



## No Matter What the State of the Economy, Today's Travelers Demand a Good Night's Sleep

[CATHLEEN McCARTHY]

**WE LIVE IN A SLEEP-DEPRIVED WORLD.** Forty percent of adults claim they're so tired during the day, it interferes with their daily activities. Experts claim sleep deprivation is costing \$45 billion a year in lost productivity, increased healthcare bills, and traffic accidents. Add the stress of business travel and you have a lot of hotel guests desperate for sleep. Here's what some hotels are doing to attract and retain customers by all but guaranteeing a good night's sleep.

**E**ntering the lobby of the Westin Dragonara in Malta at dinnertime, guests are met with a soothing jazz soundtrack, a sea of flickering candles, and shukoru games arranged on tables for them to play. This is part of Westin's Unwind program, one of many hotel marketing efforts aimed at relaxing harried travelers. The promise implied behind such campaigns is simple but elusive: a good night's sleep on the road.

Westin's Unwind program is less about the actual act of sleeping than the early stage of relaxation that begins after work. It's also a ploy to get guests to dine and, especially, drink in the

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hotel lobby bar. Each property defines its Unwind mission of “making the transition from chaos to calm” in ways that reflect their specific locations.

Karen Colliton-Thomson, marketing director at the Westin Times Square, says chaos is built right into her location. “Where else is it more chaotic than Times Square?” she says. “All your senses are pulsating here, whether you’re walking down the street being pushed from side to side or having to make a presentation, a sales call, or attend a meeting. Everyone is rushing. It’s stressful just getting around in this city. Our hotel is a bit of an oasis in the jungle. Guests can come in, unwind, rejuvenate, and get ready to go out and face the battle the next day.”

As in Malta, guests entering the Westin in Times Square at dusk are met with the chain’s signature white tea scent and instrumental music. At 5 p.m., the tempo of the music slows and lights dim. Sometimes massage therapists from the hotel spa circulate, offering five-minute neck rubs or reflexology treatments. “If we can sell a few drinks while helping guests unwind, all the better,” says Colliton-Thomson. “For some people, that is the way they unwind—by having cocktails after work.”

Locations with a strong beverage tie-in have an advantage, she says. The Westin Ka’anapali Ocean Resort Villas serves tropical fruit drinks as hula dancers perform, for example, while the Westin Dublin holds demonstrations on how to properly pour a Guinness. A beverage tie-in proved more illusive for the Westin Times Square, although they eventually settled on wines from Long Island.

Like everyone else in Manhattan, Colliton-Thomson has to find creative ways to hold customers’ attention. One recent hit involved partnering with Madame Tousseau’s Wax Museum across the street. Every evening last summer, the wax figure of a prominent

New Yorker appeared in the lobby and guests could have a drink with the likes of Woody Allen, Bette Midler, or Regis Philbin. “We get a lot of families in the summer and it was a big kick to take kids’ pictures with these famous figures.”

After working in the hospitality industry for two decades, Colliton-Thomson believes relaxation and a good night’s sleep are getting ever more elusive. “Life moves at such a fast pace now,” she says. “Travel is a pain and airlines aren’t making it any easier. Any oasis you can find is cherished.”

### **Sleep-Starved Business Travelers**

Crowne Plaza took direct aim at insomniacs when they launched their Sleep Advantage program in 2004. Designed with the help of sleep specialist Dr. Michael Breus, Sleep Advantage promises “a holistic approach to sleep.” Gina LaBarre, a vice president at Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts, says the program was inspired by a National Business Travel Monitor study. More than half the business travelers surveyed claimed they weren’t getting enough sleep on the road.

Staff spent months interviewing guests and business travelers about sleep. “Through the Sleep Advantage, Crowne Plaza recognizes two important travel-related stress conditions: the first night effect and the on-call effect,” says LaBarre. “The first occurs when trying to sleep in an unfamiliar environment and the second is caused by the constant worry that something is destined to disturb sleep.” Anxiety over a wake-up call or anticipation of hallway noise are primary culprits, she says.

Like the Westin with its Heavenly Bed, Crowne Plaza’s sleep program begins with bed and bedding: mattress

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CROWNE PLAZA

topper, plush pillows, cotton blankets and duvets—all of which are for sale. (As sales of the “Heavenly Bed” showed, guests who have just had a good sleep are often eager to bring home the bed.) Along with scented bath amenities, guests of the Crowne Plaza will find a drape clip to block that distracting sliver of sunlight in the morning, a nightlight to help them navigate in the dark, and a sleep kit containing ear plugs, eye mask, lavender spray, and a \$12 CD of Dr. Breus offering tips for “physical and emotional relaxation” against a background of soothing music.

To reduce the “on-call effect,” the hotel guarantees its wake-up calls. If a guest fails to receive a requested call, the hotel will waive that night’s room and tax charges. To appeal to business travelers, each hotel designates at least one floor a “Quiet Zone” on Sunday through Thursday nights, meaning no children, groups, or leisure travelers, no noisy auto door closures, no rooms near an elevator or ice machine, and no room attendants or renovation between 9 p.m. and 10 a.m. Since the implementation of Sleep Advantage, LaBarre says guest satisfaction surveys have measured increases in bed/pillow scores and positive com-

# SELLING THE BED

Nothing is more indicative of our insomniac society than hotel guests' desire to bring home the bed that gave them a good night's sleep. Westin was the first to tap into this demand. Within weeks of introducing their Heavenly Bed in 1999, Westin guests were calling to ask where they could buy one. Westin moved quickly to establish a Web site and hotline to take orders.

