



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: Low-emitting VOC paints and carpets throughout the hotel reduce indoor air contamination. A hundred rooftop solar panels store energy to heat water. At Print Works Bistro, the dining room's 52 (7-foot-tall) windows deliver streams of natural light.

The Right Approach In Greensboro

The Proximity Hotel proves you don't have to compromise style for sustainability. By **Jennifer V. Cole**



It's a typical stay at the Proximity Hotel in Greensboro, North Carolina. You wake up in Egyptian cotton, glance out the window of your spacious loft-inspired room, shower using Aveda toiletries, ride the elevator down to the lobby, and dine in the airy Print Works Bistro. Sounds typical for a luxury hotel—but it's not. Everything you passed or used was put there with a Green idea in mind. The window measures 50 square feet to allow for unmitigated natural light. The shower utilizes high-efficiency Kohler faucets to reduce water usage by 33%. The elevator is an Otis Gen2 regenerative model (the descent generates power for the ascent). And the restaurant serves locally sourced, sustainable foods.

You'd be forgiven for not realizing it, but you're in the Greenest hotel in America. It is the first—just announced in September—to earn Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Gone are the days when Green equaled Birkenstocks and granola. Every inch of this eco-chic model has been designed for the discerning traveler, from ambient lighting to bathrooms to artwork. Hotel designer and local owner Dennis Quaintance didn't leave the creature-comfort decision-making to some arbitrary panel of experts—he tested all of the bathroom fixtures and bedding in his own home. This 147-room hotel is where eco goes hand in hand with luxe, and the devil revels in the details. Dennis says it best: "It's conservation, not deprivation." *—turn to page 34*

Proximity Hotel: www.proximityhotel.com or (336) 379-8200. Rooms from \$239.

WRITER'S NOTE: Carbon Offsetting

Over the past year, I've logged approximately 35,000 miles while researching stories, resulting in 10 tons of carbon dioxide emissions. Supporting a carbon-offsetting project can counterbalance the effect of all that CO₂. Visit www.carbonfund.org to use online calculators that determine the impact of your travels and then let you choose the project you wish to support. I donated \$101.35 (the estimated amount to make up for the effects of my travels) to the Horse Hollow Wind Energy Center in Wingate, Texas. It's not a perfect solution, but it's a start.

PHOTOGRAPHS: JOHN O'HAGAN

Travel CHECK IN



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: Hotel designer and owner Dennis Quaintance tested all the bathroom fixtures in his own home. The hotel's concrete contains 4% fly ash, the mineral residue left from burning coal, which kept 72,578 pounds of waste out of landfills. Fifty-square-foot windows dominate the loft-like guest rooms.



Green on the Go

You may not always be able to find a LEED-certified hotel during your travels, but here are a few ways you can be a more responsible guest, no matter where you lay your head.

- **FLIP THE SWITCH:** Save energy by turning off the air conditioning/heat, lights, and TV when you leave.
 - **SUMMER SHADE:** Close your curtains in summer to keep out the heat of the sun; open them in winter to allow warmth into your room.
 - **HITCH A RIDE:** Use public transportation or the hotel's shuttle service whenever possible.
 - **PASS IT ON:** If complimentary newspapers are provided, place them in the lobby or lounge for others to read when you're done.
 - **LATHER, RINSE, RECYCLE:** Carry your own soap and shampoo in refillable bottles. Leave any unopened hotel toiletries behind to help reduce packaging waste.
 - **FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS:** Pack a night-light to use in lieu of leaving the bathroom light on—it's more energy efficient.
- **Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants**, a boutique hotel collection with locations in Texas, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., has implemented guest room recycling programs, prints only on recycled paper with soy ink, donates partially used toiletry bottles to local charities, and uses nontoxic cleaners throughout its more than 42 properties. www.kimptonhotels.com
 - This past summer, **Starwood** unveiled **Element Hotels** (inspired by Westin), the first hotel chain in the United States to require pursuit of LEED-certification. These eco-chic lodgings deliver on their sustainable promise with everything from complimentary bikes for guests to shampoo dispensers and water-efficient rain showers. Outposts in Baltimore, Maryland, and Irving and Houston, Texas, will open by the end of 2008, with more coming over the next two years. www.starwoodhotels.com/element
 - With more than 3,000 hotels in 74 countries, **Hilton's** environmental practices pack a punch. The hotel group has pledged to reduce waste, energy consumption, and carbon dioxide emissions by 20% and water consumption by 10% by 2014. www.hilton.com ●

RENEW WITH A CONSCIENCE

At locations across the country, both Avis and Hertz offer a Green collection of cars for about \$5 more per day. They can be reserved by specific make and model, including the incredibly fuel-efficient Toyota Prius Hybrid (48 mpg highway, 45 mpg city).