

YHA in The Rocks sets new benchmark for sustainability in tourism industry

The state-of-the art budget accommodation and education centre under construction on an historic site in The Rocks will set a new benchmark for sustainability within the tourism sector, when it opens in November.

Sydney Harbour YHA is being developed by YHA NSW on the Cumberland Street Dig Site, part of the area of Australia's first European settlement. In line with YHA's Environmental Charter, the construction, design and operation of the \$25 million project will incorporate initiatives to promote sustainability by preserving the archaeology, increasing energy efficiency and reducing water usage.

"The national significance of this site presents an obligation to implement every possible initiative to preserve the site for future generations and minimise the impact of operations on the archaeology," said Julian Ledger, Chief Executive Officer, YHA NSW.

The building's footprint is minimised by raising the structure off the ground on steel pillars. Its design ensures construction takes place around the remains of 42 buildings. A YHA Sinking Fund will ensure percentage of revenue is invested into preserving the archaeology.

"Although there is no Green Star rating for tourist accommodation in Australia, YHA has worked with an independent ESD consultant to implement initiatives found in best practice commercial buildings and is confident that Sydney Harbour YHA will make the same positive contribution to the environment as a 5 Green Star property," Mr Ledger said.

Major initiatives include an on site gas generator to supply up to 70% of the YHA's peak energy demands and 80,000 litre rain water retention/detention tanks to collect water for use in toilet flushing.

"Guests will actively participate in reducing the environmental impact of their stay. Operable external window louvers will be adjusted by guests to block sun. Air-conditioning will only operate on request and will turn off at 10.00am or when guests open windows," Mr Ledger explained.

Other environmentally sustainable initiatives incorporated into the building's design include solar hot water, energy efficient lighting and environmentally friendly rubber flooring.

To encourage the use of public transport and cycling, no off street car parking will be available and bicycle storage will be provided. External areas of hostel will be closed after 10.00pm to limit noise and an acoustic treatment of the roof-top plant area has been undertaken. Recycling of glass, paper, plastic, batteries and clothing will be promoted.

Sydney Harbour YHA will open in November 2009. For further information visit www.yha.com.au.

YHA is part of the world's largest budget accommodation network, Hostelling International, which provides more than 4,000 YHA/Hi hostels in more than 60 countries. Renowned for its unique properties, YHA hostels include heritage castles, log cabins and beach houses. A membership based organisation, YHA provides travellers with quality accommodation and the opportunity for personal growth through travel, fostering cross cultural understanding and environmental responsibility. YHA is a not for profit organisation, with surpluses invested in the accommodation network and the experience it provides.

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