

How to Create Sustainable Hospitality

A handbook for guest participation



Christopher **Warren**



What they are saying about this book

Anna Pollock - Independent strategist for regenerative tourism

Christopher Warren's *How to Create Sustainable Hospitality* closes any gaps in motivation that have existed between host and guest. All too often hosts have delayed adopting sustainable practices until there was proof of demand and guests have found it difficult to know what else they can do after hanging up their used towels. This book is an invaluable source for all hoteliers smart enough to see their guests as partners not consumers and provides a wealth of practical advice as how to make that partnership serve the business, the guest and the planet. The book is original, based on experience, well researched, very readable, convincing and deserves widespread circulation.

Bob Garner – Founder of EnviroRental and Owner of Casal dei Fichi

What a superb resource this is! Christopher draws on extensive research and experience to give us a master class in what to do to be a sustainable host. But importantly the focus is very much on the vital piece of the puzzle – how to communicate with guests and persuade them to be active participants. As Christopher says “guest participation should be deeply woven into service delivery”. Active in this field for 15 years I felt I knew this topic, I learnt so much.

Nicole Ouimet – Previously Environmental Manager Disneyland Paris

Actively involving our guests is essential now to protect nature and to take part in this time of *great transitions*. Christopher's book is practical and innovative. Apply these ideas and you will see guests enjoying helping your business by interacting with employees in a new way, making significant savings and reducing the destruction of our natural resources.

Don Morris AO – Previously Chair of the Australian Tourism Commission, founding director of the Tourism and Transport Forum

The primal urge to escape the humdrum of daily life and to plunge into exotic new experiences and cultures – *wanderlust* – is indelibly imprinted in human DNA. Tourism is by far the globe's largest discretionary mass consumer activity. But, as Christopher Warren's fascinatingly clever and readable book makes crystal clear, authentic action on climate change and environmental sustainability are today's non-negotiable 'must have' values at the core of tourism demand, particularly for engaging with the dominant and influential Millennial and Generation Z cohorts. An absorbing and timely read for the entire tourism and hospitality sector.

Rodney Payne – CEO Destination Think!

Christopher's book is exceptional both educational and filled with opportunity. Nearly every tourism professional I know is woefully unprepared for the climate crisis. Even the most advanced sustainability professionals in our industry has trained for a very different world than the one we've now created.

The thinking in this book goes right to the heart of the type of behavioural psychology needed to catalyze transformational change among both guests and hotel staff. It is anything but a generic sustainability textbook; exposing the depth and complexity of the problems with a method of critical analysis that avoids the typical generalization.

My own reckoning of the true severity and pace of the climate emergency was a brutal awakening. The magnitude of disruption is staggering. This piece will be an important primer the hotel industry leaders of tomorrow. When you're ready to unbury their heads from the sand and grapple with an entirely new worldview, this book will help you to be part of creating a more prosperous world by bringing green tourism into the mainstream.

John Swarbrooke – Professor at Plymouth University

This unique book provides an invaluable practical guide to how hospitality businesses can encourage consumers to behave more responsibly. Based on the real-world experiences of the author, an acknowledged expert in the field of sustainable tourism, it also has a strong theoretical underpinning. This important text deserves to be read by practitioners as well as students and researchers in tourism and hospitality, marketing, and consumer behaviour

Harald Friedl – Associate Professor for Sustainability and Ethics in Tourism, University of Applied Sciences

This book is a refreshing source in the desert of sustainability guidebooks: where the mainstream spreads top-down advice with moral undertones, this author manages to address everyday needs of hoteliers and guests. Here, sustainability in tourism turns from an arduous challenge into a gain in quality, credibility and joie de vivre.

Alexandra Coghlan – Associate Professor Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management, Griffith University

An enormous amount of experience, research, reflection, and conversations with other experts has delivered an insightful, engaging and practical handbook. His strengths are to show how stressors will and are compounding each other, through their direct and indirect interactions. Christopher's lived experience of the sector allows him to paint the system in an engaging and compelling way.

