



HOW TO REDUCE SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

Guidance for tourism businesses



Futouris e.V.

www.futouris.org

Preserving the heritage of holiday destinations and developing a sustainable future for the travel industry - that is what Futouris stands for! Our members are committed to the improvement of living conditions, the conservation of biological diversity and environment and to climate protection. Our aim is to help - in the long term, comprehensively and sustainably. All measures are planned and implemented in close collaboration with the local people.



Travel Without Plastic

www.travelwithoutplastic.com

Travel Without Plastic is an organisation established by tourism and sustainability professionals to provide practical advice and implement strategies to reduce unnecessary single-use plastic consumption, creating environmental benefits, reducing costs and engaging staff and customers from across the tourism sector. Travel Without Plastic created a range of online tools including the Let's Reduce Single-Use Toolkit which is available on their website.



Save The Med

www.savethemed.org/en

The organisation Save The Med, based on Mallorca, aims to reduce the amount of single-use plastic products used in the Balearic Islands. They launched their "Plastic Free Balearics" Programme in 2018 with the objective of tackling plastic pollution in the islands by working together with businesses, organisations, communities, schools, local authorities and individuals towards a 100% single-use plastic free Balearic Islands.

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Did you know that...?

... **8 million tons**
of plastic waste enters the oceans each year¹

... it takes up to **450** years
for a bottle to decompose²

... our oceans could contain
more plastic than fish by 2050³

... tourism increases the waste in the
Mediterranean Sea by **33%** during summer⁴

... single-use plastic items such as
straws and bottles
are amongst the most common litter
items found on beaches⁵

... the financial impact on Mediterranean tourism
industry due to plastic pollution is
approx. **268 million €** each year⁶

Worldwide

up to 8 million tons of plastic waste enter the oceans each year. According to estimates, about 80% of the garbage found in the sea is plastic waste. The Mediterranean is one of the most affected marine regions.

Plastics do not decompose in the same way as organic material or paper. The decomposition takes much longer (e.g. plastic cup up to 250 years) and even then, they simply degrade into much smaller particles (some are even invisible to the naked eye) known as microplastics, which contain toxins. These are eaten by plankton and fish and ultimately end up in our food chain. Plastic pollution can cause great harm to the marine environment and wildlife. In addition to environmental problems, plastic litter also causes economic risks, e.g. for tourism in coastal regions suffering from polluted beaches.⁷

In addition to the negative impact of plastic pollution on tourism destinations, the tourism sector itself contributes to the generation of single-use plastic waste. As part of their holiday, guests are often offered single-use plastic items such as drinking cups or straws, plastic bottles or bags, whether this is in their hotels or on excursions.

A study by the environmental organization WWF shows that due to tourists, marine litter increases by up to 33% on Mediterranean coasts during the summer season.⁸

In response to the problems caused by plastic pollution, the European Commission defined a European strategy for the future use of plastics in January 2018. The plans are to reduce the consumption of single-use plastic products as well as the use of microbeads. A directive with corresponding provisions applicable throughout the EU was adopted in early summer 2019.⁹

The members of the sustainability initiative Futouris e.V. fully support this approach and aim to go even further. In their joint project "Plastic-free Holidays" their goal is to reduce the amount of unnecessary tourism-related single-use plastic waste and improve waste separation processes and recycling rates.

In order to support businesses in reducing single-use plastic waste and to implement sustainable alternatives, this guidance was developed. It provides information and practical advice, focusing on more sustainable alternatives to many unnecessary single-use plastic products that are commonly found in hotels. This guidance offers support to hotels worldwide as a step-by-step-plan on how to start, how to monitor and record results, and to communicate about single-use plastic reduction to guests and staff.

We kindly invite you to work together with us on tackling the plastic waste problem. Please share your ideas, experiences and successes with us.



We highly appreciate your ongoing commitment!
Your Futouris team



1.1 THE THREE-R-PRINCIPLE

A good principle to help you to manage your consumption of single-use plastic products is the three R-principle.

