



Sustainability Practices in the Attractions Industry

The global attractions industry has a long record of pioneering and implementing sustainable practices in all facets of our business operations. By communicating our efforts with the millions of visitors and employees who pass through our facilities each year, we hope to inspire them to make positive sustainable choices as well.

For years, the term sustainability has referenced everything from climate change and food and water instability, to wildlife conservation to the responsible use of products. Sustainability is no longer simply a trendy buzzword but, rather, a way of living and doing business that is what our visitors expect and demand we do. Adopting sustainability practices in the attractions industry now will ensure a bright future for generations of visitors ahead.

Sustainability protects the long-term health of the attractions industry. That in part means staying relevant, while attracting younger audiences. Studies on generational theory show consumers who visit attractions when they are young will continue the behavior with their own families as they age. Attractions facilities modeling best practices and shaping audience behavior around the globe will have a profound impact on future generations. The best way to encourage our visitors to consume in a more sustainable manner is to lead by example.

Below are some examples of sustainability efforts within the attractions industry.

Water Conservation

Attractions operators know conserving water is good for the environment—and the bottom line. Many have taken steps to reduce flow rates, use wastewater and prevent leaks on water slides during daily operations.

Over the past decade, the Philadelphia Zoo in Pennsylvania has planned and executed ways to reduce water use throughout its 42-acre property. Since 2009, the zoo has reduced water use by 57 percent, which is equivalent to 542 Olympic-sized swimming pools' worth of water.

The zoo conserves water by filtering and recirculating water from animal habitats rather than draining and replacing it. The zoo also captures stormwater to replenish their water supply and collects rainwater from the McNeil Avian Center to replenish their lake. To keep stormwater runoff from polluting local rivers, the zoo has almost 9,000 square feet of "rain gardens," designed to absorb rainwater runoff. In addition, vegetation planted on top of buildings replaced heat-attracting shingles to make "green roofs" and permeable pavement is designed to soak up rainwater runoff in other areas.

Schlitterbahn Waterpark Galveston Island located in Texas is one of the top 10 attended water parks in the nation. When it comes to water conservation tactics, Schlitterbahn Galveston Island utilizes grey water for landscape where possible. One of their most effective initiatives is the conversion of all public restroom urinals to smart valve flush-less systems that utilizes enzymes which is flushed manually twice a day. The waterpark also uses automated faucet systems in guest restrooms. Each system saves 20,000 gallons per year, for a total saving parkwide of approximately 360,000 gallons per year.

Reducing Waste

Reducing waste by looking closely at products, packaging and suppliers is another sustainability measure the attractions community has adopted. This practice plays a valuable role in the reduction of food and beverage waste, area that typically sees the highest amount of waste produced. By adopting the use of recycled materials and acquiring better waste disposal systems, attractions are seeing significant reductions in what ends up in landfills.

All twelve SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment properties ceased using polystyrene foam plates, trays and bowls in favor of products made from 100 percent recycled material, including paper plates, at quick-service dining locations.

The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium in Ohio built its Mapori restaurant to ensure it is not only LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified, but also certified by the Green Restaurant Association (GRA).

Six Flags Over Texas introduced a Trash Reduction System that reduces the parks environmental footprint with a 75% to 90% reduction in trash using a system designed to rapidly reduce organic content within waste right at the source, cutting off-site transportation and processing costs and helping companies achieve zero waste to landfill.

IAAPA, the Global Association for the Attractions Industry, is the premier trade association representing the diverse and ever-changing attractions industry. IAAPA represents amusement parks, water parks, family entertainment centers, aerial adventure courses, zoos, science centers, aquariums, manufacturers and suppliers, with over 6,000 member companies from over 100 countries.

To learn more about the attractions industry's sustainability efforts, please contact Erika Scheffer at escheffer@iaapa.org.