His step by step process, arguments and questions all serve to reduce the fear around inviting the guest to be part of the process of sustainability, leading to a deeper transformation in the direction needed. And while there is no sugar coating of the scale of the issue and the challenges we face, he quietly dispels myth after myth of what is and isn't possible in greening the hospitality sector and brings it home with concrete examples through clear images and explanations. And he consistently reminds us of the importance of true hospitality, not merely a series of transactions and trade-offs, and good old fashioned "waste not, want not", which in my view is an excellent creed to live by...

This is a book for anyone serious about greening their business, and who wants to move beyond the low hanging fruit and/or hit and miss technological solutions, to a deep, ongoing, adaptable and context-driven approach to sustainability.

Glenn Mandziuk, CEO, Sustainable Hospitality Alliance

Due to its reliance on the natural environment and its position in communities all around the world, the tourism industry has perhaps more reason than many other industries to manage and mitigate its impacts. However, this global presence and its interaction with thousands of travellers each year gives it a unique opportunity to be a huge force for good.

By connecting guests to local communities around the world, particularly those that will be most affected by climate change, accommodations can help spread awareness of key sustainability issues and what role individuals can play. This can also help them engage guests in their own sustainability efforts and amplify what they're doing.

Guests are increasingly looking for authentic experiences which enable them to connect with the world around them and are increasingly keen to take steps to be more environmental when they travel.

This book explains the business case for engaging guests in your environmental efforts and outlines five easy-to-follow steps to engage guests in a meaningful way, encouraging them to support your environmental efforts and, potentially, increasing their loyalty at the same time.



Part of the Responsible Tourism Series

Edited by Harold Goodwin, Director of Responsible Tourism,
Institute of Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University
and John Swarbrooke, Associate Dean-International, University of
Plymouth.

Sustainability is a necessity, climate change, biodiversity loss, the loss of cultural heritage and local economic development are challenges for the tourism sector. Too often sustainability is used as 'greenwashing'. Responsible Tourism requires transparency in reporting and respect for local people and their cultural and natural heritage. We need to leave more than footprints, to fund conservation and to compensate local communities for the opportunity cost of maintaining their heritage for our enjoyment. Too often tourism has just used destinations and this needs to be reversed. Responsible Tourism is about using tourism to make better places to live in and better places to visit, in that order.

How to Create Sustainable Hospitality

A handbook for guest participation

Christopher Warren

(G) Goodfellow Publishers Ltd

(G) Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited,
26 Home Close, Wolvercote, Oxford OX2 8PS
<http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com>

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data: a catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: on file.

ISBN: 978-1-915097-45-3

DOI: 10.23912/9781911635659-5276

Copyright © Christopher Warren, 2023

All rights reserved. The text of this publication, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, storage in an information retrieval system, or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher or under licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency Limited. Further details of such licences (for reprographic reproduction) may be obtained from the Copyright Licensing Agency Limited, of Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

All trademarks used herein are the property of their respective owners. The use of trademarks or brand names in this text does not imply any affiliation with or endorsement of this book by such owners.



Design and typesetting by P.K. McBride, www.macbride.org.uk

Cover design by Cylinder

Contents

Foreword	iv
Prologue	xiii
<hr/>	
Part I: Where we are now	1
<hr/>	
1 The business case for guest participation	2
2 Re-imagining the Green Guest	39
3 Beyond efficiency and renewables	63
4 The costs of inaction	91
<hr/>	
Part II: What to do about it	115
<hr/>	
5 Step 1: A Green Audit	116
6 Step 2: Designing change in your accommodation (Materials)	132
7 Step 3: Teaching guests how to participate (Skills)	166
8 Step 4: Interpersonal communication (Meaning)	184
9 Step 4: Persuasion (Meaning)	201
10 Step 5: The eco-feedback loop (Skill)	217
11 The Guest R/Evolution (Meaning)	243
Index	277

Foreword: Xavier Font

Professor Xavier Font, University of Surrey, United Kingdom, and UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Norway.

There are many tourism and hospitality businesses that already protect their environment and create meaningful jobs, purchase locally and promote the sense of place of where they belong. It's part of who they are, and they do many of these things naturally. These businesses may not be making the most of their sustainability practices because they are implemented in an instinctive way, without a systematic approach to reflect on their current practices, to set out plans to make continuous improvements, and to experiment with pro-sustainability changes. The book is very helpful to these and also to those businesses that have already made significant progress, and now want to scale up their work.