When planning to reduce or eliminate single-use plastic products from your hotel operations focus as much as possible on the removal of products before investigating replacement options:

Remove

unnecessary plastic products

Replace

single-use with services or more sustainable options

Recycle

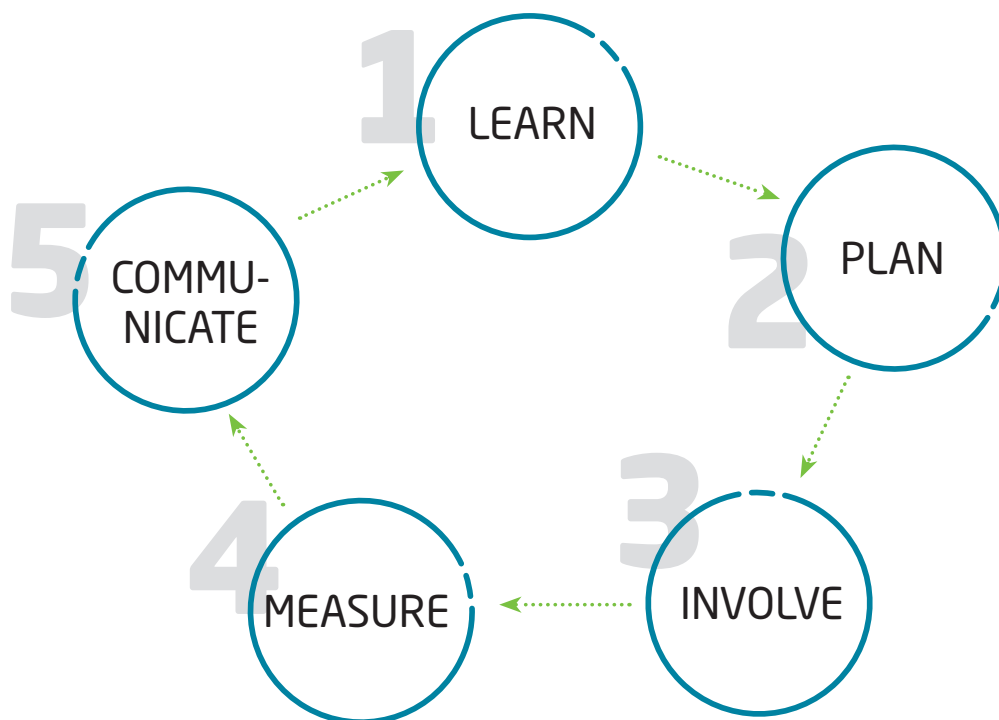
remaining plastic waste items

- 1. REMOVE** items that are unnecessary and can be eliminated entirely (e.g. straws or miniature guest room amenities)
- 2. REPLACE** single-use plastic items
 - with **processes** instead of products (e.g. amenities on request instead of amenities being provided in guest rooms),
 - with **reusable products** or **reusable packaging systems** (e.g. refillable water bottles in guest rooms which can be refilled from dispensers in the hallway),
 - with materials that can break down and decay safely in nature (e.g. products that are certified as home compostable).
- 3. RECYCLE** or responsibly dispose of all remaining plastic waste items that can't be eliminated or replaced with services/reusable alternatives.

1.2 FIVE-STEP PLAN TO MANAGE PLASTIC REDUCTION

Tackling your use of (single-use) plastic can be challenging. Our suggested 5-step-plan supports you in starting your plastic-reduction journey and enables you to manage your plastic reduction effectively.

1. Gather data on single-use plastic consumption by undertaking a self-assessment with our free template.
 - How much/which kinds of plastic do you use and in which operational departments?
 - What can you control immediately (products purchased for use within your company)?
 - Which types of single-use plastic waste are generated by contractors and suppliers?
2. Create a reduction strategy which should include clear ambitions and targets. What do you want to achieve and what is the timeframe? Consider the three-R-principles above.
3. Involve your staff and suppliers and communicate your strategy and targets to them, so they understand what you are trying to achieve and can support your strategy.
4. Monitor your progress regularly (achievements, single-use plastic consumption statistics, what is going well, what needs to be improved and why?).
5. Communicate changes and updates with guests, ask for their support.



2 Guidance: **Sustainable alternatives** to single-use plastic items

The following tables show a range of alternatives for the most common single-use plastic items consumed in hotels. The index used was developed by the Majorcan NGO Save The Med to quantify the impact of plastic products compared with common alternatives, to help you choose the most sustainable option.


The index takes into consideration the impact of the product's material, the size of packaging, its reusability and end-of-life facilities for alternative products available in the Balearic Islands.

The index works on a scale of 1-10. A solution rated 0 has the least negative impact, a solution rated 10 has a high negative impact.

GOOD TO KNOW

Making certain items such as straws, amenities and slippers on request only also helps to reduce the amount of plastic.



