

Global Short Term Rentals ESG Initiative

Carbon-neutrality is the new nirvana that all businesses are striving for



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Looking at the media, more and more companies are pledging to become carbon neutral, net-zero or even climate positive however when huge multinational like Google pledge to achieve something perhaps you should sit up and take notice. Google claims that they are the first company to eliminate its carbon legacy, which is perhaps the furthest any global company has gone. Google intend to operate using carbon free energy by 2030. As part of that commitment, they have **utilised next-generation geothermal energy** and continue to **implement carbon intelligent computing**. This is combined with a huge commitment to the circular economy and reusing as much material as possible.

Terms like “carbon-neutrality”, “net-zero” or “climate positive” have been around for a while, but for the last few years, small start-ups to global corporations have used them, particularly in the travel sector, without necessarily fully understanding their meaning.

As a consequence, the diversity of phrases and the lack of clarity around them can mislead well-intentioned travellers.



So, let's understand better what the language around reducing emissions and carbon neutrality is.

To start, let's clarify some of the terms around carbon-neutrality:

- **Carbon neutral** means that any CO₂ released into the atmosphere from a company's activities is balanced by an equivalent amount being removed. No business's operations are fully carbon neutral so the business seeks to reduce its carbon emissions as far as it possibly can and then looks to offset the rest. Offsetting is very controversial however potential offsetting programs include tree planting, re-wilding landscapes, planting mangroves and growing sea grass off the coast all of these options remove carbon from the atmosphere.

To be ethical, organisations should choose schemes they have some oversight of e.g. supporting local efforts to reduce carbon.

- **Climate positive** means that activity goes beyond achieving net-zero carbon emissions to create an environmental benefit by removing additional carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Despite its controversies Brewdog is a certified carbon positive company. **By assessing its carbon footprint and investing in carbon offsetting projects it is a certified climate positive business.**

- **Net-Zero emissions** recognising that carbon dioxide is not the only greenhouse gas (GHG) released, net zero is the overall goal of most countries, business sectors and organisations.

Thus, for food producers and agriculture methane emissions are extremely important. For holiday venues the most likely source of methane is in respect of organic food waste which emits methane as it decomposes.

Thus, carbon neutral is, as the name suggests, specific to carbon dioxide emissions whilst net zero includes carbon emissions BUT refers to all the greenhouse gases.

The main greenhouse gases are as follows:

- Carbon dioxide (CO₂)
- Methane (CH₄)
- Nitrous oxide (N₂O)
- Industrial gases:
 - Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)
 - Perfluorocarbons (PFCs)
 - Sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆)
 - Nitrogen trifluoride (NF₃)



Sources of Carbon Dioxide Emissions at Tourism Properties & Venues

In the same way your house generates emissions from energy use, so do the hotels, guest house, and short-term rental. Most accommodation relies on heating and air conditioning to keep guest rooms at a pleasant temperature depending on the climates. These energy-intensive systems create CO₂, as do the water heaters used to warm showers, pools, and spas. Electricity used to power lights, TVs, refrigerators, laundry machines, and other equipment is also a big contributor, especially in areas with dated or inefficient systems.

The emissions vary based on the source of the electricity used with renewables being extremely efficient in reducing carbon related emissions.

Sources of Methane Emissions at Tourism Properties & Venues

From a hospitality and tourism perspective the biggest source of methane emissions are from food waste. When food breaks down at landfill sites, it releases harmful greenhouse gases like methane into the atmosphere. Approximately 8-10% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions relate to food waste. If food waste were a country, it would be the third biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, behind the US and China.

Sources of Nitrous Oxide Emissions at Tourism Properties & Venues

The main source of Nitrous Oxide emissions is in the agricultural industry. Keen travellers will thus look to venues to determine where and how their food is sourced. That data may not however be available for the eco-conscious venue however organic options are less likely to feature pesticides and fertilizers which are the main source of Nitrous Oxide in agriculture.

Nitrous Oxide emissions can also be generated by wastewater treatment so eco-conscious venues may wish to discuss this with their utilities providers.

One other source of Nitrous Oxide is from transport and venues may want to be conscious of this.

Sources of Industrial Gas Emissions at Tourism Properties & Venues

Of the main industrial gases described above the most relevant for the tourism industry is Hydrofluorocarbons (HFC)

HFC's are used as refrigerants, aerosol propellants, foam blowing agents, solvents, and fire retardants. The major emissions source of these compounds is their use as refrigerants—for example, in air conditioning systems in both vehicles and buildings.

Most emissions from HFC are as a consequence of leakages from the systems and so maintenance regimes are a priority.



What is carbon-neutrality?

By definition, carbon-neutral (or carbon neutrality) is the balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon emissions from carbon sinks. Or simply, eliminate all carbon emissions altogether. Carbon sinks are any systems that absorb more carbon than they emit, such as forests, soils and oceans.

According to the European Union Commission, natural sinks remove between 9.5 and 11 Gt of CO2 per year.

Hence, to become carbon-neutral, companies have two options: reducing drastically their carbon emissions to net-zero or balancing their emissions through offsetting and the purchase of carbon credits.

What does it mean to become carbon-neutral?

In order to become carbon neutral a venue needs to calculate its carbon footprint. QIA Services provides a free carbon footprint calculator.

Please contact us today to get access : hello@qiaservices.com

Once the total carbon footprint is calculated, you will have a better sense of how much your property needs to counteract. Then, reduce carbon emissions by analysing the worst carbon hot spots - where your venues emit the most and acting upon it. Finally, offset what's left.

It is not possible to generate zero-carbon emissions; therefore, offsetting is a viable approach to become carbon-neutral.

Offsetting your carbon emissions sends a strong message to your guests and wider community, that you are committed to paving the way for a sustainable future.

You have to ensure that the offsetting project is transparent and potentially involves local communities in the process.



What's is the difference between Carbon neutral and Net-zero?

As established previously, carbon-neutral and net-zero are two similar terms.

In both cases, Properties are working to reduce and balance their carbon footprint. Carbon-neutral refers to balancing out the total amount of carbon emissions usually derived from power utilisation, for example, a company's building running entirely on solar, and using zero fossil fuels can label its energy as "zero carbon."

However, when referring to "net-zero emissions" you are referring to the overall balance of greenhouse gas emissions produced and GHG emissions taken out of the atmosphere.

Thus, net zero is a wider concept than carbon neutral. Achieving either concept is beneficial to the environment. For Properties seeking to trying to understand how to achieve this, we can assist.

Contact QIA Service today
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