Christopher Warren has found the way to explain sustainability as a business opportunity, not a cost, in a way that will make sense to small and large hospitality firms alike. Few understand what is required to design sustainable experiences, and how to communicate persuasively with consumers to change their behaviour. The advice in this book is practical and evidence based. The examples used are current and wide-ranging. There isn't another book with a step by step, tried and tested process, that distils years of experience and the many reality checks of looking at a business owner eye-to-eye when you suggest how they can use sustainability to remain commercially viable.

The term sustainability is multifaceted, it will mean different things to different guests. Rather than expecting them to understand and appreciate every aspect of it, it's important to break it down into its many components that gives you 100 communication touch points rather than just one. This book shows how to unpack the S word into a wide range of aspects, and first focus on those that will mean something to your customer, and will not require a great effort. These customers will appreciate your knowledge if you are generous with it and not judgemental and transparent.

We often see guest participation in sustainability as punitive – reducing the quality of service offered. Sustainable luxury needs to be redefined, in the context of how the meaning of sustainable prosperity, wellbeing and quality of life are being redefined. A customer who demands a wasteful consumption environment is unlikely to leave satisfied for long, whereas a genuinely wholesome and fulfilling experience can create a sense of wellbeing that we sorely need these days. Multi-sensory sustainable guest experiences are positive, empowering, and satisfying. Christopher's many examples demonstrate clearly that businesses of every size and target market can improve their business models to provide lasting customer satisfaction by introducing sustainability-informed experiences.

Christopher advises that you do not shy away from sharing your sustainability practices since the media suggest that everyone exaggerates their claims and that customers are sceptical about what they hear. While *greenwashing* may be more

common amongst large firms, we have seen that many tourism firms *greenhush* instead – they deliberately under-communicate their sustainability efforts, for fear of coming across as having compromised on customer service. The lack of knowledge and understanding of everyday things like electricity use of different appliances means that owners/staff like you can be scared to discuss what they are actually doing or answer questions. This book will help you understand the many different aspects of sustainability so you can feel more confident discussing the property's actions, as Christopher guides you on how to assess your impacts by looking more intently at everyday things and redesigning the guest experience.

We are a risk-adverse industry, and anything that may threaten our current business model is looked at with suspicion. But changing our business models is no less than what Christopher suggests, with his 20 years of experience owning a boutique accommodation and meeting guests himself. Host-guest engagement needs to go beyond contractual requirements and service level agreements, to create fulfilling, transforming opportunities. At home, most of our behaviours are routine-based, and a truly hospitable experience is a chance not only to refresh yourself, but also an opportunity to reflect on your daily behaviours and to break some of those bad habits and learn from experience. Environmental psychologists will call this spillover effect, Christopher makes it part of his mission.

The book encourages owners by accepting that though some guests are not interested in savings, they will do better if the owner has implemented changes that reduce wasteful behaviours. For those customers that are not ready to embrace change, at the very least you ought to provide “frictionless sustainability”. This involves making sustainability behaviours be the default, easiest to choose offer, either by editing unsustainable options, or requiring guests to actively require them. While this book does not speak about behavioural economics in such terms, it does implicitly propose actions to nudge consumers, and to create a social identity of being a caring customer, aligned with this discipline. Not only are the solutions based on science/research, but Christopher has applied them himself to thousands of guests over the years. I am reassured by that unusual combination of research and evidence-based practice.

Co-created experience delivers competitive advantage, and this co-creation involves us all. It goes without saying that staff engagement will be essential to create the conditions for guest engagement. Guests will only truly participate if they can feel that staff live by the sustainability values that their organisation stands for. Staff design and deliver the experience context and mechanisms that then condition the impacts, positive and negative, that the guests will have. Few books have considered the design and delivery aspects of hospitality experiences, and here's where Christopher's hands-on experience provides a multitude of ideas on how managers can engage their teams, and in doing so make their business more competitive.

