



**U.S. TRAVEL**  
ASSOCIATION

## U.S. Travel Association's 2008 Marketing Outlook Forum

### **CONTACT:**

Daystar Van Wagner  
Manager, Meeting and Event Services  
U.S. Travel Association  
1100 New York Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 450  
Washington, DC 20005-3934  
202-408-8422

### **1. Overview**

For the past several years, the U.S. Travel Association has been incorporating measures to reduce the impact of its meetings and events on the environment. The 2008 Marketing Outlook Forum reflected the high value placed on sustainability by U.S. Travel and its member organizations. The conference focused on a number of sustainability practices both in theory and in application.

### **2. Program Establishment**

Early in the process of designing the 2008 Marketing Outlook Forum, U.S. Travel staff made conscious decisions to make the conference as "green" as possible. The process began with the selection of Portland, Oregon as the site for the conference and ended with unused materials sent to recycling centers. The application of environmentally-friendly actions entered into virtually every decision. The in-house U.S. Travel meeting planners, already well versed in green meetings, took the program several steps further and the entire team designed the program and events with sustainable tourism as one of its "working theme." The decisions made during the conference planning process will be applied to future U.S. Travel meetings and events.

### **3. Goals and Benchmarking**

It is not possible at this point to place a direct economic or dollar value on the steps taken by the U.S. Travel Association to ensure that the 2008 Marketing Outlook Forum was as “green” as possible. However, it is clear from a post-conference survey of attendees that the decisions made and actions taken by U.S. Travel towards running a “green” conference were acknowledged and appreciated by those in attendance. Through the conference presentations and use of recyclable products, biodegradable goods, and the sharing of information and communications digitally, attendees clearly left the conference with a better understanding of sustainability and what it means to create a “green” national conference. It is likely that attendees took the ideas back to their respective offices and businesses in the form of applied actions.

### **4. Outcomes and Environmental Benefit**

A post-Marketing Outlook Conference survey shows that attendees received information on sustainable tourism through the presentations, but also, and probably more importantly, saw efforts to be sustainable at work during the conference. Comments obtained through the survey indicate that the entire program was well received, supporting the initial decisions made by U.S. Travel in establishing the 2008 conference. The actions taken by U.S. Travel described below are easily replicated by other organizations in planning conferences and other events.

### **5. Relevance to the Travel Industry**

As the umbrella organization for over 1,700 travel-related organizations, U.S. Travel has the ability to not only follow examples of sustainable tourism practices established by its members and other businesses, but to also provide leadership in the area. As a major step toward providing an educational tool for the industry, the U.S. Travel Association and American Express created the [travelgreen.org](http://travelgreen.org) web site. The web site, which launched on February 4, 2009, contains a wealth of information about sustainable tourism. The web site also includes case studies of specific “green tourism” programs submitted by the industry. Ranging from large corporations to small independent businesses, the case studies provide real-world examples of sustainable tourism programs and practices established to reduce their carbon footprint.

### **6. Real-World Example**

The 2008 Marketing Outlook Forum was held in Portland, Oregon in October 2008. As a pioneer in environmental sustainability, Oregon, Portland and the Oregon Convention Center served as one of the best destinations and venue for a national conference that focused on “green travel” and sustainable tourism as one of its primary theme.

The following list of actions that were taken for the 2008 Marketing Outlook Forum – actions that will be used as much as possible by U.S. Travel in future conferences and

events and can be applied by other organizations in the conference and event-planning process.

### Selection of a Hotel and Convention Center Committed to Sustainable Business Practices

- The Doubletree Hotel Portland – Lloyd Center recently received the American Hotel and Lodging Association’s Good Earthkeeping Award. It also earned Oregon’s First Green Seal GS-33 Lodging Certification in 2004 and is a two-time winner of the annual Environmental CARE Award from Doubletree Hotels. The hotel’s environmental programs have led to a 30 percent reduction in its electricity, gas, and water consumption.
- The Oregon Convention Center is LEED® -EB certified, has aggressive recycling programs and makes extensive use of natural light and low emission fixtures. The center was acknowledged for its forward thinking design when it received a BEST Award (Business for an Environmentally Sustainable Tomorrow) by the City of Portland’s Office of Sustainable Development for water conservation and its innovative “rain garden”.

### Education about Sustainability Issues in Travel

As part of U.S. Travel’s commitment to ensuring that the industry is both well informed and has the most up-to-date environmental information, several sessions at the 2008 conference were dedicated to sustainability issues. These were featured in a general session and throughout a number of concurrent sessions. Also, during the conference, U.S. Travel provided an advance view of [www.travelgreen.org](http://www.travelgreen.org), a new web site developed in partnership with American Express, which serves as the industry’s only comprehensive clearing house on sustainability issues and case studies.

### Printed Material

The Marketing Outlook Forum Program and other conference materials were printed on paper products carrying the **Forest Stewardship Certification** (FSC) label. These products are independently certified to assure consumers that the products come from forests that are managed to meet the social, economic and ecological needs of present and future generations. FSC is an independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit organization established to promote the responsible management of the world’s forests. To learn more about Forest Stewardship Certification, visit [www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org).

### Reduction of Waste

At every step of the way, U.S. Travel took advantage of opportunities to reduce all types of onsite waste, including:

- Reusable name tag envelopes, tent cards and signs

- Badges printed on recycled paper
- Reliance of recyclable or biodegradable goods throughout the meeting, such as recyclable paper cups, reusable and biodegradable cutlery, dishware and linens
- Distribution of reusable registration bags
- Encouragement of sponsors to also rely on digital practices
- Culinary offerings featuring local foods and beverages
- Decorations with reusable plants
- Donation of un-served meals and food to Portland's Blanchet Shelter -- a temporary shelter for single, homeless men who need to find a job or are in recovery or has employment, but insufficient funds to be independent.

### Reliance on Digital Communication and Registration

Behind the scenes preparations to eliminate paper waste included:

- Use of electronic promotion and marketing messages
- Implementation of an online registration practice with electronic confirmations
- Online communication of conference updates
- Online distribution of white papers
- Communications with speakers via e-mail and online

### Transportation

Promotion of energy efficient transportation included encouraging conference attendees to use Portland's Airport MAX light rail links as a means of traveling to the host hotels and the Oregon Convention Center. Bio-diesel motorcoaches were also used to transport attendees from the host hotels to the Forum's opening event at the Portland Art Museum. It is clear that attendees took advantage of the MAX light rail and busses to experience Portland's attractions and restaurants during non-conference related excursions.