



PENANG
GREENHOTEL
EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

PENANG
2030

Penang Green Hotel Excellence Program Guidebook

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY



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Foreword from

YAB Chow Kon Yeow
 Chief Minister of Penang



Penang2030's aspiration to be "A Family-Focused Green and Smart State that Inspires the Nation" is more than a vision statement; it is a practical blueprint that guides how we grow our economy, care for our people and safeguard what makes Penang distinctive. Tourism and hospitality are central to this agenda. They generate employment, sustain local enterprises and showcase our living heritage to the world. As we welcome increasing numbers of visitors, it is imperative that growth remains responsible, resilient and firmly rooted in care for both people and place.

The Penang Green Hotel Excellence Program Guidebook represents a concrete step in advancing this commitment. It translates policy intent into clear, actionable practices for the hospitality sector, encompassing energy and water efficiency, waste and food-waste minimisation, responsible procurement, and meaningful engagement with local suppliers and communities. Beyond reducing environmental impact, these measures enhance operational efficiency, elevate service quality and strengthen guest confidence, while protecting the natural and cultural assets that underpin Penang's tourism economy.

Penang has consistently demonstrated leadership in environmental governance. From being the first state in Malaysia to champion the Say No to Plastic Bags initiative to the implementation of robust waste-segregation-at-source policies, we have led by example. Penang has also taken a proactive approach to visitor safety and service standards. As the first state in Malaysia to mandate hotel safety awareness videos for guests, we reinforce the importance of preparedness, professionalism

and guest welfare. This forward-looking measure complements the objectives of this guidebook, reflecting a holistic approach where sustainability, safety and quality advance together.

Global recognition further underscores the importance of maintaining these standards. Once again this year, Penang was named a must-visit destination by leading international platforms such as CNN Travel and The New York Times, placing the state firmly on the global tourism map. As international attention grows, so too does our responsibility to manage tourism sustainably and preserve the very qualities that draw visitors to our shores.

I encourage all hoteliers, industry partners and members of the hospitality workforce to embrace the guidance in this publication, invest in staff capability, and collaborate closely with local SMEs and communities so that the benefits of tourism are widely shared. The State Government will continue to support capacity-building initiatives and provide clear policy direction to ensure that sustainable practices are both practical and economically viable.

I extend my appreciation to the organisations, industry bodies and community partners whose expertise and commitment have contributed to the development of this guidebook. Together, let us ensure that Penang's tourism success remains responsible, resilient and environmentally sound – for the benefit of present and future generations.

Foreword from

**YB Dato' Seri Sundarajoo
A/L Somu**
Penang State Executive Councillor for
Housing and Environment



The built environment and the tourism industry are significant contributors to resource consumption. To meet our state's climate goals, we must transform how we manage our physical spaces—specifically our hotels, which operate 24/7 and consume substantial energy and water.

This guidebook is more than just a manual; it is a call to action. It focuses on tangible outcomes: reducing landfill waste, optimizing energy efficiency and implementing sustainable water management. As the EXCO for Housing and Environment, my priority is to ensure that Penang's development does not come at the cost of our natural ecosystems.

Transitioning to a "Green Hotel" status is an investment that pays dividends—both in operational cost savings and in the preservation of Penang's natural beauty. I commend the Penang Green Council for their dedication to providing the industry with the tools necessary to make this shift. Let us work together to make Penang a global gold standard for sustainable urban living and green tourism.

Preface from

Ms. Josephine Tan Mei Ling
Chief Executive Officer
Penang Green Council



At the Penang Green Council (PGC), we believe that sustainability is no longer an option – it is responsibility. Our mission is to accelerate Penang’s transition toward a circular economy and a resilient, future-ready community.

Today, sustainable tourism is no longer a trend, it is a responsibility. As global expectations shift toward ESG accountability and climate action, our hospitality sector plays a critical role in shaping Penang’s sustainable growth.

Hotels sit at the heart of tourism, community, and economy. Every green initiative will create a ripple effect across supply chains, local businesses, and visitor experiences. By embracing sustainable practices, our hotels can strengthen competitiveness while safeguarding our environment that makes Penang a world-class destination.

The Penang Green Hotel Excellence Program Guidebook serves as a practical roadmap to support this journey. It translates sustainability goals into clear, achievable actions tailor-made together with the industry players, professionals and government for our local context. Our aim is to cultivate a culture of Green Hospitality, where every guest stay contributes positively to the environment.

The urgency is clear. The time to act is now. I call upon our industry leaders to adopt, implement, and champion these practices. PGC remains your committed partner in driving this transformation.

Together, let’s position Penang as a leading model for sustainable tourism, not only in the region, but on the global stage. The responsibility is ours, and the time to act is now.

INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY

The Penang Green Hotel Excellence Program Guidebook is designed to help hotels in adopting sustainable practices in their daily operations. As industry expectations continue to evolve, sustainability has moved away from a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and is now an essential part of how hotels operate. This guidebook offers clear guidance to navigate this transition with ease, ensuring your establishment remains competitive, compliant, and cost-effective.

ABOUT the Penang Green Hotel Excellence Program

The Penang Green Hotel Excellence Program is the state's premier recognition initiative designed to support hotels in adopting and strengthening sustainable practices. Initiated by the State Government and managed by the Penang Green Council (PGC), the program helps to identify and celebrate hotels in Penang that demonstrate dedicated and outstanding commitment to environmental management in their daily operations.

Rather than being a one-time certification, participation in the program offers hotels a structured pathway and ongoing alignment

with the State's sustainability direction. This recognition will ultimately grant the hotels a prestigious edge in tourism marketing and aligning their brand with the Penang2030 vision for a green and smart state.



WHAT is a Green Hotel?

In the context of Penang's hospitality landscape, a Green Hotel is an establishment that integrates environmental stewardship into its daily operations through measurable performance. This involves a holistic approach to three crucial daily operations and financial investments to energy conservation, water conservation, and waste management.

Beyond technical upgrades, a Green Hotel prioritizes circular economy practices by eliminating single-use plastics and sourcing from sustainable supply chains. It is defined by its ability to deliver high-quality services while minimizing its carbon footprint, and by fostering a culture of environmental awareness among both staff and guests.

WHY Sustainability Matters for Your Business?

Adopting green practices is a smart business move that balances environmental responsibility with financial performance. By reducing energy and water consumption, hotels can lower utility expenses, which are normally the highest variable costs in daily operations. By consistently embedding environmental practices into daily routines, hotels reinforce

what matters most to today's guests – responsible and well-managed operations.

This practical approach helps hoteliers build a strong foundation for long-term operational efficiency while strengthening the hotel's competitiveness in Penang's evolving tourism landscape.


HOW to approach this Guidebook?

This guidebook serves as your "**Sustainability Concierge**," offering quick and practical guidance to hotel managers and department heads to address immediate answers to operational hurdles. Each section is structured to help hotels:

Whether you manage a heritage boutique hotel or a multinational resort, these measures provide the clarity and direction needed to transform and become a recognized leader in Penang's green hotel movement.

- **Understand** relevant state green policy or standards,
- **Implement** practical and achievable solutions, and
- **Prepare** the team for the official recognition process in a clear and simple way





BARRIERS AS MOTIVATORS: REFRAMING THE PATH TO EXCELLENCE

High-Cost VS Investment



While the upfront cost of green technology—such as smart HVAC systems or rainwater harvesting—may appear high, these **upgrades should be viewed as long-term investments** rather than added expenses. They help **reduce major operational costs**, particularly energy and water bills, and often generate measurable savings over time. By managing future utility expenses more effectively, hotels gain **greater financial certainty and flexibility**. In addition, achieving **Penang Green Hotel recognition strengthens market positioning**, allowing hotels to attract environmentally conscious travellers and turn sustainability efforts into a clear competitive advantage.

Guest Expectations VS Competitive Edge



Hoteliers might fear that green initiatives will compromise traditional luxury or convenience, but modern travel trends show that guests now view **sustainability as a hallmark of premium services**. This **shift in guest expectations** becomes a **motivator for innovation** rather than a barrier to service quality. By integrating **eco-friendly practices**—such as biodegradable amenities or farm-to-table dining—hotels can exceed guest desires for a **green hotel experience**. Being recognized as a Penang Green Hotel transforms environmental commitment into a valuable marketing asset, attracting **loyal and eco-conscious clientele**.

Structural Constraints VS Infrastructure Upgrades

Older buildings may present physical challenges for **green retrofitting**, but these limitations can motivate hotels to **modernise their infrastructure** and remain **competitive in the long term**. Instead of viewing **structural constraints** as a dead end, hoteliers can treat them as a **starting point for phased upgrades** that improve building performance and safety. Upgrading insulation, lighting, and water systems supports green certification, strengthens the hotel's **market value**, and **ensures compliance** with future environmental regulations, keeping the hotel relevant and competitive over time.

Skills Gaps VS Competencies

What often appears complex in green management is simply a **lack of practical guidance and experience**. This can become an **opportunity to strengthen workforce competencies**. Engaging with the Penang Green Hotel Excellence Program provides a structured learning environment that equips employees with valuable knowledge in **resource management and green technology**. Investing in employee training helps build knowledge, confidence, and staff engagement, while supporting long-term retention and preparing teams to manage sustainable hotel operations.