I appreciate a book that is not descriptive of concepts, but that is action oriented. The advice given helps you design a sustainability management system

(it is less daunting than it sounds!) that helps you reduce your operating costs (and your impacts), as well as attract more customers, improve their satisfaction, increase their expenditure, promote customer loyalty and reduce seasonality. The breadth of ideas provided show you the multitude of opportunities to fine tune your current business model. There are many low-hanging fruit that are manageable, with a little budget and time, and a can-do approach. Before long, you will realise that both your mastery and self-efficacy have improved. This will fuel your ambition to do more, and you will re-read the book looking for higher targets. You will be encouraged by the positive response of your colleagues, friends and indeed customers, to keep going and progress further.

At a personal level, I find it hugely satisfying to read a book from Christopher, and I can hear his voice as I read every sentence, reflecting the many conversations we've had over the years on how to change the business models of our industry to do good.

Foreword: Susanne Becken

Professor Susanne Becken, Griffith University, Australia and University of Surry, UK

This handbook is an extremely useful resource for anyone involved in tourism and hospitality. The book addresses an important gap, indeed several gaps, in that it bridges theory and practice, and in that it finally tackles the most important dimension of the sustainability transition – the people. All too often, attempts to become more sustainable – and to use less energy and water as aspects of this – seem to almost purposefully and clinically dehumanise the process so to not 'inconvenience' anyone, be it the visitors or staff. The predominant focus on technology and higher level 'managerial solutions' has robbed us of an important opportunity to put the people at the centre of the solution. As Christopher Warren points out in his book, every guest can be a green guest and become part of a greater movement to 'do good'. I agree with the underlying assumption of this book that nobody travels to be a bad tourist... But all too often, the structures around us simply do not allow to make sensible choices. Or guests just don't know enough about their impacts. By including them in sustainability initiatives, we harness an important opportunity of positive learning. Holiday experiences (or even business travel) that are novel and intriguing are rewarding, exactly because they do not provide cookie cutter solutions that just don't deliver sustainable outcomes.

The text is based on a vast array of personal experiences and stories from across the world. This makes the book very readable, but also provides a sense of authenticity that few experts in this sector can deliver like Christopher. The depth and authority with which pertinent examples are shared and analysed leaves little doubt that the key arguments presented in this book are 'worth thinking about'. Many of the (nonsense) examples from real-world accommodation experiences

will resonate with readers as they clearly expose the lack of thought that has gone into room design and service delivery in many places. Who hasn't arrived at a hotel room with all lights on and the air conditioner blasting at 18 degrees Celsius. And who hasn't wondered about the one milk container in the fridge, and the heat it generated in the cupboard behind it. And the lack of opening windows in many hotel rooms, I am sure, has driven to frustration many who would like to breathe some fresh air.

The book is usefully structured into two parts. I read it in two parts and that worked very well as it allowed me to digest the information presented in Part I, before engaging on how this would work in practice as outlined in Part II. The first part makes a clear case of why sustainability is important, and also why involving guests is a win-win for everyone. The text is soundly anchored in scientific theory and evidence, yet readable for a wide audience. Part II then sets out a 'course of action' with plenty of examples, graphs and tables to assess one own's situation. What came across to me is that if one followed the five steps from the first audit to a well rounded integrated business ethos of 'conserving together with the guest', one will not only achieve a major benefit for the environment, but a much better business as a whole.

And herein lies the challenge of the book! The call to action is not for hospitality providers to go out and change lightbulbs. It goes much deeper than that – encouraging owners/managers to take progressive steps to transform their business. The book actually is about spending considerable thought on every aspect of the business. The building design and infrastructure (the proverbial 'canvas to paint on'); the existing set up of service delivery and experiences (is human interaction minimised? Is the uniqueness of the location conveyed to the guest?); the staff and their empowerment to be part of this journey (have they been trained? Are they rallied around the purpose of the company?). And of course, finally the guest who arrives at the premise, eager to have a good time or relax, but a bit disoriented and grateful for sound advice that makes their stay more enjoyable without it costing the Earth. Commitment to understanding all of the above, and accepting that this will take a long time ('Iterate, iterate, iterate' as advised in the book), is part and parcel of a successful transition. I am convinced that the journey will be a rewarding one.

