

## Choice Hotels' Comfort Suites Brand To Go Smoke Free May 1, 2007

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The decision adds another 433 U.S. hotels to the ever-growing ranks of FreshStay.com's directory of smoke-free lodging facilities worldwide

The decision by Choice Hotels International(R) to go smoke-free at all 433 domestic Comfort Suites(R) hotels highlights the growing trend - and importance - of providing healthy, smoke-free environments for hotel guests everywhere.

'The extensive survey research we conducted with Comfort Suites' guests and our franchisees strongly indicated that going smoke-free was the right decision for our brand,' says Janna Morrison, division president of Choice Hotels(R). 'More and more information is becoming available on the hazards of second-hand smoke - that information is undoubtedly influencing where our guests stay.'

With its 433 domestic Comfort Suites hotels, Choice Hotels marks the second largest smoke-free commitment from a hotel chain in the U.S., behind only Marriott's 2,300 properties comprising 400,000 guestrooms in the United States and Canada that went smoke-free last summer. Westin-brand properties rank third, with 77 hotels in the United States, Canada and the Caribbean that went smoke free in January 2006.

### **Now That's Refreshing**

When Comfort Suites' smoke-free policy goes into effect May 1, the move will certainly bulk up the ever-growing ranks of FreshStay(R) ([www.FreshStay.com](http://www.FreshStay.com)), an online directory of smoke-free lodging facilities worldwide.

'The number of completely smoke-free hotels in the United States grew more than 2,700 percent in 2006, and with Choice Hotels' Comfort Suites brand coming into the fold, we're already off to a great start for 2007,' says Ray Burger, president of Pineapple Hospitality, which founded FreshStayTM. 'Studies show that at least four out of five hotel guests prefer to stay in a smoke-free environment. It's encouraging that the number of smoke-free hotels continues to grow,' Burger adds.

With Comfort Suites' 34,000 soon-to-be-smoke-free guestrooms, nearly 10 percent of the United States' 53,000 hotels will have gone 100% non-smoking in answer to guests' demands for cleaner, fresher stays and healthier accommodations.

'With the leadership and success of companies the caliber of Marriott, Choice Hotels and Westin paving the way, we're sure to see more and more hotel managers realize the smoke-free movement is not just a fad. It's a trend that is part of doing business today,' Burger adds.

### **Fresh Testimonials**

Even before the policy change was announced, 10 percent of Comfort Suites hotels already were smoke-free. The owners of those Comfort Suites hotels report being positively affected by their smoke-free switch.

Choice Hotels says the smoke-free move was customer-driven. Eliminating smoking rooms also accelerates the registration and check-in process, and cuts down on cleaning time and costs.

'Since going smoke free, I've been pleasantly surprised. Not only have my regular smoking guests remained loyal, but for every potential smoking customer that chooses another hotel, we gain two non-smoking customers,' says Adam Gough, general manager of the Comfort Suites Davis in Davis, Calif.

### **Healthy Decision**

In response to Comfort Suites' decision, John R. Seffrin, Ph.D., chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society, applauds the growing movement to smoke-free hotels.

'The decision to make Choice Hotels' Comfort Suites 100-percent smoke-free will remove a major threat to the health of all Comfort Suites' guests and workers,' Dr. Seffrin says. 'In the United States alone, secondhand smoke is estimated to cause 35,000 to 45,000 deaths from heart disease and 3,000 deaths from lung cancer among nonsmokers each year. Former U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona said it himself last June: There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.'

Given what we know about the dangers of secondhand smoke, Choice Hotels has made 'a socially responsible decision in the best interests of its franchisees and their guests' at its 433 Comfort Suites hotels in the United States, Dr. Seffrin adds.

With an estimated 70 percent of the public - smokers and non-smokers alike - favoring smoke-free facilities, Choice Hotels new policy makes good business sense as well. Smoke-free policies have been shown to increase tourism in cities such as Los Angeles and New York City, Dr. Seffrin added. The top 10 travel destinations in the United States all have enacted smoke-free laws.

'Corporate smoke-free policies are gaining popularity,' Dr. Seffrin says. 'Comfort Suites' new smoke-free policy follows the adoption of similar policies by Disney Resorts, Marriott and Westin Hotels in 2006. We hope the example set by these and other companies will encourage additional businesses to follow suit.'

## **Butt Out**

### **States and districts**

These states have laws banning smoking in public places (in many cases, there are exceptions, and definitions vary): Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota (bars and casinos exempted), Utah, Vermont, Washington, D.C. (banned in government buildings, except in Congress), and Washington.

### **Cities**

Some popular tourist destinations with bans enacted on local level, often targeting smoking in restaurants and bars: Anchorage, Alaska; Chicago (bars and restaurants exempt till July 1, 2008); Lexington, Ky; Minneapolis; Albuquerque, N.M.; Columbus, Ohio; Eugene, Ore.; Philadelphia; Burlington, Vt.; Madison, Wis.; Cheyenne, Wyo.; and Laramie, Wyo.

### **Hotels**

Westin, Marriott, Choice Hotels Comfort Suites brand domestic properties and Heartland Inn hotels are all 100 percent smoke-free, from guest rooms to restaurants and bars. Westin's policy applies to hotels in North America, the Caribbean, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand and Fiji as well. The Marriott policy applies to all its brands, including Renaissance Hotels, Ritz-Carltons, Fairfield Inns, Courtyard by Marriotts, Residence Inns and Spring Hill Suites. All three Disneyland hotels are 100 percent smoke-free; Walt Disney World resorts allow smoking in designated areas.

### **Other resources**

[www.smokefreeworld.com/nrtha.shtml](http://www.smokefreeworld.com/nrtha.shtml)

[www.tobacco.org](http://www.tobacco.org)

[www.smokefree.net](http://www.smokefree.net)

[www.lungaction.org](http://www.lungaction.org)

### **About Choice Hotels**

Choice Hotels International franchises more than 5,300 hotels, representing more than 435,000 rooms, in the United States and more than 40 countries and territories. As of December 31, 2006, 860 hotels are under development in the United States, representing 66,238 rooms, and an additional 70 hotels, representing 6,317 rooms, are under development in more than 15 countries and territories. The company's Cambria Suites, Comfort Inn, Comfort Suites, Quality, Clarion, Sleep Inn, Econo Lodge, Rodeway Inn, MainStay Suites and Suburban Extended Stay Hotel brands serve guests worldwide.

Additional corporate information may be found on Choice Hotels' Internet site, which may be accessed at <http://www.choicehotels.com>.

### **About Pineapple Hospitality**

Headquartered in Saint Charles, Missouri, Pineapple Hospitality(TM) is an EPA ENERGY STAR(TM) partner bringing fresh ideas to hospitality guests' doors and owner/operators' bottom lines - including FreshStay(TM) ([www.freshstay.com](http://www.freshstay.com)), Environmentally Sensitive Amenities(TM), the greenSPA(TM) luxury amenity and dispenser system, Numi(TM) Organic Teas, Project Planet(TM) Linen Re-Use programs, Guestat(TM) programmable thermostats, Oxygenics(TM) water-efficient showerheads, the Nature's Mist(TM) deodorization system, and dozens of other products and programs. To get a taste of Pineapple's sweet solutions helping hundreds of hotels bolster business and cut costs, please visit [www.pineapplehospitality.net](http://www.pineapplehospitality.net), or call Ray Burger at 636-922-2285.

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