Plastic water bottle		Impact 7,05	
POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE			IMPACT
Tap water			0
Dispensers (guests to refill their bottle)			2,14
Reusable bottles (carafes) with filtered water on site			2,20
Medium glass bottles (local & returnable to supplier)			2,20
Medium glass bottles (local and disposable)			4,40

Mini toiletries Impact 8,54

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
Unwrapped soap bar	0
Refillable dispenser for shampoo, shower gel, lotion, soap etc., from large container, returnable to supplier	1,76
Refillable dispenser for shampoo, lotion etc. from large non-returnable container	3,53

<div> <div>Plastic straws</div> <div>Impact 10,0</div> </div>	
POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
No straws at all	0
Reusable straws made from glass	2,93
Reusable straws made from stainless steel	3,01
Reusable straws made from bamboo	3,12
Single-use straw made from paper	5,67
Single-use straw made from straw	5,83
Edible single-use straw	5,85

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
Frequent hand washing	0
Reusable (washable) gloves	4,27



Single-use slippers	Impact 8,13
Plastic wrapping	Impact 6,79

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
Reusable slippers made from mixed fibres and available on request, unwrapped	4,06
Reusable slippers made from mixed fibres available on request, in cotton bag	Slipper 4,06, cotton bag 3,51
Single-use slippers from natural fibres (e.g. hemp) unwrapped	6,43
Single-use slippers from recycled plastic, unwrapped	7,38
Single-use slippers (mixed fibres) unwrapped	8,13
Single-use slippers (mixed fibres) wrapped with slim reusable band	Slippers 8,13, band 3,38

CLEANING MATERIALS

Cleaning products in plastic bottles Impact 5,29

Single-use wipes (mixed fibres) Impact 8,13

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
Cleaning products provided in large containers that are returned to supplier for refill	1,76
Cleaning products provided in large containers that are separated for recycling	3,38
Reusable wipes made from natural fibres	3,51
Cleaning products provided in plastic bag refills that are separated for recycling	3,53
Reusable wipes made from microfibres	4,06



POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
No bin bags at all	0
Bio-based bin bags	5,26

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
Reusable laundry bags (medium size) made of cotton or linen	2,63
Single-use laundry bags (medium size) made from paper	4,37

Category	Impact
Single-use plastic amenities	8,54
Plastic wrapping	7,05

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
No amenities at all	0
Replace amenities with services (e.g. sewing repair, show-shining on request)	0
Amenities made from mixed plastics and wrapped in paper	Paper wrapping 5,83 + Amenity 8,54
Amenities made from and wrapped in bio-based plastic material	7,01

plastic cups Impact 10,0

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE IMPACT

Reusable cups made from glass	2,93
Reusable cups made from hard plastic	4,27
Single-use paper cups lined with bio-based plastic	6,49
Single-use paper cups lined with traditional plastic	6,79

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
Provided in large format bottles, dispensers or bowls	3,53
Pre-portioned in small ceramic dishes (from large containers)	3,53

<div> <div>  </div> <div>  </div> </div>	
POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
Provided in sugar, salt and pepper mills , from large format bags	3,53
Single-use paper sachets	5,83

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
BYO (Bring Your Own) policy	0
Reusable take-away boxes	2,64
Boxes from bagasse	4,37
Boxes from naturally compostable materials such as paper, bamboo or palm leaves	4,67

Plastic film wrap	Impact 6,76
Tin foil	Impact 6,03

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
In hotel kitchen: reusable silicone covers or Tupperware	4,27
For guests: reusable boxes / trays with reusable covers	4,27
Snack bar: Greaseproof paper	6,79

Tea bag	Impact 6,79
Plastic wrapping	Impact 7,05

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
Loose-leaf tea stations (tea in large plastic bags)	3,53
Tea bags wrapped in paper	Tea bag 6,79 Paper wrapping 5,83

WHY BIO-BASED BIN BAGS HAVE A HIGHER NEGATIVE IMPACT THAN TRADITIONAL PLASTIC ONES

Despite the upstream advantages (being made from renewable resources), bio-based liners are rated lower than traditional plastic liners due to a greater number of downstream challenges:

- They are difficult to differentiate from traditional plastic and are therefore **incorrectly used and/or disposed of by general public**.
- Bioplastic separation and recovery facilities are not developed.
- If composting facilities are available, bags are often separated as the machinery cannot identify

if they are made from bioplastic (can be processed as food waste) or traditional plastic (cannot be processed as food waste).

If industrial composting facilities exist, follow these guidelines to ensure that you do not compromise waste recovery systems:

Use bio-plastic liners to collect food waste and other bio-plastic products AND separate for specific composting collection. **Do NOT put bio-plastic liners into traditional plastic recycling bins.**

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRODUCTS LABELLED AS 'HOME COMPOSTABLE' AND 'INDUSTRIALLY COMPOSTABLE'

There are two types of compostable plastic **1) Home Compostable** and **2) Industrially Compostable**. Unfortunately, the manufacturers of many products don't make this clear and this means businesses may buy products made from materials that cannot be suitably disposed of.

