

Hotel Motel Security

Safety Advice for Travelers

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Hotel Motel Room Sanctuary

When traveling on business or pleasure, it may become necessary to stay overnight in a **hotel** or **motel**. Your hotel room becomes your home for the night and is your sanctuary while you sleep. It is important to give some thought about security planning. What hotel or motel are you going to select, and what room you are willing to accept? The cost of the hotel room is not always the best predictor of how safe the room will be. There are a few security rules of thumb that should apply to any hotel room you rent.

Higher Floors are Safer

Upper floors are safer from crime, but worse for fire rescue. Emergency rescue is best below the fifth floor. I compromise by picking a modern fire-safe hotel and always request a room on an upper floor to reduce crime exposure. Ground floor rooms are more vulnerable to crime problems because of access and ease of escape. In a high-rise building, rooms above the fifth-floor are usually safer from crime than those below because of lesser accessibility and ease of escape. Also, rooms not adjacent to fire stairs are safer from room invaders because they use them for escape. Criminals do not want to be trapped on an upper floor inside a high-rise hotel. By design, high-rise buildings usually have fewer ground level access points and are easier for the hotel staff to monitor who passes through the lobby after hours.

Door Security Hardware

Hotel or motel rooms should be equipped with a solid-core wood or metal door for best protection. Doors should be self-closing and self-locking. Room doors should have a deadbolt lock with at least a one-inch throw bolt. If the lock appears worn or there are pry marks around the lock area, get another room or move to another hotel. The knob-lock should be hotel-style where you can push a button on the inside knob and block out all keys. This feature is designed to prevent a former guest or housekeeper from entering the room once you are safely inside. Hotels with electronic card access have the advantage of being able to disable former keycards issued to previous guests and unauthorized employees. Electronic locks also will block out most room service keys when you set the deadbolt. The room door should have a wide-angle peephole so you can view who is at the door before opening.

Access Control

Do not open your door to someone who knocks unannounced. Some criminals will pretend to be a bellman, room service, maintenance, or even hotel security to gain admittance to your room.

See my web pages on [Hotel Room Invasion](#). Always call the front desk to confirm their status with the hotel and only open the door if you requested the service. Do not rely on door chains or swing bars to secure the doors while you partially open the door to speak someone. These are unreliable security devices. Teach your children not to open the door of any hotel room without knowing the person on the other side and without your permission.

Other Entry Points

Make sure all windows and sliding doors are secured, if they are accessible from the ground. It is a good idea to test all windows and glass doors to see if they are secure. Beware of balconies where someone can climb from one to another and enter through an open window or sliding door. If the windows or sliding doors are not securable, ask for another room or find another hotel. If your room has an adjoining door to an adjacent room, check it to see that it is secured with a deadbolt lock. If it is questionable, ask for another room.

Beware the Parking Lot

If you are a woman traveling alone or with small children, take advantage of car valet service, if available to avoid the parking lot. After checking-in, ask the bellman or desk clerk to escort you to your room. After unlocking the room, quickly inspect the closets, under the bed, and bathroom including behind the shower curtain before the bellman leaves. Tip the bellman for his efforts.

Occupancy Cues

Put the Do-Not-Disturb sign on the doorknob even when you are away, this deters room burglars (it may affect housekeeping service, however). Turn on the TV or radio just loud enough to hear through the door to give the appearance that the room is occupied. Leave one light on inside the room if you will return after dark. This helps you see upon re-entry and gives the room the appearance of occupancy from the outside. Always go through the same room inspection routine every time you re-enter. Women travelling alone should use caution when using the breakfast order door-knob hanger card. This card lists your name and number of persons in the room. A smart crook can knock on the door posing as room service and use your name as a ruse to gain entry.

When you find a suitable hotel that meets your safety standards and will cater to your security needs try to stick with it or with the same hotel chain. Don't be afraid to complain to management to get the safe room you deserve.

- Always request a room on an upper floor, if possible
- A solid door with a good deadbolt lock is best
- Electronic card access locks help limit access
- Make sure your door has a peephole and night latch and use it
- Turn on the TV or radio just loud enough to hear through the door
- Turn on a single light in the room if you plan to return after dark
- Inspect the room hiding places upon entering and check all locks
- Ask the bellman for an escort and use valet parking if alone