

## You're Giving Me That Room? No Way

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When C. Leonard Gordon, a venture capitalist, travels with his wife, Margot, an art dealer, he never goes straight to the assigned hotel room with her.

'Instead, I sit with the luggage in the lobby and read until she's decided on a room,' he said. 'She usually rejects the first one or two they show her. So I don't go up with her after we check in, unless I feel like I need exercise.'

The fussy Mrs. Gordon is not alone. At Shutters on the Beach, in Santa Monica, Calif., about five customers a day ask for their rooms to be changed, said Klaus Mennekes, the hotel's managing director. At the 3,500-room Atlantis Hotel in Nassau, room-change requests can number as many as 200 a day, said George Markantonis, the hotel's president and managing director. And the staff at the 450-room Hotel Arts in Barcelona, Spain, gets about 30 room-change requests daily, Ricard Casimiro, the front-of-the-house manager, said.

Sometimes these requests are made in a friendly manner, with customers like Mrs. Gordon just trying to ensure that they get the best room available for the money. 'Some of the older European hotels often have a number of different rooms at the same price, and some are awful and some are nice,' she said. On a return visit to a London hotel, 'they gave us a room that was practically in the basement. I was horrified,' she recalled. 'They found us another room for the same price that was lovely.'

But other guests are clearly just out to manipulate the system, hotel managers say, often setting the stage for a confrontation as they head up to the room, perhaps complaining about the height of the hallway ceiling or the fact that they believe they are being led to a less desirable wing of the hotel.

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