



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on November 21, 2012

Hotels and Hassles

Few things can make you appreciate home like staying in a hotel. This includes not only low-budget, bare bones hotels but also sweepingly large and ornate luxury hotels. What many hotels seem to have in common are needless hassles.

Since most people who stay in hotels do so while traveling, and stay only a few days in a given hotel, you might think that those who run hotels would want to make it easy for someone who arrives a little tired (or a lot tired) from traveling to use the various devices they find in their hotel room. But you would be wrong. That thought never seems to have crossed their minds.



Recently, at a well-known luxury hotel in Los Angeles, I found that something as simple as turning on a television set can require a phone call to the front desk, and then waiting for the arrival of a technician. Then it took another phone call to get a list of which of the dozens of channels were for which networks.

Why the turning on of a television set should be anything other than obvious to a newly arrived hotel guest is apparently a question that never occurred to the people who ran this hotel. Nor did it apparently ever occur to them that someone just arriving from a journey might want to be able to relax, instead of having to cope with complications that the hotel could easily have avoided.

The next morning, in the shower, I found myself confronted with a dazzling array of knobs and levers, none of which provided any clue as to what they did. The lever rotated and four of the surrounding knobs both rotated and tilted forward and backward.

Apparently it was not considered sporting to come right out and tell you how to get hot water or cold water. That was something you could find out for yourself by being either scalded or chilled.

Being fancy and opaque seemed to be the guiding principle. Getting on the Internet required another phone call to the front desk. In fact, it required two phone calls, because I was first referred to the wrong technical support group.

It is easier to get on the Internet at almost any institution other than a hotel. And, at this particular hotel, you had to go through the whole procedure every day, instead of just signing up for Internet access for your entire stay when you checked in or logged on.

Being a luxury hotel, this one provided bathrobes. But I had my own bathrobe. At least I had it until the maids took it away when cleaning the room while I was out. Another phone call to the front desk.

Since my bathrobe was a white, terry-cloth robe and the hotel's robes were a light tan and made of a different material, I thought there was no danger that one would be mistaken for the other. But I was wrong.

Just how wrong I discovered when, after a long delay, late at night when I wanted to get to sleep, a man



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appeared with a large bag containing two bathrobes. Apparently their search had also turned up another guest's bathrobe that the maids had taken. It looked even less like the hotel's bathrobe than mine did.

Something as simple as turning on a light can be a puzzle at some hotels. Again, the fatal allure of the fancy seems to be the problem with people who choose things to put in hotel rooms. Moreover, it is not uncommon for different lamps in the same hotel room to have different fancy ways of being turned on.

Years ago, at a hotel where I stayed for a week, it was only on the last day that I finally figured out, or stumbled on, the way to turn one of the floor lamps off and on.

Since I was very busy on that trip, I didn't feel like adding this to the list of things to phone the front desk about, especially late at night, when I was more interested in getting to sleep than in waiting for some technician to show up and unravel the mystery.

After my misadventures in Los Angeles, I was off to San Diego, where a hotel maid had to replace a light bulb in the bedroom and a technician had to fix a lamp in the living room. Later I had to fix a toilet that kept running after being flushed. I once had a toilet like that at home, so I knew what to do. But I replaced my malfunctioning toilet at home, unlike the hotel.

No amount of fancy things makes up for hassles.

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