

# There's no place like home

Esquire design columnist  
**CYRIL ZAMMIT** rhymes  
accommodation with irritation



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**FAILURES IN  
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**I** find myself travelling for work more and more these days. It is a strange upturn, particularly in a world that has accepted and embraced the digital office and Zoom waiting room. And, while it is always nice to see new places, I must confess that the substantial size of my carbon footprint is starting to weigh on me a bit—which has got me thinking of ways I can try alter my behaviour to offset it in different ways.

As I find myself spending a significant amount of time in hotels, I've started to develop a criteria for how to select the places that I will be staying in. For example they must be conveniently located, preferably within walking distance of my main destinations, and while not necessarily luxurious, they should offer easy access to amenities.

Beside the indispensable need for good WiFi, the attention and friendliness of the staff will always be a factor in my return visit to a specific hotel. Then, of course, there's the quality of the bed linen. I don't sleep much, but I sleep fast, so I need to feel comfortable when I reach the bed.

With almost half of last year spent on the road, I have taken to making little notes detailing typical design missteps that hotels often make—regularly where cost-saving measures are prioritised or the interior designer failed to consider the comfort of guests. Allow me to share a few of my findings.

In the hotel industry's quest for smart automation, almost every property offers a whole set of challenges when it comes to operating the lights and curtains. Some can be so frustrating, that I've needed to contact the reception desk for assistance, only to not being able to find the number to dial. In one stay, I had curtains without a window behind them; rooms with a single electrical plug socket; toilets that located were more than two metres from the paper roll; an ashtray in a non-smoking room; and confusing multiple elevator set ups with buttons that make no sense.

Then of course there are the overly 'designed' rooms where the rooms have no mirrors, or glass windows between the bathroom and the bedroom—perfect when your travelling with a work colleague or a family member who isn't your significant other! No, open plan bathrooms are not a design error, but rather an increasingly bizarre feature of modern hotels.

Failures in hotel design are always preventable, which is fascinating when there seem to be so many of them.

The concept of design is rooted in traditions of the hospitality. Since ancient times, the hospitality industry has served at the behest of making the journey of the traveller more amenable. The development of many diverse types of Inns, hotels, brands and other services has occurred in cultures all across the world—but they always start by design conception, some of them taking years on this stage.

The initial design phase is crucial, drawing upon centuries-old traditions of hospitality. Hotels often falter due to technological obsolescence or poor furniture choices, a problem not limited to budget accommodations but also seen in luxury resorts. Ultimately, the staff's attitude plays a pivotal role in creating a memorable guest experience, as Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "True hospitality consists of giving the best of yourself to your guests." When you travel, if there is no memory, there is no value. Well, it's a good thing I've been keeping my notes then. ☺

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