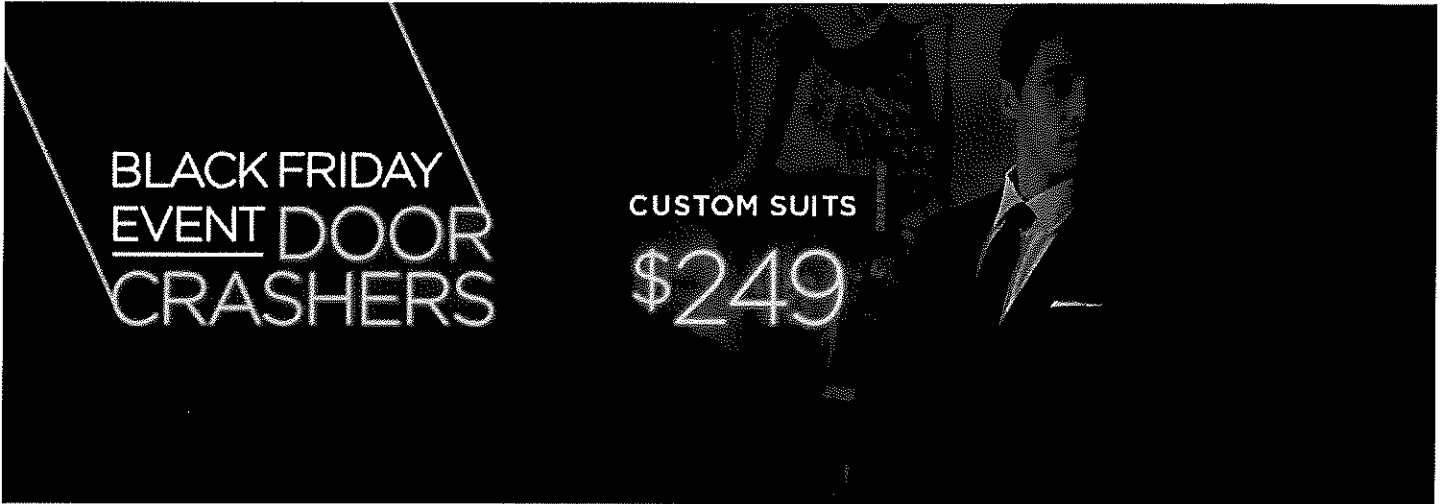


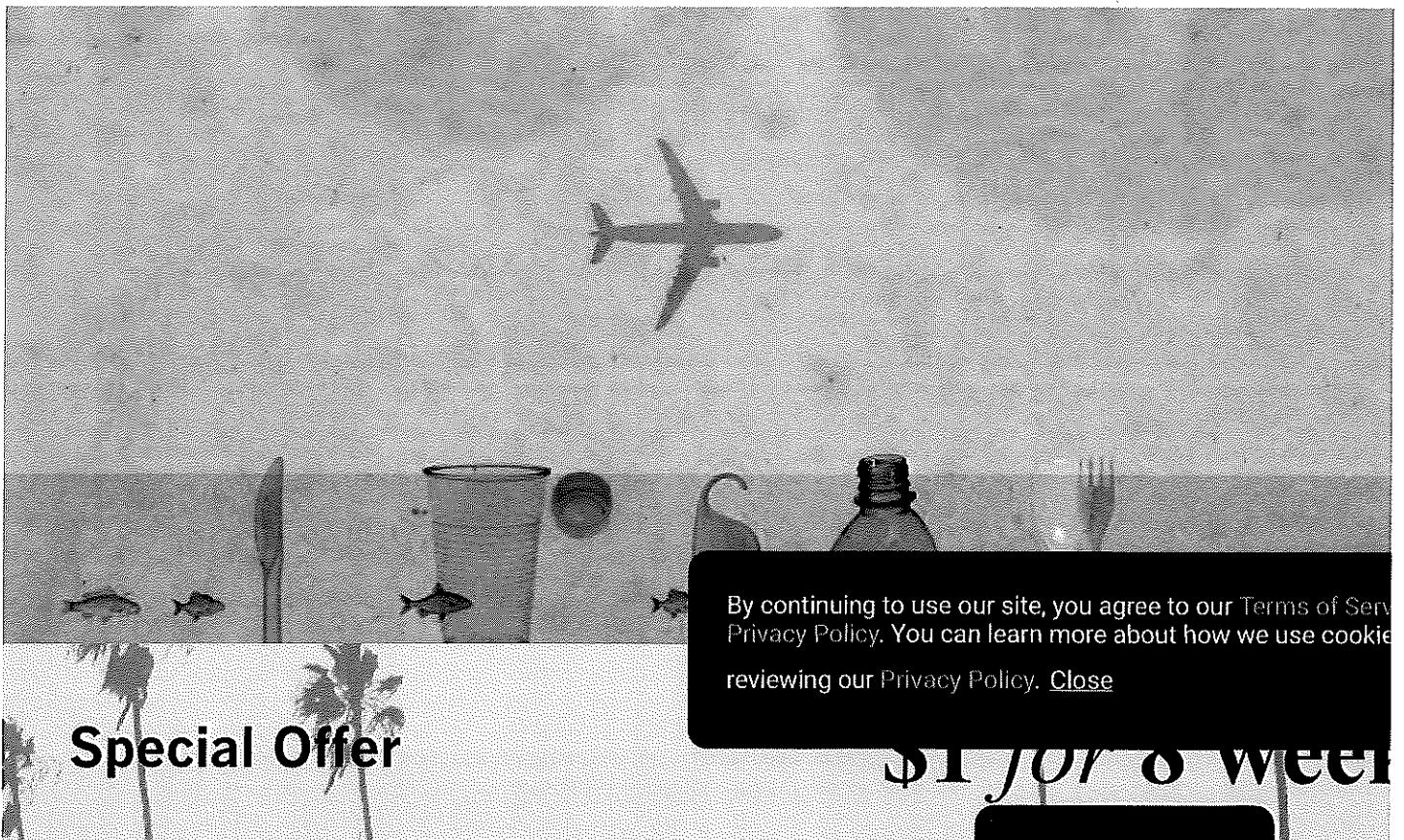


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TRAVEL

In the fight against plastic use, travel providers walk the talk. You can too



Travelers have an opportunity to avoid unnecessary plastics while they're on the road. (Matthew Richardson/For The Times)

By CATHARINE HAMM

MARCH 6, 2020 | 6 AM



Mr. McGuire was only half-right when he told Benjamin Braddock, “There’s a great future in plastics.”

That was but one of the sardonic cinematic moments in “The Graduate,” the now-classic 1967 movie starring Dustin Hoffman in his