



# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

## PERSONAL JOURNAL

### When Home Is Where the Hotel Is

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Luxury hotels are hoping more guests will check in and stay awhile—a very long while.

High-end hotels are increasingly courting so-called extended-stay guests, who reside for a month or more at a time.

While months of daily maid service and mini-bar raids may sound fun, living in a hotel, even a swanky one, seems less than homey. Hotel executives say demand for extended stays is being driven by people who are on work assignments in far-off cities, traveling for medical treatment or suddenly homeless because of a disaster, such as flooding.

The slow real-estate market also has spurred interest. Relocating families may spend months in housing limbo, unable to buy a home in their new city until the old one sells. Others are renovating their homes instead of trading up—and need a place to stay while the dust flies. Some hotels are seeing surging interest from international travelers from booming economies, such as Brazil, who are taking lengthy vacations.

People going through divorces are a major market, too, particularly the “gentleman who is not used to taking care of himself,” says Bob Boulogne, chief operating officer of Rosewood Hotels & Resorts. “We can do an awful lot for that person.”

Historically, many luxury hotels shied away from extended stays, largely because those guests usually receive discounts on the nightly rate. But with occupancy levels around 70% at high-end properties, and rates not back to pre-recession levels, hotels are looking to fill rooms.

Long-term visitors tend to spend more than other travelers on hotel services including restaurants, room service and spa appointments. One recent international party of guests



(t-b) Allison V. Smith for The Wall Street Journal; Pelican Hill



**Where everybody knows your name:** Gary Massad, above, has gotten to know the staff while living at the Rosewood Crescent Hotel in Dallas while his home undergoes repairs. Guests who stay more than 30 days at the Resort at Pelican Hill in Newport Beach, Calif., left, can get a hefty discount, but then hotel perks like butler service cost extra.

at the Waldorf Towers, which sits atop the legendary Waldorf-Astoria in New York, reserved more than 150 rooms for several months for a member's medical care. The first night, they spent \$10,000 on ironing, says

Matt Zolbe, director of sales and marketing at the Waldorf-Astoria.

Prices for most long-term stays are negotiated on a case-by-case basis. In many states, guests don't pay

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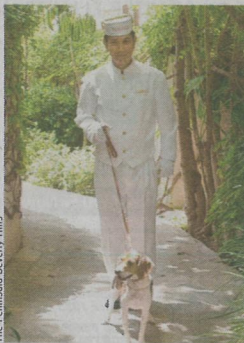
# When Home Is Where the Hotel Is

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occupancy taxes after 30 days.

The Surrey Hotel & Spa in New York—which added full kitchens to its suites in a 2009 remodeling—has seen long-term stays grow by 50% so far in 2011 compared with the same period in 2010. AKA, a chain of eight high-end hotels that specializes in extended stays, is adding properties next year in London and Beverly Hills, Calif. When the Rosewood Sand Hill in Menlo Park, Calif., was developed, the resort, which opened in 2009, built five two- and three-bedroom villas to go after long-term stays.

Gary Massad, a sports-medicine doctor, has lived at the Rosewood Crescent Hotel in Dallas for the last 13 months while his Oklahoma City home is undergoing repairs for damage caused by a hail storm. (His insurance company is picking up most of the tab.)

To accommodate his wardrobe, the hotel brought in a clothing rack on wheels, an extra dresser and half a dozen additional luggage racks. The fruit bowl in his suite is heavy on bananas and light on oranges, reflecting his tastes. During turndown service, in-



The Peninsula Beverly Hills

Wilfredo Belisario at the Peninsula Beverly Hills, which offers dog walking services for guests.

stead of putting the remote control on a tray on the bed as they do in other rooms, housekeepers place it on the table next to the chair where Dr. Massad likes to watch television. Lights are left on and the blinds remain open (another departure from typical housekeeping procedures). “I like to see the city when I walk in,” Dr. Massad says.

At the Rosewood Crescent, housekeepers take pictures of long-term guests’ vanities to record and replicate the pre-

ferred placement of toothbrushes and cologne bottles. At the Mansion on Peachtree, a Rosewood Hotel, in Atlanta, the hotel will hang long-term guests’ personal artwork on the rooms’ walls. The Four Seasons Resort the Biltmore Santa Barbara, in California, turned a 400-square-foot guest room into a walk-in closet for a guest who stayed in the suite next door for about four months. Hotel restaurants will make special meals for guests who may have eaten the entire menu several times over.

Garrett Calacci, a 35-year-old real-estate developer who has lived at the Resort at Pelican Hill in Newport Beach, Calif., since March, has made some unusual requests. A few times when he’s had cocktails with friends in town he has called the hotel and said, “Can you come get me?” Mr. Calacci says. “My friends always think it is quite entertaining that an Escalade comes up with resort staff to pick me up.” Mr. Calacci moved into Pelican Hill after the furnished home he was leasing sold.

Pelican Hill, which opened during the depths of the economic downturn in 2008, actively courts long-term guests

as a way to fill its two-bedroom villas. Guests staying longer than 30 days snare a big discount: From \$263 a night for a two-bedroom, compared with regular nightly rates beginning at \$745.

The rates, however, don’t include some of the perks automatically given to nightly guests. If long-term guests want daily butler service, for example, that’s an extra \$100 per day. Turn-down service is \$50 per day.

Richard Stone, a lawyer and former mayor in Beverly Hills, Calif., his girlfriend, Marjie Bender, and their dog, Nikki, have lived at the Peninsula Beverly Hills since early October because of water damage in their nearby home. Mr. Stone enjoys the twice-daily maid service and the employees’ attentiveness to Nikki.

When Mr. Stone comes down for breakfast, he drops Nikki off at the concierge desk so a member of the Peninsula staff can walk her. But there are downsides to living in a hotel. “I’m putting on weight,” Mr. Stone, 84, says. “At home I’d have a yogurt and that was breakfast. Here I have eggs and bacon. I eat more and I get to work a half hour later.”



Above, hotel staff place Gary Massad’s remote controls on a table rather than on the bed, per his request. Below, his extra luggage racks.

