

## TRAVEL

# Bringing the hotel home

## Hotel style becoming popular with guests

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The Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Honolulu offers many items from the rooms for sale to guests.

ACTIVATE

**HONOLULU, Hawaii (AP) -- Like that curved shower rod in your hotel bathroom? The embroidered pillow on the bed? The martini glasses you saw down at the bar?**

The latest vacation souvenirs may be as close as a hotel Web site, because these days just about everything in the room can be bought -- for a price. Designers call it "hotel-at-home" decorating, pioneered five years ago by Westin Hotels & Resorts' heavily marketed "Heavenly Bed," which was supposed to bring a little bit of luxury to travelers who wanted nothing more than a good night's rest. But the trend is much more than selling people the bed they just slept in, or even giving them a legitimate way to keep a towel with a hotel logo on it. It's about selling the feeling of bringing the vacation home. "When we did the Aston Waikiki Beach Hotel, we used a beaded curtain with a traditional Hawaiian hula dancer on it as the closet partition, and guests loved it," said Holly Boling-Ruiz, associate senior designer at Philpotts and Associates, a Honolulu design firm whose clients include hotels.

Vacationers at Hawaii resorts want to know where they can get everything from chairs to coconut shell dishes. "In the old days, hotels put up signs that said, 'If you really like this robe, it's for sale in the gift shop,'" said Robert Mandelbaum, who researches hotel industry trends for PKF Consulting in Atlanta. These days, he said, "it's not just robes. Hotels are becoming more residential in feel, and guests can afford to pay a premium to bring that concept of comfort home." Take, for example, the Heavenly Bed, a cushy, 12 1/2-inch pillow-top mattress that the Westin, owned by Starwood Hotels & Resorts, sells fully loaded for more than \$3,000. More than 6,000 consumers have plunked down the bucks for feather-filled comfort. Mark Flaharty, 37, first discovered the bed when his job on the sales side of advertising for Yahoo took him on the road. Then his wife tried it and they were hooked. "We own three of these things," Flaharty laughed. "It was so revolutionary when they first came out. We just liked the bed. So we bought one and then another one and another one."

Ariane Steinbeck, senior vice president of The Gettys Group, a Chicago-based firm that specializes in hotel design, says hotels "have sold their wares openly, or not so openly, for many years." And these days, guest requests aren't just about bathrobes or shampoo. They want area rugs, flooring and even the laundry detergent. Joyce Matsumoto, spokeswoman for the Halekulani resort in Waikiki, said one man liked the smell of the hotel's detergent so much he began ordering his own the same way the hotel did: in 55-gallon drums. At The Ritz-

Carlton in Kapalua, Maui, guests have been known to spend thousands on bronze sculptures and tropical landscapes like those in the hotel, spokeswoman Shelby Taylor said. And at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel on Oahu's famed Waikiki Beach, anything pink is popular, including the ceramic candle holders that decorate tables at the beachside Mai Tai Bar. At the Kahala Mandarin Oriental Hawaii, an upscale Oahu beachfront hotel with rooms that feature four-poster canopy beds, guests rave about the coconut bath salts on the bathroom counters. Travelers notice the details, from hand-held sandalwood fans to the 300-thread count Egyptian combed cotton duvet covers -- all for sale, Kahala Mandarin spokeswoman Marie Cazaux said. She even e-mailed one guest pictures of the hotel restaurant's bamboo floor because the woman wanted the same floor designed for her own home. At the Halekulani, guests can buy anything, including retro glass lamps and a lavender sofa just like those in the new Vera Wang suite, a designer suite that goes for about \$4,000 a night, said Matsumoto. But more often, she said, guests ask where to find fixtures such as those in the bathroom showers, where the water temperature automatically turns on at 105 degrees.

**Boutique hotels elsewhere are also getting into the retail business. A new company called Hoteluxury at Home is helping hotels sell their furnishings and other signature products over the Web. The company's first client, Boston's Nine Zero hotel, is offering everything from a \$9 candy jar to a \$5,065 hanging light fixture through [www.ninezero.com](http://www.ninezero.com).**

Traditional retail venues are also becoming part of the trend. Westin's signature Heavenly Beds can now be bought at Nordstrom stores. "Anything that creates creature comfort, that's what people want to take home," said Robin Ware, co-owner of the Hotels at Home, a New Jersey company that works with hotel chains such as Starwood and Wyndham to make their designer items available to the average Joe through catalogs and web sites. But she added that "the bestseller is always the pillows, because it's an affordable thing for everyone."

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