



EXPERTS

## Key ways to achieve sustainability goals in your spa

It Must Be NOW founders Onno and Alexa Poortier share crucial sustainability advice and a checklist for spas wishing to accelerate change

Global

By Wendy Golledge

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[www.itmustbenow.com](http://www.itmustbenow.com)



Onno and Alexa Poortier founded It Must Be NOW to help companies working in hospitality and tourism achieve Climate Positive and accelerate change for a sustainable future.

With an ever-growing urgency for the wellness sector to intensify its efforts to fight climate change, *European Spa* asked Onno and Alexa to create an exclusive sustainability checklist for spas.

Their advice can help your business identify what really needs to happen to make a significant move forwards towards your [sustainability goals](#).



Litter on a beach on Ile de La Gonave in Haiti | © Conservation International

“While more spa and wellness companies are environmentally aware, not nearly enough have committed to sustainability with accountability and transparency as a core value,” says Alexa Poortier. “Short-term gain is still prioritised over long-term thinking.”

“While the industry says that sustainability is a vital message and ‘talks the talk’, business-as-usual prevails. More spas must champion a climate-positive future to limit global warming to 1.5°C.”

## How sustainable is your spa?

**It Must Be NOW** suggests spas begin by asking the following questions...

- Is the spa team knowledgeable about sustainable practices?
- Does the property reduce, then offset all remaining carbon emission?
- Does the property conserve water and have efficient water usage?
- Does the property’s electricity use come from renewable sources?
- Does the property have an energy-efficiency plan?
- What are the property’s waste management and recycling policies?
- Does the property provide and use single use plastics?
- Are the spa suppliers sustainable and certified?
- Are the bathrobes, towels and linen sustainably sourced, natural and organic, instead of chemically treated?
- Are the spa amenities and packaging biodegradable and sustainable?
- Does the spa’s restaurant use locally grown, organic and in-season food and locally made drinks whenever possible?

### What really needs to happen for a significant move forward?

"There must be greater scrutiny and governance from government regulators, banks and insurance companies," continues Poortier.

"A significant move forward will require a change in values, attitudes, behaviours and stakeholder demand."

"More country governments need to adopt laws for stricter sustainability reporting directives, governance, incentives and penalties for non-compliance.

"Countries must establish a cap on carbon emissions for big companies and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)."



It Must Be NOW is a legacy project in alliance with inspiring figures and companies from the hospitality industry founded by Onno (right) and Alexa Poortier

### How to do sustainability better

- Prepare better – be knowledgeable and prioritise accountability and transparency.
- Understand what leading global scientists have been saying and the urgency – there are just over 6 years left before our carbon budget runs out
- NET Zero by 2050 is 'too little too late' to limit global warming to 2°C
- The difference between 1.5°C and 2°C is a big deal
- Global temperatures will only stabilise when carbon dioxide emissions reach Net Zero or better
- Establish strategic alliances and obtain robust support from companies providing funding support
- Get the basics right – you need the support and commitment of your entire team
- Form a Green Team with representatives from all departments
- Draft a sustainability policy and have it available to all stakeholders
- Build knowledge and capacity – train the sustainability coordinator to undertake day-to-day programme implementation
- Collaborate and share knowledge with other properties that are 'forces for good'.

## The simple must-dos

How spa and wellness businesses that have not yet committed to sustainability can simply change their values, attitudes and behaviours

- Reduce, reuse and recycle waste (plastic, packaging, water)
- Opt for renewable materials and energies
- Reduce harmful ingredients in all products
- Conserve water
- Spend time in communities and nature to promote wellbeing



*"Accountable and transparent sustainability includes taking responsibility for your impact on communities and the environment with a holistic and circular approach focused on community wellbeing, the conservation of nature, culture preservation and carbon reduction."*

**Alexa Poortier**  
Co-founder, It Must Be NOW



Bali from the sea | © Reto Guntli

“Spa and wellness tourism worldwide is positioned to benefit profitably from the fast-growing wellness and tourism economy,” concludes Poortier.

“But when more than 80% of consumers want a more sustainable experience (*booking.com* and *Google 2021 Survey*), spas must take responsibility for their total impacts.

“This means no greenwashing. Commit to sustainability with accountability and transparency as a core value and practice.”



**Be inspired...**

To find out more about the work It Must Be NOW is doing to increase sustainability in the hospitality sector, click below

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