breakthrough role as Benjamin. Mr. McGuire (played by Walter Brooke) may have been a little overblown in his career advice, but he was right about the future of plastics.

He was wrong that it would be great.

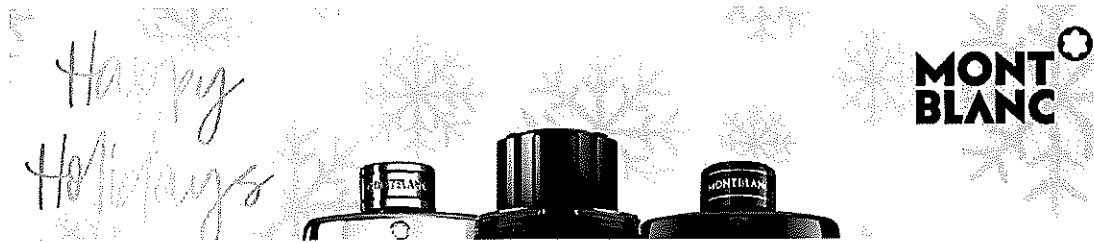
In fact, many say it’s a disaster. “Single-use plastics account for 40% of the plastic produced every year,” Laura Parker wrote in a [National Geographic explainer](#) on the scope of the problem. Discarded bottles don’t break down — not quickly, anyway, and Parker said 8 million tons of that junk ends up in the oceans each year, killing and sickening the denizens of the deep.

