

## Maryland Launches Green Travel Program, Includes Certification Component

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Baltimore's Inner Harbor

BALTIMORE—As an extension of Gov. Martin O'Malley's "Smart, Green and Growing" agenda, the Office of Tourism—in partnership with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Maryland Tourism Council—is launching "Maryland Green Travel." The new initiative will encourage environmentally-friendly practices throughout the state's tourism industry and promote Maryland as a "green" destination to eco-minded travelers.

The initial stage of the program will create an online, self-certification application for the lodging sector that uses environmental guidelines adopted by the American Hotel and Lodging Association and the best practices of MDE's Green Registry. A similar process will be implemented for restaurants, attractions and other tourism businesses during 2010.

"We believe Maryland Green Travel will prove to have great marketing value for individual properties and for the state's tourism industry overall," said Gov. O'Malley. "Most properties will see cost savings through waste reduction, recycling and innovative approaches to energy and water conservation."

As a voluntary program, Maryland Green Travel will encourage certified properties to share their environmental practices in order to promote themselves as green properties and to encourage others to similarly reduce their impacts on Maryland's environment.

### Green Micro Site Designed

The Office of Tourism has designed a green micro site on its [visitmaryland.org](http://visitmaryland.org) website that promotes the state's eco-friendly businesses and attractions to environmentally-conscious consumers. The site, [www.visitmaryland.org/green](http://www.visitmaryland.org/green), will also include an online application and provide tips and resources on best practices for environmental management and leadership, waste reduction, energy and water conservation, and transportation.

"Increasingly, travelers are making travel plans based on sustainable practices that reduce our carbon footprint. Maryland Green Travel will promote those businesses that undergo self-certification, said Margot Amelia, executive director of the Maryland Office of Tourism. "We would like this program to be a collaborative effort. Industry participation is needed for the program to be beneficial for both the tourism industry and the environment."

Properties that are part of the program will be identified as Maryland Green Travel partners on the official state tourism site, [visitmaryland.org](http://visitmaryland.org), which receives nearly 2 million unique visitors a year. Additionally, participating businesses will be certified for and promoted on the Maryland Department of the Environment's Maryland Green Registry.

"I was greatly impressed with how quickly the Office of Tourism has ramped up the Maryland Green Travel program," said Paul Bales, owner of Culinary Concepts, LLC. and The Crossings at Casey Jones. "It was not surprising to hear that the Maryland Green Travel program is way ahead on the implementation curve."