Home, or backyard, compostable plastic is capable of breaking down at the soil temperature and conditions found in home / hotel compost piles. This may happen very quickly in warm climates but very slowly in cold climates. It also depends on humidity.

Industrially compostable plastic requires special conditions to biodegrade. These conditions can (i.e. temperatures over 50°C) can ONLY be achieved in specific facilities AND you would need to separate them on your business premises so that they are not confused with traditional plastic products

Standards for industrially compostable plastic do exist (EN 13432, ASTM D6400). Standards for home composting (OK Compost, TUV Vincotte and AS5810) are more complicated as the conditions will vary geographically, so what is theoretically possible may not actually be possible.

If you are unsure, ask suppliers of bio-based products if they meet recognised standards for home or industrial composting and make your decision according to the disposal facilities that are available to you. If disposal facilities are not available for these materials, it is suggested to avoid them at this time and find other suitable alternatives.

3 Separation, recycling and correct disposal

Globally, over 2 billion tons of municipal solid waste are generated every year, but only 13.5% of the world's waste is recycled, and one-third of waste is inappropriately managed.¹⁰

Waste that is inappropriately disposed of in natural environments causes severe ecological and social impacts. In order to protect the environment and to preserve natural resources, the correct recovery, recycling and disposal of waste is important.



The following tips can help you to improve the waste separation and collection in your business that recovery and recycling is facilitated:

- **Check with your local waste facility** or waste collection contractor to verify which materials are accepted for recovery and recycling. When you know this, ensure that people responsible for purchasing **prioritise products that can be processed locally** (e.g. avoid products made from bioplastic materials if there is no infrastructure in your destination to dispose of them).
- **Provide facilities for staff and guests to separate waste** according to the information you received from your local waste facility or contractors (e.g. sufficient waste bins throughout the premises that are **clearly labelled** and encourage staff and guests to separate waste accordingly.)
- **Regularly train your staff on waste separation** and encourage them to support your efforts and measures. New habits take time to embed, this will require regular follow ups to ensure waste is being properly separated.
- **Create communication signs for guests** and encourage them to support your strategy. Signage will need to be visual if you have guests from many different nationalities. Trying to educate guests about the correct disposal of every material is challenging. It is often easier to start with a focus on one or two products to make it easier for guests (e.g. plastic bottle collection points, newspaper collection points).
- When providing waste bins for separation, try to use colours or signage that is representative of the local waste collection system (e.g. yellow bins for plastic items, blue bins for paper, green for glass).
- **Don't be tempted to 'wish-cycle'.** This term represents our appetite to ensure that waste products are disposed of responsibly, but it often causes problems at the waste facility. For example, many types of plastic packaging are not recyclable, they must be disposed of with general waste. This can be difficult for staff and guests to understand, they 'want it' to be recycled and therefore discard non-recyclable plastic packaging into plastic recycling bins. This contaminates the waste stream and in the worst case can mean that all of the plastic waste (even the recyclable plastic) ends up in landfill or incineration. This might be too much information for your guests, but it is vital that your staff become aware of this and act accordingly.

BEST PRACTICE WASTE DISPOSAL SYSTEM IN HOTEL

The Ministry of Environment of the Balearic Islands has created helpful information for hotels on how to reduce the waste volume and how to dispose of. Their manual contains a seven-step-plan on how to reduce the volume of waste in hotels as well as practical advice on reduction, disposal and recycling for each hotel department.




In addition, a website (<https://www.separ-arensuneix.net/es/>) was created where hotels can find further information, e.g. videos giving practical advice about waste reduction for specific occasions like events or parties. There are also FREE posters that hotels can use as supporting communications material.

4 Tips and best practice examples

4.1 GENERAL TIPS

- 1. Create a plastic inventory** and list all single-use plastic products consumed in your business, what they are used for and how much waste they generate.
- 2. Apply the “Process over Products” approach!** Whenever possible try to change the process not the product (please see page 16 for an example).
- 3. Avoid single-use packaging** and pre-portioned products whenever possible.

