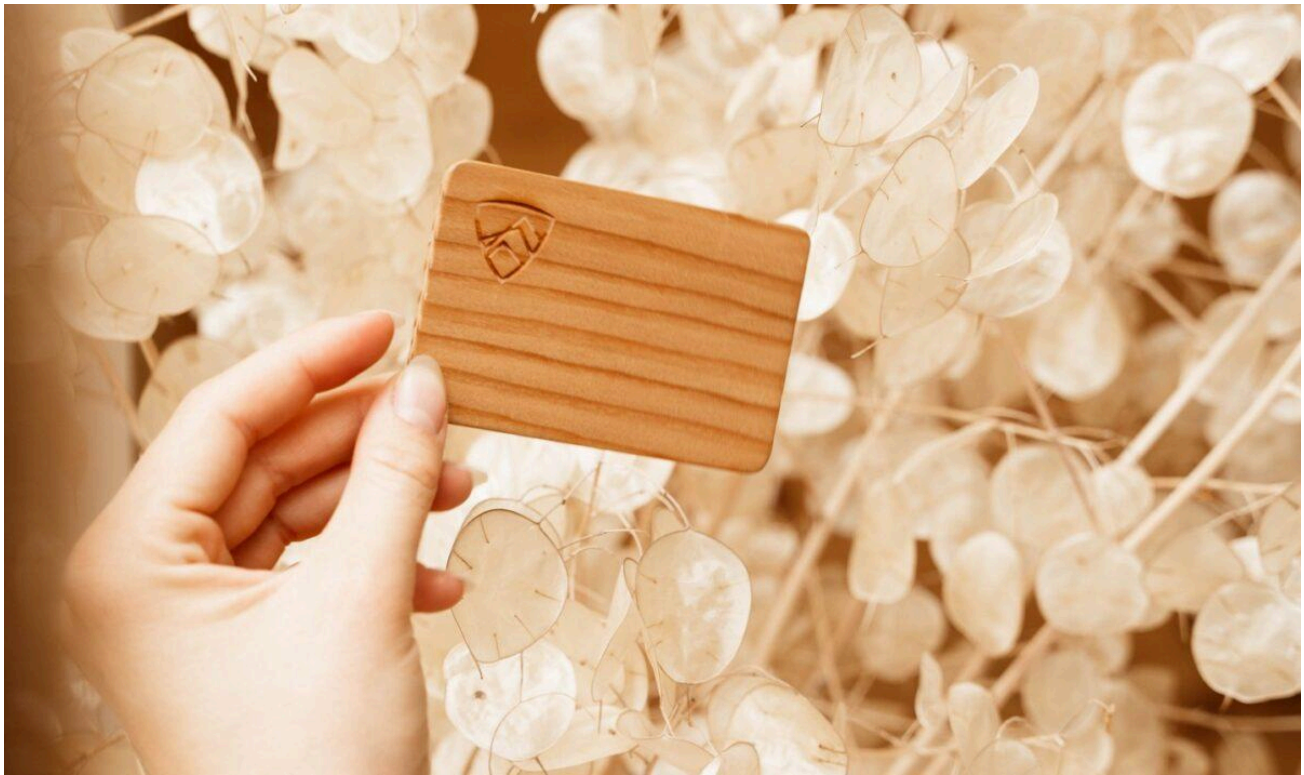


# GREEN TRAVEL BLOG ([HTTPS://GREEN- TRAVEL- BLOG.COM/](https://green-travel-blog.com/))

== *green pearls® - unique places* ==

30. April 2026

## WOOD VS. PLASTIC: HOW SUSTAINABLE ARE HOTEL ROOM KEY CARDS, REALLY?



You check into the hotel, receive your room key—and suddenly it feels completely different. More natural. Not plastic, but wood. It looks good and is a renewable resource. But are wooden hotel room keys really more sustainable? IMAGE ©Naturhotel Outside

In the Green Pearls® network, many hotels rely on wooden chip cards. Often, the aim is to avoid plastic and emphasize their nature-oriented approach. But a problem has emerged:

Several hoteliers report from experience that the wooden cards wear out faster in everyday use: They get worn down, discolor, and need to be replaced sooner than classic plastic cards—sometimes as early as two years, whereas plastic cards are still in use even after ten years.

## TAKING A HOTEL KEY CARD HOME AS A “SOUVENIR”? HERE’S WHY THAT’S A BAD IDEA.

Hotels like the [Green Spa Resort Stanglwirt \(https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/green-spa-resort-stanglwirt-tyrol-austria/\)](https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/green-spa-resort-stanglwirt-tyrol-austria/) report that they can’t say anything about the durability of their (wooden) hotel room keys, since guests often keep them as “souvenirs.” A little memento in your wallet. How nice. Maybe you’ve also had such a card (accidentally or not) tucked between your credit card and health insurance card.

Eventually, you’ll sort it out and it ends up... in the trash? That’s bad. Because (wooden) chip cards contain an electronic chip. That means: They count as electronic waste.

**Conclusion:** Wooden chip cards used as hotel keys look chic, but because of the chip, they are no longer a natural product that could decompose in the compost. Additionally, they need to be replaced more frequently than plastic cards because they have a shorter lifespan. You should also always leave hotel room cards at the hotel. Because, first of all, they are not your property, and secondly, the hotel can use them for several more years and eventually dispose of them properly.

## ALTERNATIVE: TRADITIONAL ROOM KEYS WITH CUSTOM KEYCHAINS

Surprisingly, a significant number of Green Pearls® hotels (about 10 to 20% of the network) still use good old-fashioned room keys. Often with creative ideas for keychains:

- At the **Inkaterra** hotels in Peru, each hotel features oversized keychains crafted by local artisans. At the **Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba** (<https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/inkaterra-hacienda-urubamba/>), there are sloths made of balsa wood. They’re lightweight but impractical for a handbag, so guests naturally leave them at the front desk (if you’d like to take one home, you can buy small balsa sloths at the hotel shop)
- At the **Hotel Bella Vista Zermatt** (<https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/hotel-bella-vista-zermatt/>), there are handmade wooden hearts as keychains, produced by “Atelier Manus,” a foundation promoting social integration.
- The **SANDnature** (<https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/sand-nature-lifestyle-hotel-baltic-sea/>) on the Baltic Sea uses keychains made from driftwood. It’s an idea that many guests have already taken home and recreated there, says hostess Marion Muller.



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The **Hotel Klosterbräu** (<https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/hotel-klosterbraeu-seefeld-austria/>) in Seefeld reports that the classic room keys also help preserve “that moment at the front desk.” “You come back from the mountain, pick up your key, and the conversation begins right away: Was the slope as perfect as promised?” The keys help maintain a “human touch” in the hotel.

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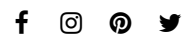


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