

LUXURY WITHOUT COMPROMISE

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The Big Reset

From freshly baked signature cookies to folk art carvings, quirky upgrades are revamping the classic turndown service the world over.

The door closes softly behind you. Outside, the city continues blaring at full volume. Inside, the vibe has shifted. The lights are dim, the curtains are drawn, the room has been reset for rest. But there's something more, something unexpected: a souvenir, a handmade cookie, or a song just for you—an extra “something” that

shows someone went an extra step to make your stay special. Turndown service or evening service—once no more than standardised offerings by premium hotels where a room was prepared for a guest to sleep—has become an opportunity for hotels to offer personalised signature experiences in high hospitality. When done right, turndown

service reveals thoughtfulness that goes beyond the expected. “Guests may forget the size of a suite or the number of amenities [on offer], but they remember how something made them feel,” says Renee Holten, rooms division manager at The Dylan, Amsterdam. Around the world, hotels have been upping the ante by stocking rooms with turndown amenities that

ABOVE: The Dylan, Amsterdam curates a local playlist for its long-stay guests.

CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE DYLAN AMSTERDAM; MAYAKOBA; FOUR SEASONS HOTEL FIRENZE; W KUALA LUMPUR.



are indulgent, symbolic, even quirky.

“We believe it’s worth investing in because it allows us to express who we are. Not through scale or spectacle, but through thoughtfulness,” says Holten.

At The Dylan, a curated playlist of local music opens “a week of Amsterdam specials for long-stay guests”. Each night, the staff places a different turndown treat in the room; the famous Van Staple cookie with a molten white chocolate heart or a miniature Dutch clog, for example.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP: Mayakoba provides guests with folk art sculptures; Four Seasons Hotel Firenze pays homage to the city of Florence with a white chocolate sculpture of Michelangelo’s *David*; at the W in Kuala Lumpur, chocolate creations and kombucha shots are part of the evening service.



Christine Galle-Luczak, founder and CEO of hotel representation agency Heavens Portfolio, says, “Luxury is no longer defined by abundance or uniform standards of opulence. Today, guests are exceptionally well travelled; have experienced the finest rooms, spas, and dining across the world. What differentiates a hotel now is not what it offers, but how meaningfully it delivers [that offering].”

The evening service is a smart way for hotels to differentiate themselves, especially since guests are most vulnerable at night when they are tired, often on their own, and particularly receptive to gestures of care.

At the Mandarin Oriental New

York, Capella Bangkok, and The Leela Palace New Delhi, staff pick up cues based on their guests’ personal schedules, offering fitness programmes to recovery baths, and local balms. In Florence, Four Seasons Hotel Firenze leaves a handcrafted white chocolate sculpture of Michelangelo’s *David* on the bed. The sculpture is sometimes paired with an in-room Negroni kit, offering a playful homage to the city as the birthplace of the cocktail. At The Four Seasons Resort Orlando, parents travelling with children will find a bedtime story that can be accessed via QR code, transforming bedtime into a family ritual. Hotel Belmar in Costa Rica offers via QR code link to a guided meditation or



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT: Cheval Blanc Paris has butlers who can assist guests with anything they need, including drawing up a warm, scented bath; long-stay guests at The Dylan get the signature dark chocolate cookie from the famous Van Stapele Koekmakerij in Amsterdam, located close to the hotel.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CHEVAL BLANC PARIS; THE DYLAN AMSTERDAM.

yin yoga session in the room.

These gestures may be quiet, but do not go unnoticed. “Turndown services have evolved from a checklist item into a storytelling opportunity,” says Ridhaa Kapadi of By the Boutique, a marketing consultancy for boutique stays.

At Abode Bombay, evenings often end with local sweets. AAt Raas Hotels, in Rajasthan, guests will find a different poem, each night, inspired by the property’s setting,” adds Kapadi.

Hotels such as BrijRama Palace in Varanasi, Fairmont Udaipur Palace, Hotel Hauser in St Moritz, and Imperial Hotel Tokyo place chocolates, handcrafted keepsakes, and origami in rooms. Mayakoba in Mexico keeps alebrije and folk art sculptures, as keepsakes for guests, while Amankora in Bhutan provides *tingsha* bells (prayer cymbals) hand cast by a master maker.

The turndown service culture is being shaped as much by guests as by the staff. Cheval Blanc Paris, for instance, offers highly personalised turndown service from slippers being placed by the bed, rooms

spritzed with a signature scent to a butler-drawn bath. At the Four Seasons Resort Dubai at Jumeirah Beach, the staff created an Egyptian-inspired journey with themed bedtime stories, culinary presentations, and accessories sourced from the country for one of their long-stay guests who was interested in Egyptian history.

At the W Kuala Lumpur, guests can expect “curated rituals” that include chocolate creations, kombucha shots, special playlists, and organic bath salts. Turndown moments can also be arranged during events such as the annual Gumball 3000 motor rally in which the hotel had rooms transformed in keeping with the theme.

At the end of the day, it’s in the quieter moments when hotels stop performing and start listening. Where they show—not tell—who they are, and how closely they’ve been paying attention. In an era of constant stimulation, turndown services remain one of the few moments in travel that belong entirely to the guest. No audience, no agenda; just receiving the care you didn’t know you needed. **Ria Gupta** ●