- 4. Always choose local options** if available. It supports the local economy, it reduces carbon emissions and you are more independent from global crisis.
- 5. Regularly train your staff** and involve them in finding solutions.
- 6. Communicate to your guests** and involve them in supporting your strategy.
- 7. Always choose bulk options** if available. It is often more cost-effective and it reduces the volume of plastic waste produced as our example shows:

	 Miniature hotel bottle (0.04 l)	 Standard domestic bottle (0.35 l)	 Returnable container (5 litres) with refillable bottle
Amount of bottles needed	910	104	1 bulk and 1 bottle
Amount of plastic needed to produce bottle	6 g	36 g	Container: 172 g Bottle: 36 g
Total of plastic used for annual supply	5.5 kg	3.7 kg	0.2 kg

* for a yearly supply = 36.4 litres (real data from a partner hotel).

4.2 BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

“Water from air”-instead of plastic water bottles in JW Marriott Phuket

Since 2018, hotel JW Marriott, Phuket offers its guests fresh mineral water in reusable glass bottles. The water is taken from the surrounding moist air and filtered into drinking water. More than 100,000 plastic bottles were replaced with this innovative “water from air”-technology in 2018 which is perceived positively by guests.¹¹

“Wave of Change” program, Iberostar Group:

With its ambitious initiative “Wave of Change” Iberostar Hotels achieved the goal of being the first Spanish hotel chain completely free of single-use plastic products in their hotel rooms in 2018. In total, over 607 tons of single-use plastic were avoided as a result of this program by the end of 2019.



Reduction measures included switching from plastic bottled water to glass bottles and dispenser/reuse systems, replacing mini shampoo/shower

gel bottles with dispensers as well as redesigning amenities using more sustainable materials and replacing individual plastic-packaged jam portions with dispensers at the breakfast buffet.



In addition, Iberostar invested in 3 industrial scale composting projects to work towards a circular economy, which now enables hotels to compost all organic waste.

As a next step, Iberostar Group plans to be completely waste-free by 2025.



Water refill stations on Balearic Islands by Cleanwave.org

Water refill stations on Balearic Islands by Cleanwave

In order to reduce the use of single-use plastic bottles the non-profit organization is building a network of refill stations on the Balearic Islands

where guests can refill their bottle with fresh drinking water for free. With this initiative more than 6.8 million plastic water bottles have been saved since July 2017. Hotels and other tourism businesses can be part of this initiative as well.



4.3 COST-BENEFIT-ANALYSIS

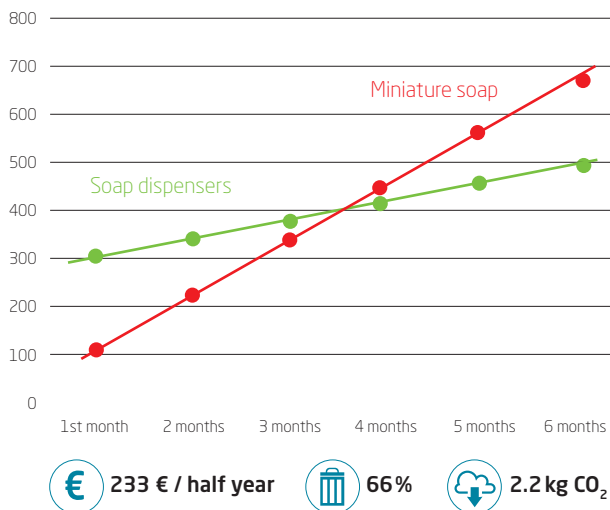
Even though single-use plastic is a cheap material, there are still opportunities for cost saving. For instance, by completely eliminating unnecessary products such as straws and stirrers you can make immediate savings. Even though the savings will be small, many small actions can add up over time.

Other alternatives can require larger initial investments which you will need to budget for, but many do

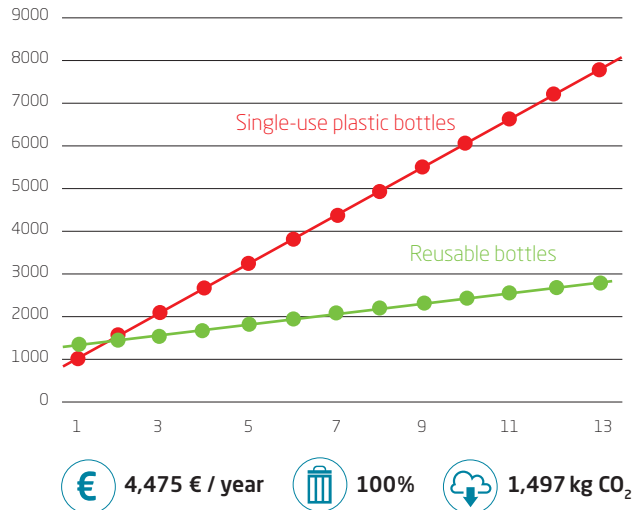
provide a good return in the medium to longer term.