Time Consuming VS Efficiency

While **greentransitions** are often perceived as time-consuming, they encourage hotels to **review and streamline outdated workflows**. Implementing the structured frameworks in this guidebook can actually save time by simplifying **resource monitoring and procurement processes**. By integrating **sustainability into daily SOPs** rather than treating it as an “add-on” task, managers can **reduce time spent troubleshooting** waste issues or managing manual records.

Extra Workload VS Team Ownership

Concerns over the added management effort of green programs are common, but in practice, **structured green initiatives** help simplify how **responsibilities are shared across the hotel**. Instead of placing extra workload on senior management, the program supports the formation of **“Green Teams” across departments**. This approach encourages staff participation, improves coordination between teams, and helps **sustainability actions become part of daily work routines**. When sustainability becomes a **shared responsibility** rather than a management-driven task, the hotel benefits from smoother implementation and stronger team ownership.

INITIATING YOUR GREEN JOURNEY

Navigating the transition to a sustainable operation does not require immediate or large-scale changes. For many hotel managers, the challenge of sustainability is not a lack of commitment, but uncertainty about where to begin without disrupting daily operations. This phase is designed to move your team from ambition to action using a structured, step-by-step approach that identifies low-hanging fruit and long-term gains.

Step 1

Understanding the Core Sustainability Pillars

Before diving into any technical assessment or improvements, the hotel teams should have a shared understanding of what defines a Green Hotel in Penang.

The Penang Green Hotel approach is built on **five key pillars**:



Energy Efficiency focuses on optimizing HVAC, lighting, and kitchen equipment to lower utility costs.



Sustainable Sourcing ensures the supply chain that reflects environmental values through eco-labelled products and local vendors.



Water Conservation involves implementing smart fixtures and monitoring systems to reduce wastage.



Environmental Policy provides an administrative backbone, documenting hotel's commitment and helps staff members understand their role in supporting green practices.



Waste Management moves beyond simple recycling toward a circular economy, prioritizing food waste reduction and the total elimination of single-use plastics.

Step 2 *Conduct the Pre-Assessment*

By using the **Quick Green Check-in**, this simple diagnostic tool helps hotel managers understand their **current level of readiness** without requiring extensive documentation. By answering a series of targeted questions, the hotel's readiness can be instantly identified and recognize the gaps in current operations.



Scan Here for
Quick Green
Check-in

Step 3 *Complete the Penang Green Hotel Assessment*

Once the initial gaps are identified, the operations team should proceed to the official Penang Green Hotel Online Self-Assessment.



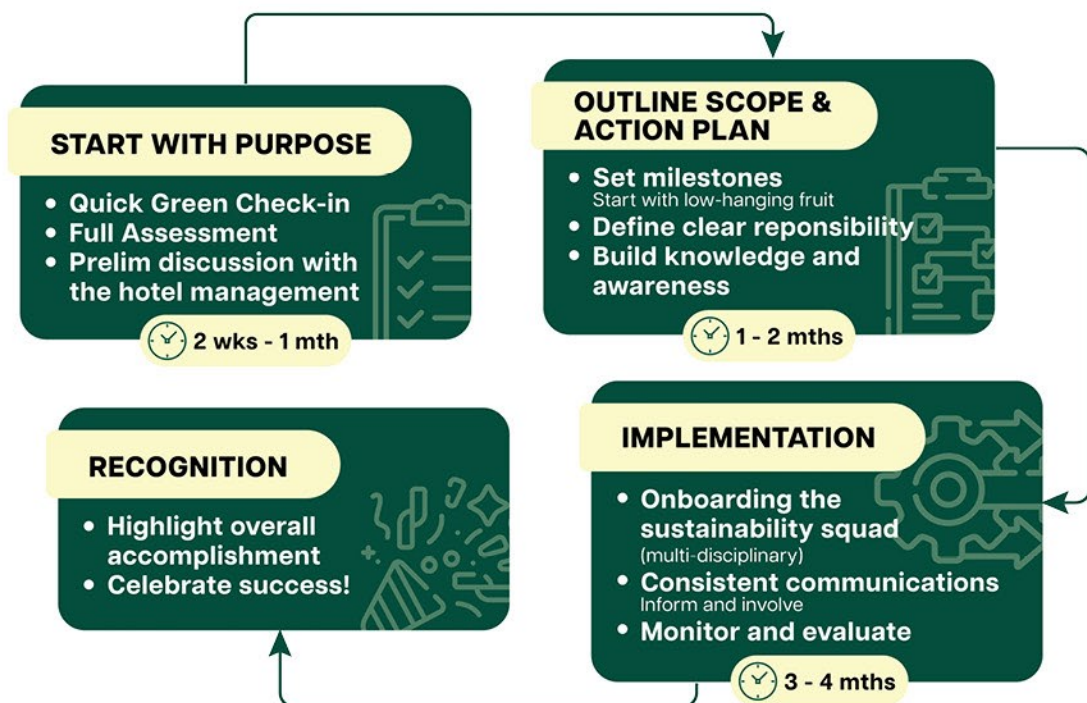
Penang Green
Hotel Self
Assessment

This assessment follows the Penang Green Hotel Matrix used for state recognition. The result provides a baseline “score” for hotel in key areas such as energy, water, and waste performance. Rather than seeing this as a test, view the results as a strategic roadmap. Use the assessment report to prioritize facility upgrades, budget for green technologies, and set realistic timelines for your official application for the Penang Green Hotel recognition.



