



INTRODUCTION

The travel and tourism industry is changing rapidly. In the past year we have seen major hotel chains like Marriott and IHG make high-profile statements about removing plastic miniatures in guest bathrooms. Others have followed their lead and an increasing number of hotels and resorts are tailoring a 'plastic-free' experience for customers.

In January 2020 the UN launched its Global Tourism Plastics Initiative, strengthening existing calls for action and building on regulation which is finally tightening the net on plastic pollution. In Europe, the EU Single Use Plastics Directive will ban plastic straws and stirrers from 2021. Similar regulation is emerging across the globe from California, which is banning miniature toiletries in hotels with 50+ rooms; to China, where hotels can no longer offer free single-use plastic items from 2025.

Whether it's in the bar or on the beach, the sector is fast realising just how much it depends on our oceans, our beaches and the stunning scenery we so love to visit. We've seen a huge increase in interest from the travel industry and there is consensus throughout the sector that change is necessary – both to meet customer expectation and to protect our shared planet.

As an environmental non-profit, City to Sea campaigns to stop plastic pollution at source and we believe that the hospitality sector can play a crucial role by helping guests connect their actions with the oceans and the natural world. Just like our award-winning campaigns, the travel sector can tackle the single-use plastic items found most commonly on our beaches and in our rivers and oceans, by providing practical, solutions-focused initiatives and advocating reuse over single-use.

We are proud to have a wide range of leading travel and accommodation providers already signed up to our Refill campaign including Premier Inn, YHA, Parkdean Resorts, Heathrow Airport, Transport for London, Network Rail and many more. Together they are making it easier for guests and travelers to top up their reusable water bottle on the move and during their stay – helping us prevent millions of plastic bottles from polluting our beaches every year.

Our wider #PlasticFreeTravel campaign also includes a Plastic Pledge for accommodation providers, backed by the UK's largest hotel chain and Refill supporter Premier Inn. Our Pledge advocates eliminating plastic bottled water and travel minis, switching instead to refill and reuse formats in the guest experience.

But that's not all! As part of #PlasticFreeTravel we want to inspire you to go the extra mile on plastic reduction. That's why we've compiled this guide – to help you identify steps you can take to rethink, refuse, reduce and reuse where possible. We know there is no one-size fits all approach – accommodation providers cater for all tastes, age-groups and budgets, across a whole range of locations from capital cities to remote islands. So, whatever your location or accommodation type, we hope this guide is helpful in your journey towards plastic freedom.

Get in touch to explore how we can work with you and celebrate treading more lightly, every step of the way.

Rebecca Burgess

City to Sea CEO

25 STEPS TO REDUCE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

The **first four of our steps** make up the City to Sea **Plastic Pledge** – so if you're on track to meet them let us know so we can celebrate your successes with the industry and with our supporters on social media. Just get in touch to find out more about how we can shout about the great changes you're making.

1



JOIN THE REFILL REVOLUTION

Sign up your locations to our Refill app which has been downloaded more than 280,000 times, joining over 30,000 Refill Stations offering guests free drinking water. Refill has already saved over 100 million plastic bottles from entering our waste stream. Plastic bottles are the most commonly found single-use plastic item found on Europe's beaches and there are now over **159 plastic bottles** for every mile of beach in the UK. Refill offers you the chance to be part of the solution and for you to let your customers join the #RefillRevolution.

2



DON'T BOTTLE IT!

By taking plastic water bottles out of your bedrooms, vending machines, dining rooms, bars and conference facilities you can not only save money and the environment but also make it easy for your customers to start refilling. This small step is having a big impact with major hotel chains such as Marriott, IHG and Hyatt who no longer provide single-use water bottles to their customers. Drinking from reusable bottles and glasses is by far the best environmental option, so make sure to provide these to guests.

CASE STUDY

Whitbread PLC, owner of Premier Inn hotels and restaurants, announced this year their ambitious target to eliminate unnecessary single-use plastic. Having already signed up to the Refill app and our Plastic Pledge, the Whitbread owned chain was looking to go further to engage their staff. They decided to issue all new starters with a reusable bottle adding to the 6,000 reusable bottles it had already distributed to its operations and support centre staff. Rosana Elias, Head of Sustainability at Whitbread PLC commented on this, saying:

“By offering all staff a reusable bottle we can ensure we're a force for good for our teams, promoting positive behaviour change and reducing single-use plastic waste at work and at home.”



3



THE LAST STRAW!

Straws (along with plastic plates, cutlery, stirrers and other pointless plastic) will soon be banned under the EU's Single-Use Directive, so you're probably working this already. The most environmentally friendly option is to stop using these items altogether (or to offer reusable and sustainable alternatives on request). Most leading hotels are now phasing plastic straws out including Premier Inn, Hilton, Marriott, Hyatt and Accor. Marriott's move alone is expected to prevent 1 billion pieces of plastic from entering our rivers and oceans each year.