The following overviews by Searious Business show the potential savings from using sustainable alternatives. For example, hotels can save up to 4,475 € a year and 1,497 kg CO₂ by using refillable bottles with filtered water from the tap instead of single-use plastic bottles.

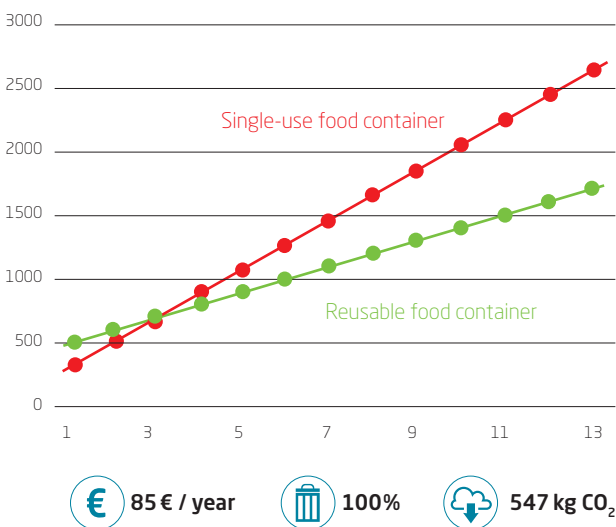
**Soap dispensing system
vs miniatures**



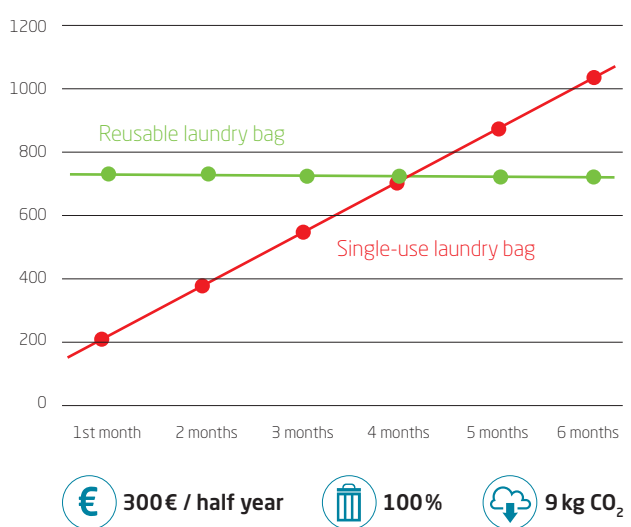
**Single-use water bottles
vs reusable bottles
(50 bottles per day)**



**Single-use food containers
vs reusable containers
(50 packed meals per day)**



**Single-use laundry bags
vs reusable laundry bags**



€ = Cost reduction 🗑️ = Waste material reduction ☁️ = CO₂-reduction

*Source: Searious Business **Searious BUSINESS**

4.4 TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION

Your single-use plastic reduction strategy is a challenging ambition, and it is a great idea to get some help! We recommend involving everyone who plays a part in ensuring its success such as staff, guests and suppliers. Make sure that they understand:

- **WHY** you want to reduce single use plastic
- **WHAT** measures you are taking and for what reasons and
- **HOW** they can support these measures so that your strategy will be a great success.

Communication to staff

Your employees represent your business as they are at the forefront of a great guest experience. It is important to involve them so that they can be real ambassadors for sustainability. Engage your staff right from the beginning so that they are included in the processes that lead to creating change

- Explain to staff about the **impact of plastic waste in your destination** – make it locally relevant as this is more likely to motivate them to be part of the change.
- **Involve staff in the creation of the strategy** – what do they think can be done to make changes.

Encourage open and honest feedback, even if it means they suggest making changes that challenge years of habit or brand standards.

- **Discuss ALL ideas** that are suggested, this gives people confidence to be involved – if staff think their idea will not be taken seriously, they might not speak up, and you might miss out on some great opportunities.
- Create a **single-use plastic reduction team** so that ideas become action.
- Don't give up at the first hurdle – changes take time to embed and not everyone is on board immediately. Persevere a while longer before dismissing ideas that don't seem to work just because one or two people were unhappy about it.
- Examples of ways to inform staff about the impacts of single-use plastic products:



Out of plastic video by Cleanwave:

<https://youtu.be/gJ6ErqSoGk8>



Video by TED-ED / Emma Bryce about the life cycle of plastic bottles:

https://youtu.be/_6xINyWPpB8

GOOD TO KNOW



STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR WATER REFILLS

Bottled water is not only a business cost, but it generates a huge amount of single-use plastic waste. Switching from plastic water bottles to glass bottles is not the immediate solution as glass bottles still create waste if not properly recycled. Plus they are extremely resource intensive to produce and transport.