In summary, this is an excellent read that will help everyone in hospitality seeking to make a difference – including researchers who study this subject. Engaging with practical opportunities and challenges in our research designs is crucial to generating new knowledge that can help our collective endeavour of service-oriented innovation. Enjoy the read.

Limitations

Much of my research and project experience is within developed or developing economies, where most tourism occurs. There are therefore limitations in research and practical examples that represent a truly global perspective. However, I believe this book has relevance to all types of tourist accommodation where host-to-guest hospitality is provided. The examples used can in many cases be conceptually applied or even reversed (from hot to cold climates) and the guest's engagement methods adapted to different cultural contexts.

New technologies are providing contactless host-to-guest communication, the principles of which can be applied similarly to new automated systems, though they have not been detailed here because of the evolving nature of digital and sensory communication. For updates of the use of new technology please visit my website, www.mygreenbutler.com.

Messaging, using signs, cards, and leaflets has also only been summarised in this book. This is because research suggests it is contextual issues that matter most rather than the intricacies of the wording. Therefore, a significant proposition of this book focuses on contextual factors (the level of comfort, the sustainability story, the property's own integrity, the staff commitment) and how to redesign the experience to help guests consume your hospitality experience more sustainably, rather than how to write sentences that are more persuasive. What matters most is what the actual offer is and the integrity of the host.

Thanks

This book would not have been possible without Sophie, who courageously allowed me to conduct experiments at our own business – I am deeply indebted. To Harold and Xavier, who taught and inspired me. To Susanne and Alexandra for your advice and friendship. Thanks to Becky, David, Edward, Fred, Laurence and Sarah for your manuscript advice. And finally, to Maxwell, the next generation, who honourably stands by me to deliver these solutions to help others' transition.

For

All our guests, thank you for your enthusiasm to try the new.
My children, there is a brighter future.

About the book

Guests directly account for over 50% of resource use in hotels and as much as +90% in self-catering accommodation, while also delivering all the revenue. They are quite simply the most significant factor in hospitality's ongoing high resource costs, pollution and, waste. Given the targets to reduce carbon emissions by 66% by 2030, it is imperative that practical solutions for the sector are created and applied fast. *How to Create Sustainable Hospitality* is the first text to demonstrate how to persuade guests to participate in the accommodation's sustainability quest, while increasing customer satisfaction and building a competitive advantage.

Based on 16 years delivering sustainable hospitality experiences face to face with guests, and conducting hard research on guest engagement at sites in Australia and Europe (from 1000-bedroom hotels to self-contained holiday homes and timeshare lodges), the author presents a tried and tested five step methodology on how to directly, effectively and successfully involve guests to conserve resources. This presents a new paradigm for tourism. *How to Create Sustainable Hospitality* presents a clearly written, jargon-free, practical solution which:

- Demonstrates, using a triple bottom line balance sheet, why guests' participation in sustainability makes good business;
- Sees guests as an active and critical component in sustainable consumption and production at their holiday accommodation;
- Introduces a five-step methodology on how to directly and effectively involve guests in saving energy and water, reducing food waste and cutting carbon;
- Delivers a practical solution that has been successfully applied to achieve a fast ROI with scientifically measured savings;
- Uses persuasive theory to explain how to communicate with guests and by so doing increase stay satisfaction, 'delight' and brand reputation;
- Includes many case examples and scientific research to illustrate how the theories works in practice.

About the author

Christopher Warren, PhD, MSc, Dip Ad, Trainer & Assessor (Cert IV), Founder of My Green Butler, Director of the International Centre for Responsible Tourism Australia, was co-proprietor of multi-award winning Crystal Creek Meadows for nearly 20 years. As a Research Fellow at Griffith University, he was a member of the Australian Research Council's grant winning team researching conserving behaviours at tourist accommodation. He is also a partner in the UN Environmental Programme's One Planet network. Ecotourism Australia awarded Christopher the EcoTourism Medal for his contribution to tourism and nature, after founding one of the world's first destination carbon calculators, the 'Green Kangaroo' in 2006, and for voluntary work conducting audits to help tourism businesses.

