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Hotel Rooms Are Nightmares

By David Leonhardt

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by: **David Leonhardt**

Ever since I began working for that Florida vacation rentals website, I have been plagued by recurring nightmares. I am haunted at night by the spirits of hotel rooms past.

There was a time when I traveled quite a bit on business. Thankfully, I don't hotels hop any more. But at night I float off to a hotel room far away in time...

The day's work done, I phoned home to check up on the kids. It seems there was a shouting match going on in my absence. It sounded like Pandemonium was winning, but Total Bedlam was making some noise, too.

"Can you just quiet down a bit," I said into the phone.

"YOU shut up," I heard the man in the next room growl.

I chose to ignore him. "Come on guys. Can't you just stop fighting for a minute?"

"I'll show you what fighting means" I heard through the wall.

"Geeze. I can't even here myself think," I complained into the phone.

"Hey! I've had just about enough of you," the guy on the other side of the wall screamed.

Suddenly I got very scared. I pictured a burly, six-foot-two weightlifter smashing his fist through the wall. I hung up the phone, wondering how thin the walls were.

Nothing happened. No fist. No smashed wall. No burly, six-foot-two weightlifter.

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I decided to go downstairs for a stress-relief stroll. As I was closing my door, the man from the next room emerged.

Fortunately, he was no weightlifter.

I was about to ask him why he had shouted at me through the wall while I was trying to discipline my kids, when he called to me, "Hey you. I was on the phone with my wife. Why did you have to heckle me?"

All of a sudden, I knew how thin the walls were.

In fact, I discovered that hotel walls come in two thicknesses:

If you're lucky, you get "Turn down the volume on your TV!" walls. If you are less fortunate, you get

"Turn down the brightness on your TV!" walls.

Fortunately, hotel rooms are immaculately clean. It's true. The sign says so. Just as long as you don't look under the mattress to find a 1976 copy of Businessweek Magazine and theatre tickets to a 1982 showing of The Music Man.

I don't know why hotels pretend to be so spotless. All that junk under the bed could be used as a marketing tool. "Stay at the Hilltop Hilton and join in our under-mattress-scavenger-hunt."

If the hotels don't catch on, sooner or later the motels will. They can turn anything into a sales pitch. Like, for example, "Color TV" (Ooooooohh.). And "Outdoor Pool" (I think the "outdoor" feature is a nice added touch, don't you?) And how about "Free Parking" (which is really a way of saying, "You don't have to park your car in your room.").

What worries me most about hotels is what they keep in the drawers. Did you ever notice there is always a bible in the drawer? Why?

When you buy a car, there is no bible in the glove compartment, although the road is where you need prayers the most.

When you dig for the prize at the bottom of the Cracker Jack box, it's never a bible.

Even in hospitals, where a prayer might be all you have left, there is no bible in the drawer.

Only in hotels and on death row do bibles come as standard equipment.

And why just the Bible? I have had plenty of spare time to search for Torahs and Korans in hotel rooms, and I have never found any. Do Jews and Muslims not stay in hotels? What do they know that I don't?

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Fortunately, I don't have to stay in hotels anymore. I don't have to endure shadow-puppet shows from the guy on the other side of the wall. I don't have to keep from reading over his shoulder. I don't have worry about what he ate for dinner.

And I don't have to listen to his snoring. I can enjoy my own nightmares in peace.

David Leonhardt publishes The Happy Guy humor column:

And A Daily Dose of Happiness:

He also writes personal growth articles:

And sells liquid vitamins:

What Makes A Hotel "Boutique"?

By Chic Retreats

The term "boutique hotel" has been widely used in recent years, but what does it mean and why should you stay in one?

There are lots of companies that claim to specialise in boutique hotels. For many, a boutique hotel is simply one that's not part of a national or international chain and that distinguishes itself by its design, location or additional features. Many hotels aspire to be a boutique hotel without actually achieving it. Overall, there are four main elements to the true boutique hotel:

Size

Large hotels can be cool, trendy and chic, but they can't be boutique. Just as the word is used to describe small, design-led specialist shops, so it applies to hotels. Hotels that apply the term "boutique" to themselves or have it ascribed to them are usually small - certainly less than 50 rooms and in some cases with only one or two. Their size contributes to the atmosphere and service that characterises a hotel with a difference. Whilst size might count in terms of the number of rooms, it doesn't follow that those rooms must also be small. In fact, a hotel that could easily accommodate 20 rooms might choose instead to create just ten, but make them spacious and luxurious, catering to the boutique market.

Design

When the first boutique hotel was opened in New York in 1984, by hotel entrepreneurs Ian Schrager and Steve Rubell, it was praised for its original design and quirky nature. Designed for those who really wanted to participate in their travel rather than passively take it all in, Morgans, and those that followed it, challenged the way we thought about hotels. Although Schrager would not now describe his hotels as boutique, the name has been applied to those hotel who followed in his footsteps as far as design is concerned. From clean and contemporary to themed rooms and classic elegance, a boutique hotel

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must have a clear design theme and attention to detail.

Service

The hallmark of an excellent boutique hotel is its service. Whether the hotel chooses to assign a personal butler to each guest, or just hires and trains staff to anticipate your every need, the service at a boutique hotel is really what it should be at any hotel: ensuring that your stay goes without a hitch, that you can get transport, opera tickets or excellent meals when you want them and making you feel at home rather than feeling like you're a nuisance.

Location

Boutique hotels are scattered all over the world, from 24-hour cities like New York, London and Rio De Janeiro to island havens in the Indian or Pacific Oceans. What often sets them apart are the buildings that contain them. From former plantation houses to old textile mills, towers and palazzos, the type of building often forms the basis of the design and it is the blend of architecture, design and service that turns what could be just another hotel into a boutique one.

Chic Retreats is a collection of small, sophisticated hotels around the world that offer the traveller a true taste of luxury and service. Visit their website by clicking on

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