

Things you don't know about...

Hotel room attendants

David Smith, executive housekeeper at Park Plaza County Hall in London, reveals what really goes on behind closed doors...

By JO UPCRAFT

The most stolen item from a guest's room isn't the bathrobe, it's the hairdryer

That's why so many hotels have permanent ones wired to the bathroom wall. Once at a hotel on Park Lane, a guest stole the heated towel rail off the wall, and the curtains. The most left-behind item is a mobile charger, and there was one guest who left a blow-up doll sitting in his empty bed. The same guest returned two weeks later and left another one!

It takes an average of 28 minutes to clean a room

And each attendant is given 16 rooms to clean per shift. There is a room attendant hierarchy, with the best and more experienced staff given the penthouses and executive rooms.

Men secretly love their beauty products

Men are tidier than women. Women spread their cosmetics and perfumes out around the bathroom and bedroom; men seem to make a show of leaving their razor and toothbrush neatly by the sink. Many men hide their grooming products in their wash bag, but when you peek inside you can see they're just as vain – if not more – than women. Popular male grooming items are concealer and eyelash curlers.

Staff can get starstruck

In one hotel, our room attendant team had a fight over who was going to take a hairdryer to John Travolta's room; the woman who won fainted from excitement when John opened the door wearing just a towel. We then fought over who was going to collect her from the room! Celebrity guests are generally cleaner than you'd expect, although they do demand high levels of service and often change their minds.

Attendants always knock twice

If you don't respond, we will enter. I've often walked in on couples having sex or people in the bathroom – who think if they don't answer the person knocking will go away. Guests are often seen in the corridor in their underwear. I'm not sure if they've forgotten they're in a hotel or are just exhibitionists.

You can tell a guest's nationality by how they keep their room

The Japanese are the tidiest (they also tend to detach the shower head and stand in the middle of the bathroom instead of in the bath to wash), Americans line up vitamin tablets around the sink and Italians have coloured footwear – they particularly love yellow trainers. There are two types of British guests: the demanding and messy, or unassuming and tidy. The latter always seem bewildered when we knock on the door to ask if we can clean the room.

Room service doesn't just stop at food

Underwear, especially red or black lace, is a popular request from guests. But the most bizarre I've had, when working at a hotel in Kensington, was for a supply of Viagra.