HOW TO BEGIN THE GREEN HOTEL JOURNEY

ESTIMATED TIMELINE FOR HOTELIERS



EVIDENCE & DOCUMENTATION GUIDE

This checklist helps hotels to prepare basic supporting materials for sustainability assessments or audits.

It serves as a general guide and does not replace official audit requirements.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photos of green practices
(e.g. energy-saving features, recycling areas, signage) | <input type="checkbox"/> Receipts or records of environmentally preferable purchases records |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy consumption records
(e.g. electricity bills or summaries) | <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of local or sustainable suppliers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water consumption records | <input type="checkbox"/> Building Energy Intensity (BEI) reports |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waste generation and recycling records
(e.g. tonnage, licensed collector details etc) | <input type="checkbox"/> Water quality test or certification documents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance logs for energy or water-related systems | <input type="checkbox"/> Waste collector or recycler documentation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Records of equipment servicing
(where applicable) | <input type="checkbox"/> Collection schedules or service agreements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Training attendance records related to sustainability or environmental practices | |

Important Note

The items listed above are indicative examples to help hotels organize relevant information. The actual audit requirements may vary depending on certification scope and audit criteria.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS

These tools are provided to help hotels **start or strengthen green practices** using **simple, non-technical actions**.

Practical actions that can be implemented with minimal cost or infrastructure changes, such as:

- **Guest communication and awareness signage**
- **Linen and towel reuse programs**
- **Staff-led green initiatives and daily habits**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What are the fees for the Penang Green Hotel Excellence Program?

The audit fee is based on the total number of hotel rooms:

- Hotels with fewer than 100 rooms: RM750
- Hotels with 101 to 250 rooms: RM1,500
- Hotels with more than 250 rooms: RM2,000

Application fees for **NEW** applications are as follows:

- Hotels with fewer than 100 rooms: RM250
- Hotels with more than 100 rooms: RM500

Early Batch Adopters Benefit:

- The first 20 hotels to pass the site audit will receive a 100% discount on all application and audit fees.
- This promotion is valid for registrations during the 2026 – 2027 period.

2. How long is the certification valid?

The Penang Green Hotel Excellence certification is valid for a period of **two (2) years**. The validity period is based on the calendar year and begins in the year following approval.

3. When should hotels apply for renewal?

Hotels are required to submit their renewal application **within six (6) months after the certification expiry date**. Applications submitted after this period will be treated as new applications.

4. What benefits do certified hotels receive?

Hotels awarded the Penang Green Hotel Excellence certification will receive:

- An official **Green Hotel wall plaque**
- **Featured on the PGC website and the Penang State tourism platform**
- The right to use the **Penang Green Hotel logo** on official marketing and communication materials

5. How is the site audit conducted?

A third-party auditor appointed by Penang Green Council will conduct the site audit. The audit results will be issued **within one (1) month** of the site visit and made available through the hotel's registered Penang Green Hotel account.

For detailed guidance on the application process and procedures of the Penang Green Hotel Excellence Program, scan the QR code provided.



LOGO DESCRIPTION
PENANG GREEN HOTEL EXCELLENCE PROGRAM



The logo design is inspired by the **geometric patterns of Peranakan tiles**, a distinctive element of Penang's cultural heritage that is widely found in heritage architecture and **prominently featured in many hotel interior designs** across the state. This reference reinforces a strong **sense of place** while reflecting the **hospitality industry's connection to local identity**.



Water Droplets
Water stewardship and efficient water management.



Leaves
Symbolise green procurement and responsible sourcing practices.



Radiating Outward Lines
Energy efficiency, referencing lighting as one of the primary energy uses in hotels.



Circular Arrows
Circular economy, emphasising waste reduction and sustainable resource management.

Be Part of Penang's Sustainable Hospitality Movement

Penang Green Hotel Excellence Program



YOUR GREEN HOTEL JOURNEY STARTS HERE!

ASSESSMENT

Complete the Green Check-in Pre-Assessment
Understand your current sustainability practices.



10 - 15 min

ACTION PLAN

Start Your Green Action Plan
Implement practical sustainability initiatives.



No Limit

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Complete the Online Self-Assessment
Identify improvement opportunities.



10 - 15 min





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