

## FreshStay(R) reports 2,700% gain in smoke-free hotels

2006-08-24

---

With 2,300 Marriott properties going smoke free, more than 5% of

U.S. hotels will be 100% non-smoking

A desire to surpass guests' standards has always been crucial in the hospitality industry. Today, a smoke-free environment is one of those standards. Americans expect fresh air everywhere, and with businesses and communities on board, they are getting it. Travelers can breathe easier now that hotels across the country are taking steps to improve indoor air quality for all of their guests.

Westin Hotels & Resorts led the way - announcing in January that 77 Westin-brand properties in the United States, Canada and the Caribbean were going 100-percent nonsmoking. More recently, Marriott International announced plans to go completely smoke free by Sept. 1 throughout its about 2,300 hotels comprising 400,000 guestrooms in the United States and Canada. Marriott International's move involves 29 times as many hotels and encompasses 10 brands: Marriott, JW Marriott, The Ritz-Carlton, Renaissance, Courtyard, Residence Inn, SpringHill Suites, Fairfield Inn, TownePlace Suites and Marriott ExecuStay.

### **The Fresh Market**

According to Ray Burger, operator of **FreshStay(R)** ([www.FreshStay.com](http://www.FreshStay.com)), an online directory of smoke-free lodging facilities worldwide, the number of completely smoke-free hotels in the United States has grown 2,700 percent during the first eight months of 2006 alone.

'With the Marriott chain aboard, more than 5 percent of the 53,000 hotels in this country will be smoke free,' said Burger, President of Saint Charles-based Pineapple Hospitality. 'The fresh air movement is catching on like wild fire across the world, and Marriott's across-the-board move shows the leadership and awareness that will encourage other major brands to follow suit.'

'Thankfully, every destination has one, if not several, smoke-free lodging options,' Burger added. 'The smoke-free trend isn't just a niche. Every week, hotels in all markets go 100-percent non-smoking and join our blossoming **FreshStay(R)** network.'

According to the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2004 about 44.5 million adult Americans (just about 21 percent of the population) were smokers. But Burger said many smokers have requested non-smoking rooms because they don't care for the pungent smell, stale air and health issues associated with smoking rooms.

'We salute Marriott International, especially the Marriott properties on **FreshStay(R)** that helped pioneer this move within Marriott and within the hospitality industry worldwide,' Burger added. 'FreshStay(R)'s dozens of hotel brands and thousands of 100-percent smoke-free lodging choices across the globe just got a whole lot better thanks to Marriott.'

### **Guest Driven**

'The vast majority of our guests - and of most hotels' guests for that matter - favor a completely smoke-free environment,' said Enrique Jevons of the 156-suite Los Altos (Calif.) Residence Inn. 'The only way to provide this experience is to ban smoking throughout the building. Therefore, we have extended this non-smoking preference throughout all areas of our hotel. To accommodate guests who smoke, we offer rooms with balconies and other smoking-designated areas outside of the building.'

Jevons said the response has been overwhelmingly positive from guests and employees alike: 'We have received many, many positive comments from guests and not a single related complaint to date. Guest satisfaction scores also have improved.'

'Staff members are equally happy about the decision,' he added. 'The front desk staff no longer has to worry about checking in non-smokers into smoking rooms when no non-smoking rooms are available. Our housekeeping staff appreciates the ease of cleaning non-smoking rooms compared to smoking rooms, and reassigning pregnant housekeepers and other staff concerned about second-hand smoke to non-smoking sections of the hotel no longer is a scheduling concern.'

Cleaning costs are down as well.

'The frequently needed dry cleaning of drapes and cleaning of carpet in smoking rooms is the most-dramatic cost savings,' Jevons said. 'Maintenance costs and related material expenses also have been cut, including reduced frequency of repainting rooms due to the yellowing of paint in smoking rooms.'

'Previously, just 2 percent of our guests requested smoking rooms,' Jevons added. 'Some of this 2 percent now stay in our guestrooms with balconies, where they can smoke outdoors. Overall, our reservations are up 4 percent since going smoke free. Of course, being listed and linked on **FreshStay(R)** helps.'

## **Pets vs. Peeves**

Since January 2006, **FreshStay**(R) member Park Lodge Hotels' three properties have allowed pets while denying smokers indoors - and they've each realized a net gain in business, said Bob Clement, president and chief operating officer of the Waltham, Mass.-based company.

The company's Courtyard Boston Waltham (the second Courtyard by Marriott opened in the United States) has 114 guestrooms and three suites. The property went non-smoking in March 2005.

'We've heard nothing but great comments,' Clement said. 'I've heard that other national chains soon will be following suit, which is great because I think this trend is wonderful.'

Park Lodge Hotels charges guests who smoke in non-smoking rooms, public indoor areas or non-smoking areas elsewhere on property \$100, while some others are charging \$200 to \$250.

'Our corporate clients love the policy,' Clement said. 'This smoke-free movement is good for all concerned - whether everyone knows it or not just yet.'

## **Healthy Outlook**

'We were New York City's first smoke-free Residence Inn and the chain's 500th property when we opened last year,' beamed Jim McCabe, director of sales and marketing at the 350-suite Residence Inn Times Square, a member of **FreshStay**(R).

'We want to provide a fresh, healthy environment for our guests and employees,' McCabe said. 'Being a brand new building in 2005, we had the opportunity to do it right - to be 100-percent smoke-free from the outset.'

McCabe said guests are constantly telling staff how much they appreciate their rooms and the hallways and public areas smelling so clean and fresh.

'Our room freshness scores consistently are in the high-90s - generally 5 to 10 percent higher than most others,' McCabe said. 'Being smoke free has helped us gain transient and group business.'

The move to smoke free isn't the leap of faith it once was; nowadays, it's an obvious step based on facts.

'When I started out nearly two decades ago, I'd say 25 to 35 percent of guestrooms were smoking, whereas 10 percent or less are today. Many smokers themselves request non-smoking rooms and just smoke outside,' he said. 'One smoker told me, 'I smoke but I don't want to stay in one of those rooms.'''

## **About Pineapple Hospitality**

Headquartered in Saint Charles, Mo., Pineapple Hospitality(TM) is an EPA Energy Star™ partner bringing fresh ideas to hospitality guests' doors and owner/operators' bottom lines - including **FreshStay**(R) ([www.FreshStay.com](http://www.FreshStay.com)), Environmentally Sensitive Amenities, the greenSPA luxury amenity and dispenser system, energy-efficient lighting, Guestat programmable thermostats, Oxygenic water-efficient showerheads, the Nature's Mist deodorization system, and dozens of other products/programs. To get a taste of Pineapple's sweet solutions helping thousands of hotels bolster business and cut costs, visit [www.pineapplehospitality.net](http://www.pineapplehospitality.net) or call Ray Burger at 636-922-2285.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com>

The URL for this story is:

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article23773.html>

© 1998 - 2007 Nevistas and the author.

Brought to you by Hotel News Resource

*Distribute your news on our Network*

See what all the buzz is about at:

[http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/Info-news\\_account\\_info.html](http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/Info-news_account_info.html)