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Simple steps for a sustainable future

Small Business Award Winner
El Primero Boutique B&B Hotel
Chula Vista, California

Sustainable Lodging near San Diego

Located in the city of Chula Vista, El Primero Boutique B&B Hotel offers guests a unique experience at an environmentally-friendly hotel. The El Primero Hotel was built in 1930 and has since been updated with low-flow appliances, solar photovoltaic panels, fruit trees and much more.

Upon arrival, guests are informed of local public transportation options nearby and referred to a bicycle rental shop to reduce the amount of driving in and around Chula Vista. Rooms are outfitted with LED/ LCD TVs, LED light bulbs and occupancy sensors to effortlessly reduce the amount of energy used by each hotel guest. Placards asking guests to recycle, conserve energy and reduce water use are strategically placed around the rooms by faucets, light switches and the air conditioner.

An outdoor garden grows pineapple, mango, papaya, kiwi and cherimoya for guests to enjoy and is also used by El Primero in their signature breakfast offerings. El Primero created two compost bins from old city trash containers, providing the garden with nutrient rich and free compost. Seedlings and plants are given to guests, employees and acquaintances with instructions as a parting gift-- one seedling even made its way to Russia! In addition, a drip irrigation system was installed to water nine new palm trees. The palm trees shade the parking lot, helping to minimize the urban heat island effect.

El Primero Boutique B&B Hotel was the recipient of the 2009 CoolCalifornia Small Business Excellence Award. Throughout the past four years, owners Ruffino and Soledad Roque continued to update and improve El Primero, making it a 2014 CoolCalifornia Small Business of the year.

Business Snapshot:

El Primero Boutique B&B Hotel is a small bed and breakfast located near San Diego, just 7 miles from the California-Mexico border.



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BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Green Retrofits:

- Upgraded 22 old televisions to LED/ LCD TVs
- Replaced the buildings light switches with 62 occupancy sensors
- Replaced CFL light bulbs with LEDs
- Repainted with low-VOC paint
- Planted 9 new shade trees in the parking lot

Costs and Savings:

- 22 LED TVs totaling \$4,400
- 64 occupancy sensors, free through San Diego Gas and Electric
- Save 7 percent annually on their electricity bill



Photo Credit: CoolCalifornia.org

Previous Award Winning Actions

Waste Reduction

Many hotels are burdened with managing the waste produced by their guests. El Primero began to tackle this problem by encouraging guests to conserve and preserve via signs and tips. They also developed an intensive recycling and composting program to manage the waste, reducing garbage going to the landfill by 70 percent.

Energy Use

Being leaders in energy independence, the owners of El Primero have installed 18 solar panels generating an average of 21 kwh/day of clean electrical power. On site electricity generation is coupled with investments in energy star appliances, motion sensor light switches, energy efficient lighting fixtures and new CFL and LED bulbs. They are also planning to install wind turbines and a solar hot water heater and tank. To monitor their progress, El Primero has an energy audit conducted every 2 years.

Environmentally-friendly Practices

El Primero incorporated environmentally-friendly practices into their standard operating procedure by writing a 14-point Practices and Initiatives document for staff. They resolved to use only environmentally sensitive cleaning products, recycled office materials, donate clean, gently used towels to a shelter rather than throwing them away and encourage guests to reuse their linens and towels to conserve energy and water. In addition, El Primero installed UV rated windows to reduce the need for air conditioning and heating. Staff is trained and regularly reminded of the environmentally-friendly policies and are encouraged to share these goals with guests.

Towel and Linen Reuse Program

Guests can sign up for El Primero's linen reuse program where they are given clean sheets and towels at the beginning of their stay and are changed out every few days instead of every day to minimize waste water and chemical usage. After old towels show signs of wear, El Primero takes the extra step and donates these unwanted items to local shelters.

Photo Credit: CoolCalifornia.org



A guest room at El Primero Boutique B&B Hotel in Chula Vista, California.

"As a business owner, I always increase awareness by emphasizing the slogan 'reduce, reuse, recycle, re-purpose'. Composting, recycling, turning off lights and saving water are all part of the dialogue among our employees and guests."
- Ruffino "Pie" Roque, Owner

Contact Information:

Ruffino "Pie" Roque
Owner
416 Third Ave.
Chula Vista, CA 91910
(619) 425-4486
pie@elprimero.com
www.elprimero.com