CASE STUDY



In 2019, Marriott announced it would be phasing out mini toiletries from 7,000 hotels around the world. This switch alone is expected to save around 500 million mini plastic bottles from washing up on our beaches. Marriott's Chief Executive, Arne Sorenson said **in a statement**.

“Our guests are looking to us to make changes that will create a meaningful difference for the environment while not sacrificing the quality service and experience they expect from our hotels.”

4



GREEN WASHING?

Remove all miniature single-use toiletries and use refillable dispensers. Miniature plastic-bottled toiletries are a major cause of marine pollution. Research estimates that 980 tonnes of mini-plastic shampoo bottles are being dumped by British holidaymakers abroad each year - that's equivalent to two-and-a-half Boeing 747s. This is something your hotel can avoid by offering refillable dispensers in your hotel bathrooms.



5

GO DAY-SIPPING

Encourage guests to download the Refill app so that they can use it when out and about in the city or the local area. We have over 30,000 Refill Stations where they can top up their reusable water bottle in the UK and internationally. Find out more at refillapp.com



6

MAKE AN ENTRANCE

Install a water dispenser in your lobby for guests and the general public. The more you install, the easier it is for guests to Refill and the more plastic bottles you prevent from littering our beaches. We work with some great water dispenser partners who can talk to you about your requirements. To find out more, contact partnerships@citytosea.org.uk



7

KETCHUP!

Make the move to dispensers or reusable containers to stop millions of single-use sachets and portions going straight to landfill or finding their way into our oceans. Premier Inn has announced it will be phasing out the use of sauce sachets where possible and others are already serving them in dispensers or reusables.

8



(PLASTIC) HATS OFF!

We've heard that in order to get a 5* rating, hotels must provide shower caps despite hardly any guests using them. We think it's time this requirement changed, but in the meantime just invest in a small number of good-quality reusable shower caps to be provided on request. And whatever you do, don't wrap them in plastic or unnecessary packaging!

9



SMILE!

By providing plastic-free wooden/bamboo toothbrushes (only on request) you can significantly reduce the amount of single-use plastic used unnecessarily. Starting the day the right way isn't just a reminder to your guests that you take plastic pollution seriously. It might just change their lives and the planet.

As Dan Bennett, Senior Behavioural Strategist at Ogilvy says, picking up his bamboo toothbrush in the morning is **'a reminder to myself to be consistent with pro-planet choices throughout the day.'**

10



PLASTIC-FREE CUPPA?

Help your guests enjoy a plastic-free cuppa by rethinking your tea, coffee and milk provision. Research from Halo (a British producer of compostable coffee capsules) estimates that every minute about 39,000 single-use plastic pods are made worldwide, with 29,000 dumped in landfill sites. Source plastic-free tea and coffee options and replace plastic UHT milk pots/sticks with fresh milk in a reusable flask.

CASE STUDY



Sudima Hotels found that in just one of its hotel's, it could prevent over 100,000 condiment containers going to landfill and polluting the oceans each year. So it quickly switched across its estate, serving spreads and condiments in glass jars so that guests can take as much or as little as they need, without creating a plastic problem. Ifti Hussain, Hotel Manager of Sudima Auckland Airport:

“The change has been seamless and if guests were to ask, we would just explain it helps the environment and most people love that.”

CASE STUDY

Hospitality company The House of Daniel Thwaites (a collection of hotels and spas in England) have introduced filtered water and milk in each corridor preventing 260,000 water bottles and 150,000 milk bottles from entering the waste stream. Chris Hill, Hotels Operations Director, said:

“We are delighted to have found a way of being able to continue to offer fresh milk without the use of plastic bottles. The feedback we have received from our guests has been incredibly positive.”

11



BE A CEREAL REFILLER

Serve cereal and yoghurt in plastic-free portions by purchasing items in bulk and serving them in dispensers or reusable containers at the breakfast buffet. Not only will you save money, you will be giving guests a planet-positive start to the day!

CASE STUDY



A 2019 University of Tasmania study revealed one in five sea birds that consumed balloons died.

“Among the birds we studied the leading cause of death was blockage of the gastrointestinal tract, followed by infections or other complications caused by gastrointestinal obstructions,” said PhD student Lauren Roman, who led the study. “Balloons or balloon fragments were the marine debris most likely to cause mortality.”

In the UK, the Boston Tea Party grabbed the headlines for doing coffee differently. It banned single-use cups preventing over 100,000 of them going to landfill and instead offered customers a choice of three reusable cup options: bring your own, buy one in store or loan one for a small fully-refundable deposit. BTP brand director Anita Atkins said:

“The feeling in our cafes is very different in the morning. Far from being a routine on the way to work, customers are now happy about their morning coffee, doing something good for the planet and giving to a local charity, all before the day begins!”

