

JANUARY 5, 2016

5 Things I Love About Hotel Rooms

by **KAREN**



Man, I love to travel. I love getting out of dodge and seeing new things. I wish I could do it more often, too, and by “more often,” I mean every month! I’d love to be able to go someplace new one weekend a month...

Do you hear that, future eccentric billionaire who’s going to fund my life of leisurely travel? I would very much appreciate one all-expenses-paid weekend trip per month. I mean...if you don’t mind. It sure would be nice.

Thanks to El Hub and frequent flyer miles, last weekend in Monterey we stayed at the [Portola Hotel & Spa](#) right down by Fisherman’s Wharf.

Naturally, this calls for a list of five things I love about hotel rooms. Things like...



A standard room at the [Portola Hotel & Spa](#) in Monterey, California

1. Trying new beauty products



GIRL, you know it's true: first thing I do after I put down my luggage and open the curtains is make a beeline for the bathroom to check out the complimentary beauty products. The Portola had products from a brand I'd never heard of before, [Olive Branch Botanicals](#)? They had all the essentials — bar soap, lotion, shampoo, conditioner and body wash.

My fave was the body wash, which smelled a little like orange flowers, and it was good stuff, too. My skin felt nice and soft and moisturized. I'll have to keep an eye out for more products by Olive Branch Botanicals...

2. Robes



OH! — the robes! Can't forget about the robes. You gotta rock the robe if there's one in the room. I like to wear them after I take a shower, while I'm getting ready for the day, or while I'm just lounging around the room.

I don't know what it is, but there's something about wearing a robe in a hotel room... Just makes it all feel a little more indulgent, like yeah, you know it! I'm really treating myself!

3. Trying different teas, coffees and coffee machines



So, at home I have a boring old drip coffeemaker... It serves me just fine, but on trips I always take full advantage of any fancy schmancy hotel room coffeemakers, especially when they come with a selection of different teas and coffee flavors, and on this trip the room had a Keurig!

I was all about the Decaf Breakfast Blend...



4. Patios and balconies



If the room has a patio or a balcony, score! I always try to spend a little time out there if possible. I'll go out with a cup of coffee or my journal and just enjoy the quiet time... Or, sometimes I'll sit there and people watch. That's fun too. I'm the kind of person who needs a little quiet time everyday.

Oh, and then there's...

5. Room service! (Specifically, breakfast)



Room service usually costs an arm and a leg, so it's not something I do all the time, but when I can, I'll splurge on a room service breakfast.

I like it when the hotel gives you one of those cards with the breakfast selections on it that you make little checkmarks on and then hang on the handle outside the door. You just put your delivery time right on there, and then, voila! — someone brings you breakfast the next morning THAT YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO COOK (which, clearly, is the most important part of the experience). Eggs, maybe some bacon, toast, coffee, juice — all that yummy breakfast stuff.



Also, because I never eat food in my bed at home, of course I always have to when I travel. I mean, you gotta do what you gotta do.

Your friendly neighborhood beauty addict,

Karen

JANUARY 6, 2016

5 Tips for a Successful Spa Experience

by **KAREN**



The [Spa on the Plaza](#) at the Portola Hotel & Spa in Monterey, California

If I could, I would go to a spa every single day of my life. They're quiet, they smell good, you get to walk around in a robe and slippers, and somebody takes care of you, instead of the other way around. For a good hour, you don't have to worry about anything, and sitting around for long blocks of time is considered totally OK. You can just sit there and zone out...

Going to a spa is one of those treats I like to give myself once or twice a year, especially when I travel, and on my trip to Monterey last weekend, I popped on over to the [Spa on the Plaza](#) at the Portola Hotel & Spa for a prenatal massage (in a nutshell: it was great!).

Incidentally, when you're a pregnant lady, the prenatal massage is pretty much your only massage option if you can't lay flat on your tum, but it works most of the majorly sore spots, like your back, hips and feet.



The spa reception area

If you go to the Spa on the Plaza, and I hope you do, ask for Ashleigh. She has *amazing* hands, and she's super nice. Seriously, her hands were among the best parts of my trip.



Beauty products galore!

While I sat in the Relaxation Room (that's actually what it's called), I got to thinking about the things that make for a successful spa visit. If you have a spa day in your future, here are some things to think about...

1. Get there early



The Relaxation Room...

Most spas suggest that you arrive at least 15 minutes before your appointment, but I suggest a full hour or two — maybe even three, depending on the spa's facilities and how stressed you're feeling.

Seriously. First of all, you don't want to be stressed and rushing to make a spa appointment (kind of defeats the purpose, yo!). You want to get there with plenty of time to check in, check out the facilities, and give yourself some time to relax (possibly even take a nap).

Research the spa's facilities online or by calling them on the phone before you go. That way, you can take advantage of any extra niceties they may have, like steam rooms and pools.



Steam room straight ahead!



The women's locker room

If I get there early, I'll use the steam room, if the spa has one (although I can't right meow because they're not advised for Baby Girl), take a dip in the pool, or sneak in a nap in one of the quiet rooms.

Most spas usually also have a fancy shower with, like, super jets of water that spray at you from all sides (OH, SO GOOD), and I'll usually save those for after one of the spa treatments.



One of the showers... There was also a showerhead above that didn't make it into the picture



Baby Girl and I getting ready for our prenatal massage

Point is, give yourself loooooooots of time to relax.

2. Figure out your food situation



What's the food sitch?

I feel like this is an often overlooked but highly important part of the spa experience, because I've been to spas and have been freaking HONGRAY AS ALL HELL, which dampens the experience. Trust me, achieving zen isn't easy when your stomach is rumbling.



Hot tea and ice water with lemon

I think it's very important to find out beforehand if the spa you're going to has food, so you can eat accordingly. Some spas provide light snacks, like fruit and nuts, but some stick to drinks (like iced lemon water and hot tea). Some bigger places have a menu and serve light dishes like salads and appetizers.

3. If anything isn't working for you during your session, let your spa tech know

I learned this lesson the hard way: if anything isn't working for you, be vocal about it. A spa visit is a special treat, so you should enjoy it. If you have to, walk out, even if it's in the middle of a massage or other session, and ask to speak to a manager.

I used to accept poor service or other uncomfortable issues to be polite, but all it ever did was make me stressed out and grumpy, which is the exact opposite of the feeling you want when you go to a spa.

4. Check to see if you can use frequent flier miles

Some spas allow you to use frequent flier miles, so if you've got some on your card, use those bad boys to hit up a spa!

5. Leave your phone in your locker

Or, if you *have* to bring it with you, only use it to take silly selfies, not for answering emails or posting on social media. Really use the time to unplug for a while and relax.



I hope these tips help you have a wonderful spa experience. I'll see ya at the spa!

Your friendly neighborhood beauty addict,

Karen