

April 21, 2011

North America

Green expectations growing in managed travel

Earth Day began in the United States in 1970 and was first observed in Canada in 1980. Frequently cited as the "birth of the modern environmental movement," today Earth Day is celebrated each year on April 22 by organizations and citizens in nearly 200 countries. Four decades after the first Earth Day was observed, the travel industry has made considerable strides toward enabling more sustainable travel through a wide range of products and services. That said, significant opportunity still remains for many travel buyers to truly integrate sustainable practices into their travel programs. Following is a closer look at environmental-friendly travel options from North American suppliers, as well as tips for buyers to further integrate sustainability into their managed travel programs.

Tune in to turn down your carbon footprint

There's no question business travel is a contributor to pollution – every 1,000 air miles flown generates 903 lbs. of carbon emissions per person, and the average hotel stay generates another 44 lbs¹. Even so, to put this into perspective, air transportation and aviation account for only 2% of all human-generated carbon emissions². The good news is that over the past many years, suppliers have responded by driving efficiencies in their own operations, and by offering products and services to help clients reduce their own environmental impact.



Airlines: Most North American airlines today enable travelers to calculate carbon emissions and purchase offsets for their flights via their websites, though this capability is not always offered as part of the actual booking process. Many have also implemented on-board recycling programs over the past five years; for instance, United Airlines to date has diverted 590 tons of waste from landfills through its efforts.

Another key strategy is the introduction of more fuel-efficient aircraft into carriers' fleets, yielding both cost and environmental benefits. To that end, Air Canada over the past 20 years has improved its fuel efficiency by more than 30%, and has a goal to improve it another 25% within the next 10 years. Finally, some airlines are also engaged in corporate initiatives more broadly to reduce their organizations' environmental impact, such as Delta Air Lines and its efforts to recycle 221,000 lbs. of worn carpet from its aircraft.

Additionally, many North American carriers have publicly expressed their support for NextGen, the satellite-based air traffic control system that seeks to upgrade the current radar-based system currently operating throughout much of the region. Among the many benefits of NextGen, airlines are advocating for the initiative based on the more efficient and direct air

routes it will enable them to fly, from point to point and in the event of inclement weather, helping reduce the aviation industry's overall fuel consumption.

Hotels: While encouraging the reuse of bath towels is likely top of mind when considering hotels' environmental efforts, most major hotel chains in North America have moved far beyond that, with broader and more aggressive goals for energy, water, and waste reduction. Some have implemented room lighting that automatically powers down when the room is vacant; still more are focusing on locally sourced menu items for their restaurant and room service offerings. Educating employees and guests on sustainability is another key initiative shared by many North American hoteliers; one example is Hyatt's Earth Training program, a series of interactive workshops that assist employees in creating and implementing environmental improvement plans at their properties. Much like airlines, many North American hotels also offer carbon management services via their websites and onsite, to help guests estimate the impact of their hotel stays and offset emissions.

Take a closer look at green hotels with CWT in the upcoming issue of CWT Vision, scheduled for mid-June.



That said, for a corporate travel buyer looking to include green hotels in their managed program, it can be difficult to compare one hotelier's environmental efforts against another's. There are dozens of industry and government certification programs in which hotels can participate, all with varying requirements. Additionally, the franchised management structure of many hotel chains may make it difficult to accurately track their overall environmental impact and progress at a centralized level. Carlson requires its hotels follow a guide for sustainability at its properties around the world. Hilton Worldwide has also made strides via its proprietary measurement system for gauging the sustainability performance of its hotels in terms of energy, waste, and carbon emissions by property. By the end of 2011, all 3,600+ of Hilton's hotels worldwide will have implemented this measuring system.

Ground transportation providers: North American car rental companies have broadly integrated fuel efficient and hybrid vehicles into their fleets, and make these vehicles widely available to corporate and leisure customers alike. Nearly 75% of Hertz' fleet comprises vehicles that provide fuel economies of 28 miles per gallon or more. In terms of chauffeured transportation, Carey International in 2010 launched a subsidiary, Embarque, focused on more environmentally responsible vehicles and affordable prices. More broadly, Green Ride Global provides a directory of U.S. and Canadian black car and limousine suppliers that have demonstrated an established focus on environmental sustainability.

North American rail suppliers also engage in a variety of environmental initiatives, but predicate their efforts on the fact that rail is inherently a more fuel-efficient mode of transportation than most. In the United States, Amtrak recycles waste generated on board, and enables customers to offset their carbon emissions via a third-party partnership. Canada's VIA Rail continues to reduce its fuel and waste consumption, recycling when appropriate. The company is also upgrading to a more efficient fleet, replacing train cars as they become outdated.