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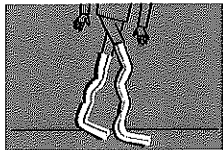
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But surely we aren't the culprits in this. Must be other countries where recycling isn't so hot. Sure we each ditch about 185 pounds of plastic each year, EcoWatch.com said. But if we recycle, that makes us part of the 9% who do, Parker wrote in another NatGeo story. Nine percent? If the world were getting graded on this, that would be, well, what's lower than "F"?

As the universe starts to awaken to an issue that's taking on increased urgency, we wonder what can be done. Plastic straws are already a source of shame. San Francisco International Airport no longer allows water in plastic bottles to be sold at the airport. And hotels are beginning to reconsider those plastic shampoo, conditioner and shower gel bottles (in coming years — in California, anyway — their use will be associated with fines).



LIFESTYLE

All the ways I failed miserably trying to live plastic-free for a week

March 5, 2020

These are small things in light of the enormousness of the problem. Even if an organization takes action, does it matter?

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“It matters and it doesn’t matter,” said David Downie, a professor and chair of politics and environmental studies at Fairfield University in Connecticut.

“It doesn’t matter if I turn off my lights. But if everyone’s car were a hybrid, it would matter a lot.”

Although one person isn’t a parade, if 20 others join, that’s a decent start.

Bring your own container

Who among us has not grabbed a plastic bottle of water in the airport in a desperate attempt to hydrate before getting on a desert-dry plane?

Answer: None of the people who now race through San Francisco International Airport.

In August, the airport banned the sale of water in plastic bottles. (You can still buy a flavored drink in a plastic bottle.) You’ll need to bring a reusable bottle to fill at one of the airport’s 100 hydration stations if you’d like a drink of water.

“By now, we estimate we’ve eliminated about 1.5 million plastic water bottles from entering the waste stream by replacing them with recyclable aluminum or glass,” Doug Yakel, public information officer for the airport, said in an email.

The next target is those flavored drinks “such as sodas, teas and juices.”

“No set timeline on this,” Yakel said, “but effective alternatives available to our retail

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elaborate.

Some companies face larger issues that one wouldn't find, say, in an airport. MT Sobek, an adventure company, planned to go plastic-free by the end of this year.

Jessica Jones, senior director of operations and partnerships for MT Sobek, said the company had made huge strides in eliminating plastics in its travel programs. Travelers bring their own reusable bottles, and the contents of its lunchboxes are not wrapped in plastic.

Because some of their trips are off the beaten track, keeping a refillable bottle cold for the thirsty trekker in the Iraqi desert sometimes strains the bounds of what is environmentally desirable. But they're working on that, she said.



LIFESTYLE

10 steps to take to start becoming plastic-free

March 6, 2020

Tiny bottles

OK, admit it. Those plastic bottles in hotel bathrooms contain products that are thrilling in a way that a bar of Ivory soap (no offense, Ivory) just isn't. Cute, small, easily transported in a carry-on and a big problem for the environment.

In October, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill that bans use of those small bottles by hotels of more than 50 rooms beginning in 2022, and all hotels starting the next year. California is the first state to do

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Marriott International and IHG (Holiday Inn, Kimpton and Intercontinental are among the brands the latter represents) will break the plastic bottle habit before any law mandates it — Marriott by the end of this year and IHG the following.

Hotels are being good stewards of Earth, although the motivation is not necessarily 100% noble. Think back to the days when hotels said you could reuse your towels and sheets to save the planet. In that case and the bottle ban, they are saving money too.

Downie of Fairfield University put that in perspective: “If I have to occasionally bribe my children to eat vegetables, does that somehow make their vegetable eating any less important?”

We’ll drink to that — but only out of glass and aluminum.

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