

Coming Back for More

2009-12-07

Some of FreshStay.com's longest-standing members talk about the value they receive from the Web site and why years later they continue to be a part of the largest online community of smoke-free hotels.

In 2006, when FreshStay.com was launched, J.D. Power & Associates asked if going completely smoke-free could be the latest marketing strategy for hotels and a key differentiator for lodging brands among consumers.

In its final findings, J.D. Power & Associates concluded some three years ago that being 100% smoke-free could soon become the industry standard - much like premium beds and online check-in/check-out.

As 2009 draws to a close, it looks like J.D. Powers' prediction was spot-on. Smoke-free hotels no longer are just a marketing strategy. The movement's been far from just a fad. It's now the way business is done in the hospitality industry. Guests expect clean, refreshing rooms - without the lingering smell of smoke from previous occupants or from rooms up or down a floor ... or from the hotel entrance, lobby, meeting rooms, restaurant and bar, for that matter.

Hotels that have been with FreshStay from the start have always known smoke-free is our future. It's just taken the rest of the industry some time to catch on. But just like smoking itself, keeping a few often-unfilled smoking rooms or a smoker's lounge is still a hard habit to break. That's why FreshStay's longest-standing members continue to market their 100-percent smoke-free facilities through FreshStay.com - to ensure their guests fresh, relaxing environments to help them Breathe Easy, Sleep Great(TM) each and every stay.

'The demand for smoke-free accommodations has certainly grown and will continue to grow,' says Andy Abels, General Manager for the Saybrook Point Inn & Spa in historic Old Saybrook, Connecticut. 'Being a part of FreshStay.com has proven to be a positive association for us over the years, both personally and environmentally. It gives us great exposure and helps us reach more people who really value a smoke-free experience.'

'Plus, I think being associated with everyone else on the Web site who has gone smoke-free further enhances our reputation. Birds of a feather flock together, so to speak,' he adds.

FreshStay.com is the largest, most comprehensive online directory of smoke-free hotels in the world, now with nearly 5,000 members from all 50 states, Canada and abroad. The Web site features and integrated booking engine for additional member ROI.

'A lot has happened since the first FreshStay members came aboard,' says Dave Janicke, FreshStay.com's CBO - Chief Breathing Officer. 'We've seen a number of cities and states ban smoking indoors. We've also seen public awareness of the dangers of smoking increase. And we've been excited as a number of national hotel chains have made the decision to snuff out smoking entirely.'

'Through it all, we're proud that we've been at the forefront, helping pioneer this movement,' Janicke adds. 'We continue to add significant value to our member properties and to help connect like-minded, non-smoking consumers with them. With the help of these long-standing members, as well as all of our recent member additions, we're able to better promote healthy, socially responsible travel to the industry and the public,' Janicke adds.

Smoke-free & green

Another long-standing member of FreshStay.com has been The Orchard Hotel in San Francisco. As one of the initial members, The Orchard Hotel has been a big part of the growth of both smoke-free and environmentally conscious facilities.

'Our membership to FreshStay is part of our deep commitment to providing our guests and employees with a clean, healthy facility,' says Stefan Mühle, Regional Director and General Manager for The Orchard Hotel.

'Our smoke-free policy is just one aspect of our 'green' programs. Inspiration for our

eco-friendly initiatives comes from the hotel's 86-year-old owner, Mrs. S.C. Huang. She is passionate about clean environments, after the untimely cancer-related deaths of three family members, and has devoted herself to creating an environmentally safe and sustainable hotel. FreshStay has helped us communicate this to the world at large,' Mühle adds.

According to some of the latest J.D. Power & Associates statistics, nearly nine out of 10 guests (89%) say they prefer a smoke-free hotel environment, compared with 79% in 2006. Likewise, awareness of hotels' 'green programs' have risen, with 66% of guests stating they were aware of their hotel's conservation efforts. Plus, satisfaction is more than 160 points higher among guests who report being aware of their hotels' green programs.

'Our commitment to clean environments includes a wide-range of initiatives from in-room recycling to San Francisco's first guestroom keycard energy control system,' Mühle says.

