



Minibars, bottled water, suntan lotion, and ... cardboard suitcase

Another great article from *The Rooms Chronicle*, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! ***Important notice: This article is copyrighted by *The Rooms Chronicle* and may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher.*** College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com

Notice: The ideas, opinions, recommendations, and interpretations presented herein are those of the author(s). The College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University/The Rooms Chronicle assume no responsibility for the validity of claims in items reported.

As hotels struggle to generate extra revenue due to room rate compression and lack of rate integrity, TRC staffers have noticed that many hotels are offering more than just the traditional minibar fare and on-demand movies inside the guestrooms. Offering convenience products inside the guestroom has evolved into a new spectrum for many hotels.

No longer are the days of just offering beer, wine, spirits, soft drinks, and snacks through the minibar the norm at full-service and select-service hotels and resorts. Consider the following nontraditional items that traveling TRC staffers have found in their hotel rooms for consumption and purchase this past year:

- Souvenir T-shirt of the city where the hotel was located \$20.00
- Baseball cap with adjustable strap of the hometown team \$15.00
- Liter-sized bottles of premium bottled water \$ 3.95
- Sewing kit (inside the minibar) \$ 4.95
- First aid kit (with Tylenol® , antacids, and bandage strips) \$ 4.95
- Premium suntan lotion, SPF 8 \$15.00
- Aloe-based sunburn relief lotion \$17.00
- Skin preservative and rejuvenator lotion \$14.00
- Filter packet (.8 oz) of Seattle's Best Coffee® \$ 5.00
- Terry cloth bathrobe embroidered with hotel logo \$75.00

By far, the most innovative and thought-provoking convenience item that TRC staffers came across this year was the cardboard suitcase that several Hilton hotels and resorts have begun placing in guestroom closets. Folded flat and shrink-wrapped in clear plastic, the Hilton LuggageBOXX offers a convenient solution for traveling guests who need another suitcase or even a box to ship personal items.

The information sheet enclosed inside the shrink-wrapping assures the traveler that the box and its sturdy handle are engineered to securely and safely hold up to 50 lbs. and it may be "carried on" most airlines. The sheet also touts that the box is simple to assemble and lightweight for easy handling yet designed to withstand the abuse of courier and airport luggage handling systems. Offered for \$12.95 (which will be added to the guestroom account if the box is used or missing), the 20-1/2" x 14" x 8" alternative is only a fraction of the cost of a suitcase and may be used as a home storage container.

TRC commends Hilton for its innovation and forethought. While the LuggageBOXX may not be a big seller for all hotel properties, it certainly will be a welcome convenience item for guests staying in destination locations and in hotels near airports.

Pictured below: The Hilton LuggageBOXX provides a sturdy yet lightweight and convenient alternative for hotel guests that may be in need of an extra suitcase or box.



So what are the next convenience items that guests will likely find available for purchase in their hotel rooms? Toiletries? Feminine hygiene products? Maps of the geographic area? Breakfast and protein bars? Souvenir magnets? Childrens' toys? The potential list may be endless, but one thing is certain. As hotels and resorts struggle to recover from the diminished revenue levels that they have been experiencing these past two years, guests can assuredly expect that lodging properties will seek to find alternative sources of revenue to bolster their bottom lines.

(Dr. William D. Frye, who travels extensively, is the executive editor of *The Rooms Chronicle*. wfrye@roomschronicle.com)