

Go for Green Hair in a Sunlit Chair

How can you tell if your hair salon is green and the staff cares about the health of their employees, their customers and their community?

Here are just a few things you can look for next time you head to the salon:

Management Commitment

The owner is committed to creating a sustainable and healthful business. Lisa Thomas, Owner of Verde Eco-Salon, believes in providing a safe, nontoxic, environment for her customers.



From the time you step in the door, you can see that she has designed her salon using repurposed furnishings. Check out the beautiful antique wood pieces that she uses for storage near the reception desk. And this is just the beginning!

Safe Products



If you have your hair colored every four to six weeks, it's important to know what your body might be absorbing through your skin and lungs. Next time you're at the salon, ask about the products that are being massaged into your scalp. Ask for the brand names and then look them up on the Environmental Working Group (EWG) website to check on their safety rating. You might be surprised at what you discover.

At Verde Eco-Salon, they're using Organic Colour Systems, a paraben-free, ammonia-free, formaldehyde-free, thioglycolate-free, cruelty-free, organic, environmentally friendly, fair trade product. I'm very pleased to do business with a company like this, even if it's indirectly.

In case you aren't familiar with the effects of ingredients that may be in your hair products, check out some of the recent and potentially fatal health concerns linked to formaldehyde.

When a business chooses to use or sell a product from another company, they're supporting their supplier's principles and ingredients. They're partnering with the beliefs and values of their suppliers. That's why health-conscious customers who have their hair done here at Verde Eco-Salon are more likely to head to Whole Foods or Native Sun instead of Food Lion on their way home. They want to do business with companies who screen their suppliers.



Media, Music & More

Over the years, I've been to a lot of salons that had TVs, but you won't find this distraction at Verde Eco-Salon. It's just one more thing I like about the atmosphere. TVs discourage conversation and it's impossible to find shows that all your employees and customers will like.

Verde plays nice music and it's at just the right volume for holding a conversation with your stylist. To me, it's most important that my stylist gives me the right cut & color, but after that, conversation is equally important. I like my stylist here at Verde. We never run out of things to talk about.

Several years ago, I stopped going to a very experienced professional who did a great job on my hair. I didn't stop going because of what he did to my hair. I stopped going because of what he did to my ears! He did all the talking and never cared to ask about what was going on in my life. He was too concerned about telling me stories about how great he was to his family and friends. But based on how he treated me, I wasn't so convinced about his mercies toward people when he was off the clock.

At Verde, they offer some basic hair magazines, which makes good sense for a salon. The magazines are displayed on a

beautiful ShabbyChic-like magazine side table between two chairs with hair dryers. I noticed other magazines appropriate for a sustainable business like Renovation Style. On this particular day at the salon, I also noticed that they had magazines that don't necessarily support healthful living. It's a small detail perhaps, but something they might want to think about as subscription renewals come up or as they're cleaning up at the end of each day.

Sustainable Local Art

MacTruque pieces have been displayed in Verde Eco-Salon ever since I started going there. I thoroughly enjoy seeing his art when I'm there. The mix of color, texture and sheen pops off the sky blue-grey walls in the salon.

✘ But today I learned even one more good thing about these round pieces. They're painted on old tabletops that might otherwise have ended up in a dumpster! What a great way to repurpose these rounds that were formally used in a restaurant!

You can find more of MacTruque's fantastic pieces at Avondale Artworks or Stellars Gallery.

MacTruque says his dad used to let him draw on the walls in their house. And now his art can hang on the walls of homes and businesses anywhere in the world!

It's especially nice that Verde has chosen to support a local artist. Selling local art at a salon is a win-win-win partnership. Artists get more local exposure; stylists get to see some variety in the art on the wall, and customers have the opportunity to browse as if they're in a gallery and the option to buy if they just can resist.

Interior Design

In Verde, all the stylists have doors to their stations, but

the doors are always wide open. Doors re-purposed from a prior life are just part of the chic uniqueness of this one-of-a-kind salon in Jacksonville. The doors serve as separators between the stations.

