



Single-use plastics:
The Last Straw?

fcmtravel.com

FCM
TRAVEL
SOLUTIONS®

The Last Straw

Sustainability is more than a buzzword nowadays. Once a box-ticking exercise, it has caught the imagination of many with CSR targets, no more so than the campaign to reduce and ultimately eradicate single-use plastics.

It seems that not a week goes by without an airline, hotel, cruise ship or airport announcing that it is reducing the use of single-use plastics and banning plastic straws. But is our industry doing enough?

Undoubtedly pressure is mounting on businesses to do what they can to help save the planet. The UK government, for example, announced a world-leading new tax on produced or imported plastic packaging in the October 2018 Budget that applies to all plastic packaging that doesn't include at least 30% recycled content. The tax will see up to 22p added to the cost of single-use drinks containers in England (which consumers would get back if they returned the bottle under a new deposit return scheme). Although industry observers believe the legislation doesn't go far enough - plus the UK government's pledge of eliminating all avoidable waste by 2042 is a long way off - it will hopefully encourage businesses to ensure that far more packaging can be recycled and to use more recycled plastic in their packaging.

Cost is one of the biggest barriers to more being done by the industry, partly because it's challenging to find non-plastic alternatives to cups, bottles, laundry bags and even polyamide teabags. With straws there is no argument as metal and paper alternatives are readily available.

But if legislation and alternative suppliers isn't enough to incentivise the industry, then the sight on our screens of a male sea turtle with a 12cm plastic straw stuck in its nasal cavity, might do the trick. It has certainly spurred on consumers who can vote with their feet to turn their backs on those travel suppliers not doing enough in this area.



30%

New tax on produced or imported plastic that doesn't include at least 30% recycled content



Our oceans play a vital role in sustaining a healthy planet. The YouTube Video of the turtle had more than 16m views. World Oceans Day - celebrated each year on June 8th - is a reminder if any of us needed it, that our oceans are the lungs of our planet, providing most of the oxygen we breathe, and cannot be clogged up. Yet between 5-13m tonnes of plastic does end up in our oceans each year¹.

Now for some more encouraging news! Two of our most respected travel suppliers - Delta Airlines and the trendy Marriott hotel brand Edition Hotels - are making industry-leading strides in this area, despite studies highlighting that 40% of companies are finding it a challenge to become more sustainable, mostly due to the cost involved. These two case studies show that it can be cost effective and that it is possible to foster sustainable initiatives and identify practical solutions to improve their environmental impact. They are beacons of light and other suppliers should follow their lead.



2042

UK government's pledge of eliminating all avoidable waste by 2042



40%

of companies are finding it a challenge to become more sustainable

Delta Airlines



300K

Number of plastic pounds
Delta Sky Clubs are
expected to eliminate

Delta's move to reduce unnecessary single-use plastics is part of its industry-leading sustainability strategy to better align the amount of food, beverage and other items on board with customer demand, resulting in significant reductions in waste and emissions. Reducing single-use plastics is a natural extension of Delta's efforts to reduce its impact on the environment. It is also aiming to reduce its emissions due to the burning of jet fuel, for example, which is an industry-wide initiative.

The measures to remove a variety of single-use plastic items, including stir sticks, wrappers, utensils and straws from aircraft and Delta Sky Clubs, are expected to eliminate more than 300,000 pounds in plastic waste each year. That is the equivalent of more than the weight of two Boeing 757 aircraft – contributing to Delta's long-term sustainability efforts.

The changes follow Delta's move in April 2018 to remove plastic wrap from international Main Cabin cutlery, which is now rolled in a napkin instead. Starting

from the middle of this year, customers will notice other changes on board, including Delta One TUMI amenity kits no longer having outer plastic wrappers.

In Delta Sky Clubs, in addition to replacing plastic straws and stir sticks with bamboo and birch wood stirrers, non-compostable plates, utensils, bowls and buffet dishware are being replaced with compostable alternatives. This initiative was started in Seattle in 2016.

It's been a long-haul for the airline since the airline created a Global Environment, Sustainability & Compliance team. The team is constantly on the look-out for how Delta can adjust its sourcing and behaviours to have greater impact on the local and global communities where Delta people live, work and serve. In addition to conducting their own research, the team also looked to Delta's Youth Advisory Council to help guide the airline's efforts to minimise the use of single-use plastics and support other sustainability initiatives.

The initiative didn't go without its challenges, namely to find and source quality products that are sustainable from both an environmental and financial perspective. One of Delta's new green suppliers is Buzz, who is busy finding alternatives to plastic wrap on Delta One amenity kits.