'We know our non-smoking policy, along with our many other 'green' initiatives, are very important to our guests - and are one reason we have so many repeat guests.'

Reaching the right customers

Terence Concannon, Director of Sales for the Mission Inn of Pismo Beach in California, says that since his property joined FreshStay back when it was first starting, he's seen more and more hotels going the 100% non-smoking path, particularly newly built hotels starting with a clean slate and wishing to keep it that way.

'We joined FreshStay to let people know we are a 100% non-smoking and pet-free hotel, and that our management team and our staff believe all of our guests are entitled to breathe clean and healthy air, free from pollutants and allergens,' says Concannon. 'Our involvement with FreshStay is one way in which we publicly commit to providing our guests with a safe, clean and allergen-free environment during their stays with us.'

Concannon says being a part of FreshStay gives the hotel credibility, outreach to those who are concerned about what they are breathing in, as well as news updates are regarding the state of the public-smoking debate.

'At the Mission Inn of Pismo Beach, we work a lot with collegiate and secondary-school sports teams and for these groups, a non-smoking hotel is essential for both performance and general health,' he says. 'Coaches have told us that some schools are requiring them to choose non-smoking hotels when there is a choice.'

'We receive very few complaints regarding our non-smoking policy, as even smokers would prefer a room that smells fresh and clean rather than one that has endured the smoke from even one cigarette,' Concannon concludes.

Updated Canadian listings

Though the Saybrook Point Inn & Spa, The Orchard Garden and Mission Inn of Pismo Beach all have experienced the benefits of working with FreshStay for a few years now, it is one of the newest additions that shines a spotlight on the latest FreshStay innovation.

The Country Inn & Suites By Carlson - Calgary Airport recently joined FreshStay 'as an extension of our marketing as we believe that more and more travelers will seek out smoke-free accommodations to ensure they are not 'accidentally' booked into a smoking room,' according to General Manager Leanne Shaw-Brotherston.

It just so happens that just as The Country Inn & Suites By Carlson - Calgary Airport joined FreshStay, the Web site updated its Canadian listings, so travelers can search for accommodations north of the border by province, just as U.S. listings are broken down by state. This makes it quicker and easier for travelers to find and book reservations directly from FreshStay, using the Web site's integrated booking system.

The Country Inn & Suites By Carlson - Calgary Airport is a 106-room newly renovated hotel. The decision to go smoke-free came during the planning of the property's \$2 million renovation completed in September.

'The decision to go smoke-free was based on a number of factors, one of which was that we were finding our smoking rooms were always the last to sell, so financially we knew we were losing business when our non-smoking rooms were sold out,' says Shaw-Brotherston. 'Also before the switch, we were finding guests would be booked into smoking rooms by travel agents and third-party Web sites - despite requesting non-smoking rooms - probably when our non-smoking rooms, or at the very least our standard non-smoking guestrooms, were sold out. And that was our No. 1 complaint, as we generally were not able to change them to non-smoking rooms.'

'Generally, our guests have accepted our non-smoking policy as a good move,' she adds. 'We have found, since going smoke-free, that our complaints have been dramatically reduced. Our housekeeping costs also have been reduced as we no longer have to ozone our smoking rooms or spend as much time cleaning the 30 rooms that were designated as 'smoking.''

About Pineapple Hospitality

Headquartered in Saint Charles, Missouri, Pineapple Hospitality(TM) is an EPA ENERGY STAR(TM) partner bringing fresh ideas to hospitality guests' doors and owner/operators' bottom lines - including FreshStay(R) (www.freshstay.com), EcoRooms & EcoSuites (www.EcoRooms.com) Environmentally Sensitive Amenities(TM), EO(R), Neutrogena(R), Earth Perfect and greenSPA(TM) amenities, AVIVA and WAVE dispensers, Energy Efficient Lighting and Controls, Custom Linen & Towel Re-Use Programs, Green Key Cards, Green Earth Key Cards, Energy Management Systems and Controls, High Performance showerheads, the Nature's Mist(TM) deodorization system, Zero Odor, and dozens of other products and programs. For more information, please visit www.pineapplehospitality.net, or call us at 636-922-2285.

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