Three years ago, Nordstrom began carrying the Heavenly Bed, making Westin the first hotel chain to sell beds through a major retailer. This year, Westin partnered with United Airlines to offer the plush Heavenly blankets and pillows to business and first-class travelers on bicoastal flights.

There are now more than 81,000 Heavenly beds in Westin guestrooms worldwide and consumers have purchased more than 30,000 Heavenly Beds, 100,000 pillows, 32,000 sheets, and 13,000 shower heads over the past decade.

Every major hotel brand followed suit, developing signature beds and bedding to sell online and via in-room catalog. Bedding has become one of the most lucrative components of many hoteliers' retail operations. And why not? A hotel is one place where people can actually try out the merchandise for a night before committing.

For hoteliers, it's a win-win situation. Not only do they get a lucrative add-on sale—a king-size Heavenly mattress and box spring costs \$1,495 on Westin's site, plus \$225 for shipping—but the purchased bed becomes a constant reminder of the hotel's brand.

ments, particularly regarding the guaranteed wake-up call.

## Sleep-Inducing Spa Treatments

You may have noticed the word "sleep" cropping up in spa treatment menus. Relaxation has always been at the core of massage with its scented oils, dim lights, and soothing music, but lately resorts are taking the de-stressing mission a step further.

At Sundara Inn & Spa in Utah, guests are encouraged to nap for 20 minutes after a spa treatment.

Sundara also offers workshops run by the San Francisco-based "sleep guru" Robert de Stefano, whose drug-free approach, emphasizing diet, yoga, meditation, and massage, fits nicely with the New Age ethos of many destination spas. In February 2009, De Stefano conducted a workshop at the Mayflower Inn & Spa in Washington Depot, Connecticut designed to help couples sleep better together. De Stefano has run several workshops at the Mayflower since Lisa Hedley, director of the Mayflower Spa, invited him to be part of her "Sleep Better, Sleep Well" program. "My interest in sleep grew out of an enormous demand," says Hedley. "Robert is a yogi like me

but he recognizes that not everyone loves yoga. You have to start with what people are comfortable with."

Hedley has participants fill out extensive questionnaires, designed with the help of psychologists and sleep specialists, choosing from an extensive menu of alternative approaches including tai chi, yoga, labyrinth walks, dream analysis, journal writing, nutritional counseling, and self massage. "We work with people to help them figure out what's going on in their lives that might be affecting their sleep," says Hedley. "It's important to personalize these things and realize that what you can achieve at the Mayflower is very different from what you can achieve at home."

## Polysomnography and a Round of Golf

Canyon Ranch was probably the first major resort in the United States to offer comprehensive overnight polysomnography tests, where leads are attached to a patient's head and body to monitor heart and brain waves during sleep. Phil Eichling MD, director of the executive health program at Canyon Ranch, began performing portable in-room sleep studies at the Tucson resort in 1993 and set up a dedicated sleep lab ten years ago. "Sleeping, eating, exercise habits, and emotional/spiritual life management are core to everyone's health," Dr. Eichling says. "Early on, I realized that sleep was an essential component of the mix."

At that time, Dr. Eichling was working with diabetics and heart disease patients who couldn't make lifestyle changes because they were so sleepy. "Sleep apnea is as big a heart risk factor as smoking," he says. "I wanted to treat sleep both to reduce heart risk directly



and allow people to take on the lifestyle tasks of exercise and dietary changes.”

Being wired to computer monitors for seven hours may not sound like a relaxing way to spend a night at a luxury resort, but polysomnography proved popular enough that other resorts followed suit. Overnight sleep studies at Canyon Ranch cost \$2,325 and an in-room version will be offered at the resort’s new Miami Beach Living hotel, opening in October, 2009. Nevertheless, Eichling admits, most guests prefer to handle their insomnia or sleep disorders with 50-minute physician consultations or behavioral therapy sessions, which book at a steady rate of one or two per week. “Twenty-one percent of the population says it has a significant sleep problem,” Dr. Eichling says. “That is a lot of people. But it’s important to note that there hasn’t been a change in the number of people with sleep prob-

lems, just a growing awareness of the importance of sleep. At Canyon Ranch, we see a lot of people with serious sleep problems.”

The quest for sleep is driving guests to La Quinta Resort & Club as well. When Dr. Daniel Cosgrove opened the WellMax Center for Preventive Medicine there in 2000, his goal was to offer the ultimate executive physical, aiming mainly at early cancer detection. By locating his medical facilities at a resort, he could offer guests gourmet medical evaluations as part of a weekend getaway. Like Dr. Eichling, he soon discovered sleep deprivation was the root of many complaints, from weight gain to depression. That encouraged him to set up a sleep lab in 2001.

“People come for medical testing because of low energy or feeling washed out,” says Dr. Cosgrove. “It turns out a lot of them simply aren’t

getting restorative sleep.” Having overnight tests at a resort is a lot more inviting than being dropped off at a downtown medical facility, he points out. “For the sleep study, you show up at about 10 p.m., when you’re about to go to sleep, and by 5 a.m., we have everything we need. People can stay if they want but many just pull those wires off and go down the hall to their rooms, where they can relax and order breakfast in bed.”

It’s not unusual for executives to bring spouses along for a barrage of high-tech diagnostic tests, followed by nine holes of golf and a meal at the resort’s 5-star restaurant. While WellMax operates independent of La Quinta, it attracts out-of-town patients to the resort who might not otherwise have come. “It’s very synergistic,” Cosgrove says. “My practice benefits by being here at the resort and the resort benefits from my practice.” ■