The airline's long-term vision is to minimise its impact on the environment and to conduct its operations in an environmentally sustainable manner. It's a strategy that filters down from the boardroom to the engineers, on-board staff and extends to Delta's contractors.

The airline has an eight-point mission:

- Complying with all environmental laws and regulations
- In the absence of governmental regulation, Delta is committed to operating in an environmentally responsible manner
- Setting environmental performance goals and continually improving environmental performance
- Preventing pollution, where possible, and if not possible, then establishing mitigation programs to minimize the environmental impact
- Using natural resources efficiently
- Conducting environmental compliance and Environmental Management System audits of performance and practices to ensure compliance
- Engaging with external stakeholders to discuss commercially viable solutions to environmental problems
- Reporting on environmental performance to our employees, customers, and external stakeholders on a regular basis.



The changes follow Delta's move in April 2018 to remove plastic wrap from international Main Cabin cutlery

Edition Hotels

Marriott's luxury boutique brand Edition Hotels – conceived by Ian Schrager and Marriott International – launched a Stay Plastic Free campaign last year which was developed by Ben Pundole, Vice President of Brand Experience, and with the sole goal of omitting single-use plastic from the hotel industry. It was partly inspired by the recent anti-plastic activism in the UK which in turn was spurred on by Sir David Attenborough's widely-viewed Blue Planet TV series in the UK.

While it's the hotel groups' goal of becoming totally single-use plastic free by the end of this year, the campaign has a much wider and more significant goal: to spread the initiative across the entire hotel industry. If it achieves its goal it will be quite a game-changer. "We want the hospitality industry to commit to removing plastic from everyday use – and we will provide the tools and resources to help them do so," say the company.

The initiative aims to inspire hotels and hoteliers worldwide to use alternatives to single-use plastic. Crucially, Stay Plastic Free will provide a library of plastic alternative vendors and contacts for everything from plastic free mini bar items, coffee cups, straws, water bottles, bathroom amenities and food containers.

The hotel group is replacing plastic straws with sustainable paper ones, is adding Naeco compostable lids to takeaway cups, replacing plastic toothbrushes with bamboo ones, while plastic bottles in minibars will be replaced by water in paper cartons with sugarcane cups. Coasters will be made from recycled ocean plastic waste. If Edition can find these alternative suppliers, then so can the rest of the industry.

The hotel group has enlisted some serious players in the scheme, working alongside both The Lonely Whale Project, fronted by actor Adrien Grenier, and Project Zero, led by Tyrone Wood and James Jagger. Stay Plastic Free has also gained support from both oceans' charities and the scientists behind them as well as industry authorities including Randy Gerber, Alan Faena and Andre Balazs as advocates.



While environmental campaigners have warned about the unsustainable nature of single-use plastic for years, Pundole believes the current momentum around plastic feels different. Far from being seen as a frugal or inconvenient decision, Pundole commented that ditching plastic is now seamlessly aligned with the new definition of luxury that Edition's guests expect.

In addition to plastic reductions throughout its properties, Edition is leading a campaign committee of influential hoteliers—which Pundole hopes will include the likes of Design

Hotels, Soho House, and Chiltern Firehouse—to look at industry-wide solutions to the plastic problem. He says the hurdles are not guests—“guests are really behind this kind of thing”—but rather making a business case to financiers that “it’s the right decision even though it’s not cost neutral”.

Using Edition Hotels as an industry standard, Pundole is working to inspire, influence and enable other hotels, hotel brands and individual properties to switch to cost effective, non-plastic alternatives by offering a toolkit of alternative vendors, contacts and options.

Edition Hotels will produce a short film highlighting the impact of single use plastic from the hotel industry on the environment. It will include many high-profile and notable friends of Edition. The hotel group has an aggressive expansion plan so it’s even more important for the company to become game changers and leaders within one of the most wasteful industries in business.

FAST FACTS

- 70% of hospitality companies plan to reduce the use of single-use plastics.
- Two thirds of hospitality companies are banning plastic straws.
- One third of hospitality businesses are planning to install filtered water systems instead of serving water in single-use plastic bottles.
- One in three businesses say installing a water filtration system would offer customers a sustainable alternative to bottled water.
- 67% of UK consumers would boycott brands that lack an ethical conscience.
- Since the 1950s we have produced around 8.3bn tonnes of virgin plastic, of which 6.3bn tonnes has been discarded as waste as less than 10% of that waste has been recycled.

PLASTIC STRAWS

The hotel group is replacing plastic straws with sustainable paper ones



SOURCES:

plasticoceans.org/the-facts and snorkelers wading through

BRITA Professional report, Life is Better Filtered: The Planet Around You

WRAP, April 2018

