

# Travel Salem presents sustainability showcase

Beth Casper 9:24 p.m. PDT July 3, 2015



(Photo: Special to the Statesman Journal)

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Salem-area visitors find maps, travel itineraries, restaurant recommendations and hidden bed-and-breakfasts at the Travel Salem Visitors Center.

Travel Salem employees are also quick to provide information about this region's growing sustainable businesses — from salmon-friendly wineries and restaurants featuring locally grown food to eco-conscious hotels and eco-tourist destinations.

The region's showcase of sustainable businesses includes Travel Salem, located in a historic building on High Street NE.

“When we were looking for a space, we wanted to meet three criteria: to create a welcoming center that showcases all the assets of our region; to bring some history forward and showcase this region's historic side; and also be sustainable,” said Kara

Kuh, Travel Salem's public relations manager. "I think that this building is a shining example of how all of those pieces came together."

CB Two Architects, known for their own sustainable practices, remodeled the Travel Salem business to incorporate huge windows in the front of the building, which allows for natural light to fill up the space and reduces the use of artificial light. The original brick walls were exposed — but kept in place to reveal the historic building and reduce the use of new materials.

The practices inside the building are just as sustainable as the remodel. Travel Salem's efforts earned it EarthWISE certification in 2009.

The EarthWISE program is a free business environmental assistance program of Marion County. EarthWISE staff helps businesses recycle, save energy, reduce waste and much more. To earn certification, a business meets criteria in six areas. Travel Salem is one of more than 150 EarthWISE businesses and organizations in Marion County.

Travel Salem employees recycle or reuse almost all of the supplies sent to the office. Visitors who need directions are always instructed first about finding the way on their smartphone, and then offered printed directions—with double-sided printing, of course.

"It has become so second nature to us that we first think about how to recycle before anything goes into the trash," Kuh said. "We have so little glass, that I just take the glass recycling home myself. We are a small team so everybody pitches in."

By the end of the week, the garbage generated is usually only about one bag—mostly from the kitchen area. Most of the employees bring reusable lunch containers and utensils.

The 11 Travel Salem employees are well-trained to use energy sparingly, Kuh said.

"We are conscious of turning off machines, copiers and lights at the end of the day," she said. "Sometimes we are too good at it and we leave someone working in the dark!"

The free visitor guides to Marion and Polk counties are printed on recycled paper with soy-based inks.

All of the other vendors for Travel Salem also use sustainable practices, including the company that cleans the office space.

In addition, employees can offer visitors information about "green" businesses from the 300-plus members of Travel Salem.

As green travel gains more popularity, Travel Salem has stayed ahead of the curve by pitching green attractions, hotels and forms of transportation.

“We have fallen in line with what people see as Oregon,” Kuh said. “When visitors come in and admire the beauty of the state, we can talk about how our building and practices are sustainable. We don’t just market it, we live it.”

For more information about the EarthWISE program, go to [www.mcearthwise.net](http://www.mcearthwise.net) or call (503) 365-3188.