Change the process!

If tap water is safe to drink

→ Communicate it to guests and remove the bottled water completely. To encourage guests to drink the tap water provide refillable water bottles (free of charge or with a deposit to ensure their return).

If tap water is not safe or is unpleasant to drink

→ Consider installing water dispensers around the hotel (in public areas and in corridors) and provide drinking water carafes in the rooms that guests can refill. These carafes should be removed daily and washed through the dishwasher before being replaced. Use good communication to explain the water quality to guests.

Benefits

- Significantly reduced waste and costs.
- Removing plastic bottles from guest rooms means less touch points to transmit germs.
- Water dispensers provide great quality and great tasting water.
- It visually demonstrates your commitment to reducing single-use plastic waste.

Communication to guests

Guests expect hotels and businesses to lead by example when it comes to sustainability. 73% of global travellers intend to stay in an eco-friendly accommodation and this is an increasing trend.¹² Concerns around the impacts of single-use plastic pollution are wide reaching in the media and this raises interest and awareness with travellers. In turn, this creates expectations that businesses will take measures to avoid the use of unnecessary single-use plastic products. However, it is important that changes are not perceived to have a negative impact on the guest experience, therefore communications are extremely important.

- **Inform your guests about your waste reduction strategy**, what are you doing and very importantly WHY you are doing it and what they can do to support it. Similar to engaging staff, it is the WHY that will ultimately motivate guests to be accepting of changes.
- Communication should be **transparent, positive, honest and easy to understand**.
- **Written communications should be placed at strategic and relevant points** in the hotel – for example, a straw on request sign should be placed at the bar and ideally be visual so that it is quickly understood, whereas a poster in the lift (where people spend more time) may include more detailed information on plastic reduction policies as people have time to read it.

- **Staff should be trained** so that they can inform guests as well (for example a 30 second welcome introduction explaining that bathroom amenities / tea & coffee facilities are now available on request).

Communication to suppliers

There are a number of ways that suppliers can help but firstly they need to know that you wish to make changes so inform your suppliers about your strategy and targets. Be clear that you would like their help in finding products that aren't made or packaged in single-use plastic.

- Discuss with your suppliers ways and options **to reduce or eliminate unnecessary plastic packaging**.
- Ask them **to avoid double packaging** (e.g. single product wrapped in plastic and a bunch of these wrapped in plastic bags).
- Consider **operating on a deposit system/return system** for packaging (e.g. reusable crates, bottles, cool boxes).
- Ask if they have bulk/refillable options available (e.g. liquid sanitising dispensers, dried foods, large water carafes of 18 litres).
- Ask them to help you identify new services (e.g. touch free water dispensers).

Give priority to suppliers who proactively help you to reach your waste reduction targets.

EXAMPLES

Communications to guests can be similar to the example below, which you can adapt and change to your own requirements.

Confidence around cleanliness and hygiene of refillable toiletries:

Dear Guests, we are taking all necessary precautions to keep our hotel clean and hygienic and we are proud to do this without having to resort to single-use plastic. For example, our refillable bathroom amenities are cleaned daily as part of the housekeeping service, they are tamper proof and when they are almost empty, they are removed to be cleaned thoroughly cleaned and sanitised inside and out.

Amenities on request

Our hotel was consuming XX amount of miniature plastic bottles and packages every year by leaving amenities in guest rooms and we wanted to make a change so that we are part of the solution and not part of the problem. Amenities are still available, should you need them please ask us at reception and we will provide them immediately.

Confidence around general cleaning (Welcome introduction at reception)

All of our guest rooms are cleaned and sanitised thoroughly before your arrival, in fact this has always been the case however we are aware that you may feel more comfortable when we explain this to you in person. We don't want to use single-use plastic around or door stickers as we prefer to ensure that we have our processes right rather than create waste from single-use plastic products. If there's anything you are unsure of you can come back to reception and ask us at any time.

4.5 SINGLE-USE PLASTIC ALTERNATIVES AND HYGIENE

Single-use (plastic) products are commonly perceived as being safer and more hygienic because they are only used once and are then thrown away. During illness outbreaks, it can be tempting to switch back to single-use products for this reason, however they can give a false sense of security. Over 125 scientists released a statement in 2020 confirming that hygiene is not necessarily improved when using single-use products, furthermore single-use products produce a lot of waste and use a lot of natural resources. Whereas reusable products can be washed or sanitized to make safe to use again.

