

Excuse me, Madame, is this yours?

Can anyone honestly, truly swear they have never taken anything from a hotel room when they check out? But here's another thing... Can you honestly say you have never left anything behind when you have checked out... perhaps even something that you'll deny is yours when the hotel gives you a call?



'What's so damned funny?' (Image: Lane Green, via Wikimedia Commons)

We're all a little bit guilty - ash trays, the bathroom goodies, slippers, tea and coffee sachets are some of the small things many people sneak into their suitcases. There are some people who think a bit bigger, however. Bath robes, kettles, umbrellas, even pillows; if it's not nailed down, it's fair game. It's got to the point where some hotels include elegant price lists in their rooms, diplomatically stating that if you like their linens and TV remote controls that much, you can purchase them.

At the African Pride Melrose Arch Hotel in Johannesburg, management adopts a more generous approach to its signature yellow bath ducks, telling guests that should they grow attached to them during their stay, they're welcome to take them home. Clearly, they're very lovable ducks because around 20 000 people take them up on the offer every year.

Nicking "souvenirs" from hotel rooms is one thing, but what about the things that get left behind?

Any artificial limbs in the left luggage department?

The Protea Hospitality Group has over the past year been gathering information from its 120+ hotels across 8 African countries, to find the weird and wonderful snippets of life that are left in hotel rooms.

Sometimes things left behind can be intentional, along the "random acts of kindness" lines, such as finishing your book and tucking it away in a drawer for a future guest to find and hopefully enjoy. It also beats carrying it back home with you when your luggage might already be overweight with shopping.



You've left your owner without a leg to stand on. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

But many guests are quite simply forgetful, although how any woman worth her expensive Jimmy Choos can leave them behind is beyond comprehension. It happens.

'Huyyo, ah belief ah lecht mah teeche behind'



'Hi, what's a doll like you doing in a place like this?' (Image: DF5KX, via Wikimedia Commons)

In a similar vein, how do you walk out the room without your false teeth? They may not be in the same league as the Choo shoes, but you'd think a person would notice if they were not in place. Ditto a glass eye or prosthetic limb. Bodyguards - not very good ones - have been known to misplace firearms and bullets but some more obvious items that are easily overlooked when packing include things like cell phones, chargers and plug adaptors; spectacles, sunglasses and contact lenses; and various items of clothing and toiletries (karma balances the removal of the complimentary shampoo). All very normal, and not the least embarrassing. Nothing a person need feel shy about calling the hotel and asking if it's been found.

'It belongs to a friend. It's NOT mine!'

Blow-up dolls on the other hand...guests tend to be a tad more hesitant about claiming those, along with naughty little negligees (especially when the only guest in the room was a man), and they almost never ask if housekeeping found their, um, battery operated massager. In fact, more often than not, when the hotels contact them about their lost property, the horrified answer is "I swear that's not mine!"

African Pride and Protea Hotels are very environmentally conscious on every level. If these aren't claimed within three months they don't toss them in the bin; they are sent off with other recycling and they get turned into hundreds of other products with different but no less useful purposes.

One thing that's easy to lose when you've had a bit too much to drink, and virtually impossible to get back, is your name. The only way to do that is with a massive dose of confidence: one night, a guest who had imbibed more than his fair share sprinted down the corridors of the hotel naked as a jay bird. Six months later he called to ask if they still had the CCTV footage, because he wanted to post it on YouTube...now that's chutzpah!

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