Prologue

3rd January, 2020 - Kangaroo Valley, New South Wales

The air is becoming suffocating, hot, dense, as if an enormous oven door is open, fanning you with blistering dry heat from which there is no escape. It is an overwhelming force. Everything is wilting, yellowed grass splinters underfoot. All life shrinks away from this fierce force.

I look at my mobile phone. It is blank. The tech has failed with the temperature +50°C. I am outside putting the rest of the branches and leaf matter on another green waste pile, one of nine we built during 14 days of preparing our property in the face of a bushfire that creeps closer each day. I am the co-owner of a tourist accommodation business just two hours from Sydney and Canberra that would normally be buzzing with visitors during this time of the year. Now it is empty. All guests sent home days before and none in prospect, revenue has dried up overnight.

In desperation, I recheck pumps and hoses then continue clearing up more green waste that could ignite and turn our little patch of paradise into an inferno. My wife and youngest child have left for safety. News reports tell us the wind is picking up and will fan the fire. It has been burning since August. It started over 150 km away and is now consuming the forest on the other side of our mountain.

I plan to stay and protect what we have built up over 18 years: the nature conservation zone; the 4 ½ star cottages; all our pension and income reinvested into creating a multi-award-winning property ...our dreams and our souls. As the sky goes orange and grey, deep and moody clouds appear on the horizon above the mountain to the southwest. My two remaining adult children say, "This is it, we must leave". I can't bear to go. I refuse. Their screams urge me to leave. I give in.

We drive out of the valley, a harrowing journey as the now gale force wind blasts in ahead of the fire front. Winds are able to drop a widow maker* on us at any moment, so we have to slowly snake up the tight bends of the eastern mountain pass. At the top we dash to safety and stop. I sit in my sweat stained clothes and cannot move for three hours. I say nothing. I am nothing as my business was me. The news suggests the fire is at our door. My mind is blank.

4th January, 2020

I wake at 6am and worry for our 15-acre property, our buildings, the habitats we created, the creatures that live there. Has it been destroyed, are we safe? Jumping out of bed I reach for a computer, tap in my password to My Green Butler, the sustainability tech solution I developed, and am overjoyed to see I have readings from my cottages. The inside temperatures had reached 45°C, but I am getting

* Australian eucalyptus trees will drop branches in severe weather conditions so the rest of the tree can survive. The branches are so heavy they will lay a man flat dead in a second.

readings. That means the buildings are standing. Dashing for the car I drive back up and over the mountain pass avoiding fallen branches to check if our livelihood is intact.

This was our experience of the Black Summer that wiped out over 3 billion native animals and forested areas larger than the size of Switzerland. We dodged a bullet that day. The fire had reached 4 km from our business and home, with embers travelling up to 12 km, and at the last minute the wind changed direction, redirecting the fire. The wind fanned that fire, it sped up and made an almighty charge as a firestorm taking a due north course up and across the neighbouring mountain. At what cost?

Friends own a similar tourism business down the road from us. Their buildings, olive grove, and natural habitats were wiped out. The firestorm intensity reached 1600°C, melting their basketball court surface to glass, forcing a parked tractor and truck, originally parked 10 meters apart, to be welded together as one metal block.



What remained of the lodges after the fire (Courtesy of Paul Williams & Alison Baker)

After two years of insurance claims and wading through new planning regulations, they are slowly regrouping and reforming their business. Two years of no income, two years of living on a charred and wiped-out site, two years of once magnificent views that had become blackened and dead, as though the world had become festooned with over-sized burnt matchsticks... everywhere.

Then came the floods, Covid, and again floods in 2022, which saw a year's rainfall within weeks and eroded the mountain pass of that destination, cutting off main road connections for months and with repairs lasting a year. A flooding downpour dumps over 390 mm in 72 hours, further demonstrating our weather has changed dramatically (on the mountain top they received 4000 mm January-June 2022 compared to an average annual fall of 1500 mm). A further economic blow as tourist numbers again plummet. This is tourism in a changing climate. This is why I have written this book.