In this chapter we provide practical advice on how you can maintain hygiene standards whilst simultaneously avoiding unnecessary single-use plastic products. Our recommendations in this chapter **are not a substitute** for local health authority regulations which should always be followed.

Reducing touch points

One of the ways germs are spread is through contact with contaminated surfaces. All products (whether made from single-use plastic or other materials) are surfaces that can be contaminated and therefore transmit viruses.

By reducing the number of surfaces that people can come into contact with, you can reduce the possibility for the spread of infection.

For example: Providing miniature toiletries in a guest room will require the housekeeping staff to clean and sanitize every (small) bottle which is extremely time consuming. To save time staff will most likely replace old bottles with new ones even if they are not completely empty therefore creating waste and wasting money. Switching to good quality, tamper-proof refillable amenities that can be easily cleaned as part of the housekeeping regime not only saves time, it saves on costs and significantly reduces waste.

Communicating the cleaning process to guests

Guests expect their rooms and the facilities within them to be clean and hygienic. Cleanliness and hygiene

are guaranteed by processes. Covering the toilet seat and remote controls with a plastic wrap or putting a 'hygiene' sticker on the guest room door does not guarantee cleanliness, they are merely a communications tool. Instead of relying on these products, communicate your cleaning process to your guests at the reception or in the guest rooms via the in-room TV, on an app or if allowable in printed material.

Soap based detergents and water kill viruses

Hand washing and alcohol-based sanitizers are the most effective solution to avoid infections transmitted by hands or surfaces.

Make sure that there are enough hand washing or sanitising stations available in your hotel and that they are easily accessible.

Ask staff and guests to maintain good hand hygiene by using the provided sanitizing dispensers/hand washing stations and avoid providing miniature sanitisers or COVID kits.

Reusable masks

Where local regulations allow, provide staff with reusable masks which can be branded with your company logo. It is important to establish reusable mask hygiene procedures that all staff should be made aware of, including how masks should be laundered.

Single-use masks are often made with plastic fibres. They are lightweight, and even if they are disposed of correctly, they can easily become plastic pollution by blowing out of bins and into local environments.

Greenerguest.com offers a free e-learning course on how to reduce plastic and keep staff and guests safe.

If you must continue to use single-use masks, gloves or indeed any other single-use plastic products in order to comply with local regulations, separate products for recycling where infrastructure exists and as a minimum, take all possible steps to ensure that single-use plastic products don't become litter. Remember to always follow local regulations for the proper disposal of any potentially contaminated Personal Protective Equipment.

5 Sources and further reading

Sources

- 1) IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature): <https://bit.ly/2Z5RdBv>
- 2) WWF: The Lifecycle of Plastics <https://bit.ly/3cWSNOF>
- 3 & 4) WWF report (2019): Stop the flood of plastic – How Mediterranean countries can save their sea <https://bit.ly/3d3rv91>
- 5) EU Joint Research Center Technical report (2017): Top Marine Beach Litter Items in Europe <https://bit.ly/36VAup1>
- 6) WWF report (2019): Stop the flood of plastic – How Mediterranean countries can save their sea <https://bit.ly/2NRzV8N>
- 7) IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature): <https://bit.ly/2Z6rM2V>
- 8) WWF report (2019): Stop the flood of plastic – How Mediterranean countries can save their sea <https://bit.ly/2Z2TkGf>
- 9) EU Single-Use Plastic Directive: <https://bit.ly/3a4RIIB>
- 10) The World Bank: Trends in solid waste management <https://bit.ly/2Z9Vu6V>
- 11) Reuters: <https://reut.rs/2NhXqaM>
- 12) Booking.com: Sustainable Travel Report 2019 <https://bit.ly/3rA4j6c>
- 13) Health Expert Statement addressing safety of reusables and COVID-19 (2020): <https://bit.ly/3q9xNl3>

Further reading

- Futouris single-use plastic products spreadsheet: <https://bit.ly/2Mqtj0T>
- Travel Without Plastic “Let’s Reduce Single-Use” toolkit: www.travelwithoutplastic.com
- Save The Med “Plastic-free Balearics”: www.savethemed.org/en/
- CleanWave.org: www.cleanwave.org
- Greener Guest e-learning: www.greenerguest.com
- Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP): <https://bit.ly/3jzGLf0>
- WWF report (2019): Stop the flood of plastics – Effective measures to avoid single-use plastics and packaging in hotels <https://bit.ly/3a8bv3L>
- Zero Plastic Waste toolkits by Searious Business: www.seariousbusiness.com/islands

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