Open carts on wheels display the tools of the trade: hair dryers, brushes and clips. It's all out in the open, and I like this. I never did like seeing a stylist pull a brush from a drawer that also stored their lunch container or a water-stained hair magazine dated several years back.



But what I like best about this salon is the fact that it smells fresh and clean, unlike many salons where the odor of strong products gives me a headache.

Because they planned well and installed a washer and dryer in the back, they wash their towels and capes on-site. This helps reduce the cost and save energy they would otherwise incur if they sent their stuff out to be washed at some off-site location. It's a good business practice since the stylists have time to manage loads between customers.

Natural Light

So few businesses take advantage of natural light, but it's especially advantageous in a salon where customers might want to check on hair color or highlights under natural light—our beloved Florida sunshine!

Verde Eco-Salon has taken advantage of their large windows draping them with light translucent window treatments. They invite the sunshine to come inside to cheer up everyone inside.



Here I am with Jessica Gould, a great stylist from New York. She loves sunshine and butterflies. Verde offers up the sunshine, but they don't have a butterfly garden yet.

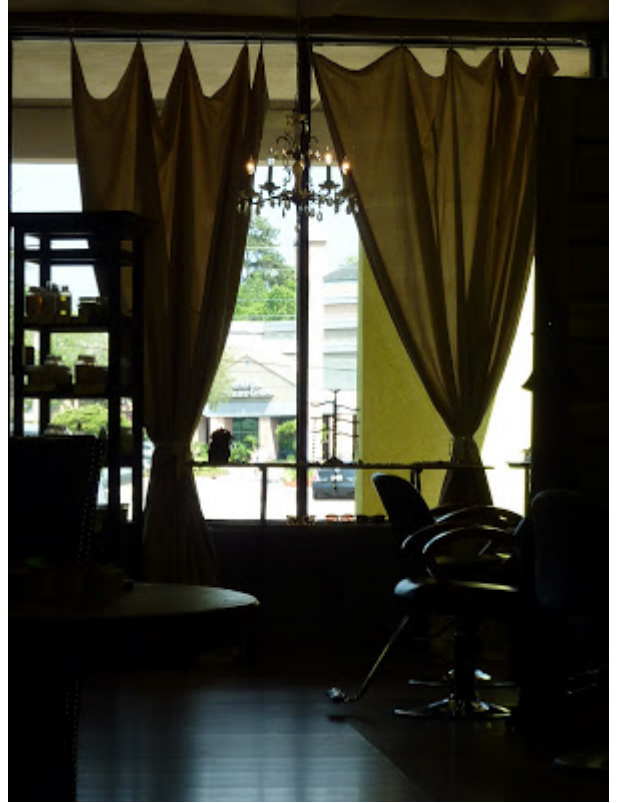
The further back you go in the salon, the more you'll notice that they also have other electric-dependent lighting. But don't look up for too long. It's a dated drop-down ceiling that would probably look better if it were removed to reveal whatever might be above it. Lots of businesses achieve a great industrial look by exposing and painting all the stuff that's up on their ceiling.

Customer Experience

Next door to Verde Eco-Salon there's a cafe with tables on the sidewalk. I sure would like to go to a salon that offered outdoor seating. If you know of a licensed outdoor salon, or one that has a courtyard or some type of outdoor space, please leave a comment with the name and location. I'd love to check it out!

For more ideas on how to help your salon go green, check out GoGreenSalon, a Toronto-based association dedicated to helping salons & spas join the green movement.

The next time you go to your salon, look around and pay attention to what's really going on. Give it the sniff test. If it doesn't pass, then start asking questions about what they're doing to continuously improve their services. If they aren't sure what you're talking about, you might want to start shopping around for another salon.



But do me a favor on your way out: encourage them to contact me at www.DrLorraine.net so I can help them begin their journey toward a safer, more eco-friendly salon.

A few small changes each week or month add up to big improvements over time! I'm committed to green hair, are you?