



What's the Deal By Daniel Lesser

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Live like a local — or enjoy the standards of a hotel

(The views and opinions expressed in this blog are strictly those of the author.)

As a result of an ongoing, dynamic renaissance in downtown Los Angeles, which has included a dramatic increase in new hotel offerings, the area still does not have a sufficient number of transient hotel rooms during peak demand periods. This phenomenon results in many corporate and group meeting travelers seeking alternative accommodations through peer-to-peer home-sharing internet platforms such as Airbnb, HomeAway and VRBO.

When considering the following experiences staying in alternative accommodations, hotels clearly offer preferred accommodations for business travelers:

- Discovering after booking that the accommodations reserved were not at the same location as indicated on the listing
- Being instructed by an owner/host to respond when asked by anyone on property that “I am staying at a friend’s apartment”
- An unsavory element of folks loitering in the building lobby with a noticeable lack of visible, on-site security
- Bathrooms that contained one roll of toilet paper and no soap, shampoo and tissues
- Dirty domestic tap water and no available in unit or vending bottled drinking water
- A limited number of thin, nonabsorbent towels that do not offer the same quality compared to what is found in most hotels
- The host only offering one set of keys for a two-bedroom unit
- One television with no cable access in the living area of a two-bedroom apartment

While typically the amounts paid per person are below prevailing hotel room rates, I believe the expression “you get what you pay for” rings true when booking accommodations through home-sharing networks for corporate and group meeting travel. With this said, in many resort markets, utilizing accommodations through home-sharing platforms may offer a compelling proposition, assuming the listing information is accurate.

Although the proliferation and embrace by the traveling public of home-sharing booking websites has had a negative impact on the lodging industry and remains a threat within many submarkets, particularly in 24/7 urban areas, I am of the opinion that staying in a transient hotel is the only practical option for corporate travel. A lack of meaningful home-sharing standards and inconsistent experiences results in daunting challenges to manage guest expectations.

Finally, as famed hotelier (and the original hospitality disruptor) Ian Schrager recently opined, “The only way to compete with Airbnb and other future technologies that might emerge is to do those things they cannot do – and they cannot provide communal entertainment.”

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