12



NOT A PRETTY SIGHT

Most decorations like balloons, tinsel and baubles can't be recycled. They may look pretty for a couple of weeks, but they soon turn ugly when littering our seas and coastlines. 31,000 balloons are found on US beaches every year and even those made from 'biodegradable' latex can take up to 6 years to degrade – which is plenty of time for marine animals to ingest them. Choose truly sustainable, natural and reusable decorations and let your guests know why.

13



REFILL MORE

Provide take-away hot drinks or food to guests in plastic-free or reusable containers not single-use plastic cups/tubs. Only 1 in 400 (0.25%) of the estimated 2.5 billion plastic coated coffee cups used in the UK each year are recycled. 4%, approximately 500,000, are littered every day. The rest (95.75%) go into landfill. Many compostable alternatives also end up in landfill as there aren't enough accessible facilities to compost them.

CASE STUDY



14



YOU'VE GOT THE KEY

Just like starting the day with a bamboo toothbrush, guests are likely to remember starting their stay with a plastic-free key card. Companies are now starting to offer FSC sustainable wooden key cards that are compatible with existing systems. Some hotels are moving to mobile keyless access solutions to do away with the key card altogether!

15



PENCIL IT IN

According to the EPA, Americans throw away 1.6 billion pens each year, the majority of them made of plastic. Why not follow IKEA's lead and provide sustainably sourced branded pencils so that guests can take your plastic-free message home with them.

16



BAN THE WRISTBAND

Do you need to use wristbands? If you *really* do, then how about replacing plastic ones with environmentally-friendly woven ones. Much nicer for customers and much kinder to the environment.

17



GIVEAWAY GOODNESS

Try not to give your guests an environmental problem. Only give out items on request and ensure they are environmentally friendly solutions, which are likely to generate more planet-friendly goodness throughout their lives. Now that's what we call a souvenir!

CASE STUDY



According to head of sales **Johan Kaijser** for Swedish based Sustainable Cards, 30 billion plastic cards are produced every year — that's 150,000 tons of plastic. And if this plastic-reduction isn't enough in itself, Johan estimates that using cards made from wood can reduce the carbon footprint by 50%.

“A hotel can do 1,000 things to improve, but you and I as guests see 10 to 20 of them if we're lucky. We don't see what happens on the back end,” Kaijser says. “The thing about the card is that it's one of the few things you hold in your hand. It's such a tangible tool to communicate an environmental message.”

18



GOT BAGGAGE?

Eliminate plastic bags wherever they are used (e.g. in bins or for laundry). Where a bag is necessary, consider a reusable and washable plastic-free option.



19 DON'T GET HUNG UP ON PLASTIC

Provide reusable plastic-free and non-laminated door hangers as well as sustainable wood or metal coat hangers.



20 LAMENTING LAMINATION

Replace laminated information or brochures with plastic free paper versions.



21 THAT'S NOT A WRAP

Are you wrapping items like drinks glasses or slippers in plastic? Try conducting a simple plastic audit and ask your staff where unnecessary plastic can be eliminated. If guests are concerned about hygiene, provide them in reusable alternatives (e.g. washable bags) or let guests know you're no longer wrapping items to save on plastic.



22 KEEP IT CLEAN!

Use reusable cleaning equipment and refillable cleaning products which are kind to the environment. This is also a great opportunity to get the whole staff team to buy into and take pride in your efforts to reduce plastic pollution.



23 MEETING EXPECTATIONS

Make your conference and event facilities the sustainable choice by eliminating unnecessary plastic wherever possible, starting with bottled water. Hilton removed plastic water bottles from its conference rooms saving up to 20 million water bottles annually.



24 SHOUT ABOUT YOUR POSITIVE CHANGES!

Removing plastic from the guest experience allows you to communicate your values throughout the day, helping your guests feel good about the part they are playing. Remember to use all the comms channels at your disposal – including booking confirmation emails, social media platforms (if your customers aren't already posting about the great things you're doing) and your staff – sometimes they are the best plastic-free ambassadors of all!



25 LET GOOD IDEAS KEEP TRAVELLING

We want to inspire as many accommodation providers as possible to rethink their plastic usage. We'd love you to share this guide to help others take steps towards reducing plastic and switching to reusables or refillable options. Please also tell us about your own journey and learnings, so that together we can make our planet-friendly impact even bigger!

CASE STUDY

TUI released a study on the wording of signs in bathrooms encouraging customers to reuse their towels. They found their customers responded best to an upbeat message like "Reuse me again tomorrow. Just like at home." This resulted in them saving 129,000 litres of water and 1,676 kg CO₂.

