

PLANNING A SUSTAINABLE MEETING AT CAVALLO POINT



Photo by Jan Lundberg

Cavallo Point is an ideal venue for sustainable meetings, offering a beautiful national park setting, environmentally responsible accommodations and meeting facilities, and a host of other features to make your meeting as green as possible.

The facility was based on principles of sustainable design. It includes highly efficient buildings, use of green building materials, solar energy, state-of-the-art water recycling systems, radiant heating, exclusive use of low VOC glues, paints and other materials, acres of native plants, and many other sustainable features.

The average meeting leaves in its wake a stack of a hundred plastic name badges, resting on top of hundreds of disposable water bottles, Styrofoam cups and plastic utensils, pages and pages of printed brochures and handouts, not to mention the promotional goodies, such as plastic pens, mouse pads and magnets, left behind. In most hotels, all this is taken to the landfill. (According to Meeting Strategies Worldwide, only 5 percent of hotels have a recycling program.)

The *San Francisco Chronicle* estimates that 250 people attending a five-day conference--with three meals and two coffee breaks each day--can end up using as many as 6,250 plates, 8,750 napkins, 7,500 cups or glasses, and 9,000 cans or bottles.

Our Green Operations

Our operations have integrated green into every aspect, reducing your event's footprint. We exceed EPA's recommended 14-point Green Meeting guidelines which require the following features: recycling program, linen/towel reuse option, shuttle services, policy to turn lights off when not in use, bulk dispensers for beverages, food and condiments, reusable serving utensils, napkins and tablecloths, energy efficiency program, water conservation program, paperless check-in, use of recycled products, employee training, local food and use of biodegradable products.

Highlights of our green operations are described below.

- Catering menus feature local and organically grown food. All teas and coffees are organic.
- Meetings rooms have natural light and windows that open.
- A comprehensive paper, plastic and glass recycling program, as well as an off-site compost program are provided. Each guest room contains a recycling bin and there are well-labeled bins for recycling and composting, as well as for trash throughout the facility.
- Organic bed linens and towels are used to reduce guests' exposure to toxic chemicals often found in traditional linens and towels.
- Guests are given the option of reusing their sheets and towels.



Photo by Charlotte Fiorito.

- Housekeeping staff members are trained to turn off all lights when not in use.
- Most of the lighting features linear fluorescent lights.
- As many sensors, timers, and energy efficient fixtures as possible have been installed.
- Reusable dishes, glasses and linens are used for food service. If reusable isn't an option, compostable items such as utensils made out of corn starch are used.
- Breakfast cereals, sugar, condiments, etc. are served in bulk rather than individual packages.
- No plastic or Styrofoam food and beverage containers are used on site.
- Durable, reusable eating utensils are provided for picnic lunches.
- Only cloth napkins in the restaurant and cloth towels are provide in the public restrooms.
- Soaps, shampoos and other amenities are contained in refillable dispensers. Most are locally produced.
- Water is conserved by using low-flow, dual-flush toilets.
- Cleaning products used in the rooms are non-toxic and Green Seal compliant.
- The campus is easily accessible via shuttle from the airport. On-site service vehicles run on alternative fuels.
- No toxic pesticides or chemical fertilizers are used on the landscape.
- Staff members are educated about the environmental ethic of the facility so they operate and maintain it according to these values.
- Visitors receive a brief orientation soon after arrival, which includes ways to minimize their im-

pact on the environment.

- A summary of the facility's environmental program is provided in the guest room and more detailed information is available at the reception desk.
- A green tour is offered for guests.

What You Can Do at Cavallo Point

- Encourage participants to take the airport shuttle to the lodge.
- Reduce use of virgin paper and minimize waste. Work with conference planners and participants to implement the following:
 - Print all materials on 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper or provide program guides and handouts electronically rather than on paper.
 - Ask attendees to print PowerPoint handouts on recycled paper. Require exhibitors to print all materials on 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper and to provide greener giveaway choices.
 - Provide giveaways that are non-toxic and made of recycled materials, or better yet, don't provide any giveaways and minimize environmental impacts associated with materials production and transport.
 - Go carbon neutral. After you have done everything you can to minimize your footprint, the next step is to offset your remaining footprint and make your event carbon neutral. Estimate the amount of carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming) created by your event and include the cost to offset in the event



Photo by Charlotte Fiorito.

registration fee or conference budget.

- **Community service.** More and more professional organizations are setting aside an afternoon while at an off-site meeting, conference or event for community service. Talk with staff of the Institute at the Golden Gate about setting up a volunteer project at Fort Baker or elsewhere in the Golden Gate National Parks. It's a great team-building activity and a great way to give back to one of America's more treasured national parks.

Selecting a Carbon Offset Program

The majority of the carbon footprint associated with meetings is due to air travel. Additional carbon emissions are attributable to ground transportation, electricity and water consumed during the event, brochures and handouts, promotional giveaways and meals.

The Institute at the Golden Gate has researched and evaluated carbon offset programs offered by dozens of nonprofits and businesses and offers the following recommendations for meeting planners:

- **Determine the Scope of the Offset.** Determine if you want to only offset travel to event or pursue for a more carbon neutral offset that will include infrastructure, food and supplies.
- **Choose an Offset Partner.** Some of the organizations providing carbon offsets include: Terra-Pass, Carbonfund.org, Sustainable Travel

International, NativeEnergy, and Conservation International.

- **Calculate Footprint.** Use a calculator or worksheet on the above-mentioned websites to calculate your emissions.
- **Choose an Offset Project.** Forestry-based projects, renewable energy projects and methane capture are among the types of projects offered.
- **Buy Carbon Offsets.** It's time to neutralize your remaining footprint by buying carbon offsets. When you buy a carbon offset you're investing in the capture of greenhouse gases or building alternative clean-energy sources that would not have been done otherwise.

For More Information

The following organizations offer more information on greening your meeting.

- **Oceans Blue Foundation.** (www.bluegreenmeetings.org)
- **US Environmental Protection Agency** (www.epa.gov/oppt.greenmeetings/)
- **Green Meetings Industry Council** (www.greenmeetings.info)
- **Convention Industry Council** (www.conventionindustry.org/projects/green_mtgs.htm)