Online booking tools and other technologies: While not yet universally available across providers, North America-based online booking tools (OBTs) are increasingly integrating information on the carbon costs of various itinerary options, and several providers also link to external partner sites to enable carbon offsetting. For example, Concur Travel lists the carbon

“costs” of each flight option in airline search results; meanwhile, the Rearden Commerce Platform makes the link to its offsetting partner readily available during the booking process.

OBTs also continue to make more fuel efficient options available to travelers, including hybrid rental cars and rail where available. Additionally, the proliferation of mobile tools in travel has further reduced the need for travelers to print and carry data, including itinerary details, confirmation and loyalty account numbers, and more.

Travel management companies: Travel management companies (TMCs) play an important role in helping clients navigate the many available options for managing the environmental impact of their travel programs. CWT helps clients address air emissions specifically via its three-tiered *CWT Sustainable Solutions* offering, which comprises a pre-trip carbon calculator that enables travelers to compare the environmental impact of various modes of travel before booking; post-trip carbon emission reporting that gives travel managers visibility into the environmental performance of their program; and emissions management services available through The CarbonNeutral Company, a leading provider of carbon reduction solutions.

In addition to products and services specifically intended to manage environmental impact, travel buyers can engage their program experts to create a demand management strategy to contain travel when needed, including as part of an overall effort to limit an organization’s environmental impact. Telepresence and web- or video-conferencing technology can also serve as travel alternatives when appropriate. TMCs such as CWT can assist in: defining a strategy, managing/communicating the change internally, facilitating bookings and fulfillment, and providing clients with ongoing reporting and optimization support.



Traveling with less environmental impact

The following suggestions can help travel buyers further integrate environmental initiatives into their managed travel programs and help travelers minimize their environmental impact:

- Take advantage of environmental reporting made available through your TMC, and collaborate to drive further improvements in use of fuel efficient travel and carbon reductions.
- Make travelers aware of the resources available to assist them in making environmentally responsible travel decisions. For example, communicate relevant OBT functionality and the location of tools such as carbon calculators. Additionally, provide environmental friendly travel tips on a regular basis. Awareness is key in changing behavior and taking advantage of the choices today’s suppliers give in travel.
- Encourage rail travel as an alternative on routes where both options are available and the time difference makes sense. Engage with rail providers on the potential for corporate discounts and/or other value-add offering for business travelers, and assess the potential to shift volume to rail where it makes sense.
- Green your organization’s meetings by requiring the facility have reusable dishes, towels and linens and minimal disposable items, beverages provided via reusable containers, and more. Work with properties that: have recycling containers readily available for attendees, actively seek to conserve water and energy, use biodegradable cleaning products, and donate leftover food to the community when possible. Finally, send meeting materials electronically.
- Replace unnecessary trips with travel alternatives like telepresence, videoconferencing, or web conferencing while also encouraging multi-purpose, maximized travel when it does occur.

CWT North America making strides of its own

The environment is a key component of [CWT North America's three-pronged CSR program](#), which also includes community involvement and diversity. The CWT North America Grassroots Environmental Team is a group of more than 40 volunteer CWT employees in the United States and Canada, representing all levels of the organization, as well as many locations and corporate functions, to drive greener behavior throughout the company.



In 2010 the CWT North America Grassroots Environmental Team conducted an environmental baseline assessment of CWT North America's facilities and mobilized to drive improvements in key areas of opportunity identified. Since then, CWT North America has reduced its carbon footprint, or Carbon Dioxide Equivalent, by 10% for gas and electrical consumption. Additional efforts center around decreasing the amount of printing by employees; reducing waste generated from kitchen areas in office locations; further implementing recycling and eco-friendly paper efforts; and driving further reductions in power usage.

A little effort makes a big difference

Organizations need to travel to accomplish their business goals, but today more than ever and with little effort, they can also partially or fully mitigate the negative environmental impact of their travel. CWT is committed to assisting clients in these efforts via a variety of industry-leading products and expert advice. We also continue to drive improvements in our own organization, both in North America and across the globe. The recognition our products and offices periodically receive for our environmental efforts is much-appreciated validation, but the biggest reward is knowing we are making a difference for the travel industry, for our clients, for ourselves, and for years to come.

CWT received the 2011 ICARUS Sustainability Award from the Institute of Travel & Meetings UK & Ireland, for the fourth consecutive year.

Industry resources

The below resources can provide ongoing information on sustainability and the environment. Also, information on preferred suppliers' offerings and accomplishments can be found on their websites.

- [Global Business Travel Association \(GBTA\) Corporate Social Responsibility Committee](#)
- [International Air Transport Association \(IATA\): Sustainability](#)
- [American Hotel & Lodging Association's Green Resource Center](#)
- [Hotel Association of Canada: Green Key Eco-Rating Program](#)
- [Earth Day Network](#)
- [Earth Day Canada](#)
- [Carlson Wagonlit Travel](#)

¹ [GreenLodge.org](#)

² [Air Canada: Our Commitment to the Environment](#)