Guests at the hotel SCHWARZWALD PANORAMA are asked to fill in questionnaires about eco-friendly improvements in the hotel. If these are feasible, the hotel does implement them. Due to the guest’s ideas, recycled toilet paper was introduced and plastic straws were banned, among other things.

Consistent for the climate

In the Hotel Speicher am Ziegelsee, guests repeatedly criticize the lack of coffee machines and minibars in the rooms. According to the guests, minibars, in particular, should not be missing at a 4-star hotel. However, the eco-hotel thinks differently: "You must remain consistent," emphasizes the managing director Christian Petersen the hotel’s persistence. The business hotel cannot be misled by guests’ complaints to protect its climate-neutral status. Instead of minibars, a 24-hour room service for drinks is available at the hotel Speicher am Ziegelsee. On the contrary, environmentally conscious vacationers praise and support the hotel’s consistent sustainable philosophy and climate-friendly projects.
Communication as a solution

Communication can prevent dissatisfied guests in many cases. The hotel SCHWARZWALD PANORAMA provides an example: Many environmentally conscious guests used the "Do Not Disturb" sign to signal that neither their room should be cleaned nor the towels be exchanged. Though a good idea, but the room service cleaned those rooms later that day, since the sign does not explicitly concern the room cleaning. Meanwhile, printed lavender bags for the doorknob make it easier to communicate: "No room cleaning today!" Moreover, the Creativhotel Luise applies multi-layered communication during the sustainable renovation to inform its guests and avoid complaints that way: banners outside, information boards in the hotel, gift boxes including letters and small presents as compensation.

Preventing complaints with sustainable services

In the eco-hotel Leilhof in the Dolomites guests have not yet complained about
sustainable initiatives or provided ideas for improvements. However, the hotel always communicates its environmentally conscious goals in person on site to prevent misunderstandings. In addition, all e-mails contain the note to avoid the printout to save paper. Furthermore, guests are also informed about alternative, sustainable services to prevent complaints: instead of a minibar, guests are offered tea and fresh fruits daily, and a shuttle service takes them to the city and the slopes.

Rethinking complaints

Before complaining about something, one might rethink if the demand is inevitable: a coffee machine in the room appears superfluous when it is available at the breakfast buffet. A plentifully covered buffet is a delight for the guest, though it produces lots of leftovers at the same time. If everyone is a bit more humble, it will be a big step for the wellbeing of our environment. The solution is to act more consciously, as recognized by Stephan Bode from the SCHWARZWALD PANORAMA: "We are not only aware of our role as a host, but we have understood that our company is the guest of our host the Earth. Therefore, I see myself less as managing director and owner, but rather interpret my role as guardian of the guest-house SCHWARZWALD PANORAMA."

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® GmbH is the first holding company worldwide that consolidates sustainable hotels, destinations and restaurants in a global data source.

Among the criteria of admission to Green Pearls® GmbH are a sustainability plan on management level, sustainable architecture, comprehensive water, energy saving and waste recovery measures, the use of seasonal and regional ingredients in the kitchen, as well as a large commitment for the social balance in each of the vacation regions.

Please click here for matching images in high resolution. All usage rights for images and photographies belong, unless
otherwise noted, to the hotels concerned and must be quoted.

For more information on Green Pearls® GmbH visit www.greenpearls.com, on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest or the Green Pearls® Blog.

Press Contact:
Green Pearls® GmbH
Dieburger Straße 203
64287 Darmstadt
T: +49 (0) 6151-273 669 0
F: +49 (0) 6151-273 669 19
E: press@greenpearls.com
W: www.greenpearls.com

If you would rather not receive future communications from Green Pearls GmbH, let us know by clicking here.

Green Pearls GmbH, Dieburger Strasse 203 Nebengebäude, Darmstadt, Hessen 64287 Germany