

The Wave Magazine / November 2005

Room Service / Hotel comfort at home

By Irene Kew

While staying at the Delano Hotel in Miami Beach, Queen Latifah fell so hard for the sofa in her suite that she ordered one to go. Heather Locklear and her rockstar husband, Richie Sambora, liked the Four Seasons suite they stayed at so much that they recreated it at home.

But you don't have to be a celebrity to replicate your luxurious getaway. Even if you can't afford to stay at a swanky hotel very often, you can now put on the Ritz in your home.

Thanks to the internet, the Starwoods, Ritz-Carltons and Four Seasons of the world are hawking hotel goods through third party companies such as Hotels at Home, Boxport and Hoteluxury at Home. Across the country, hotels are transforming into mini-home furnishings stores, selling furniture, 400-thread-count Egyptian cotton sheets, showerheads, duvets, china, even mattresses. Almost everything (housekeeping not included) is up for sale.

Most credit Starwood's Westin Hotels and Resorts for starting the trend six years ago when it introduced the cloud soft "Heavenly Bed." To date, Westin has sold close to 9,000 Heavenly Beds (complete ensembles) since the launch – over 3,500 in 2004 alone, says Mark Ricci, a Starwood Hotel and Resorts spokesman. In May this year, the Westin Heavenly Bed At Home collection made its debut at Nordstrom stores nationwide.

Hotel-at-home decorating is catching on because it makes perfect sense, says Sarah Bates, vice president of Boston-based Hoteluxury at Home. Hotels are becoming more design-savvy, boasting rooms that look like they jumped out of a design magazine. By making these furnishings accessible, hotels save their guests the time and trouble needed to piece the look together on their own. The approach also gives the decorating-challenged fresh ideas.

"At the hotels, you get one-of-a-kind furniture, things you can't find in other furniture stores," Bates adds. "They are never going to be cookie cutter. They are custom-made by famous designers for the hotel." Top-end hotels compete on comfort, which also means their selections offer quality homeowners normally can't get their hands on. Think 400-thread-count sheets that will survive daily scalding in commercial washing machines.

But the real advantage lies in the fact that with hotel furnishings, “you can try before you buy.” Instead of jumping on a bed in a mattress store to see if you like it, you can test-drive it while enjoying your vacation. “People are just wrapped in luxury during their hotel stay. Someone’s waiting on them hand and foot,” says Bates. “They want to take that weekend with them, live in it again and remember it. It’s as much experiential as it is practical.”

HOTEL GOODS TO GO: San Francisco-based Boxport (www.boxport.com) operates online shopping sites for about eight upscale hotel groups, including Kimpton Hotels, St. Regis Monarch Beach Resort & Spa, and Loews Hotels. About 90 percent of the goods offered are the same décor showcased in the hotels.

Kimpton Hotels (www.kimptonstyle.com) has whimsical offerings like a hand-crafted metal and glass Marrakech Chandelier (\$495), a Moorish-inspired soft leather hassock (\$175), hand-crafted solid maple tiered nightstand (\$795) and its signature Puzzle Mirror, carved and gilded in 22k gold (\$7,000).

The St. Regis Monarch Resort & Spa (www.stregisathome.com) has furniture for the bath – such as a mahogany calfskin leather Zen spa bench (\$1,995) – and floor coverings such as its 9-by-12-foot wool Swirl Rug (\$4,200).

Shutters Hotel on the Beach (www.shutterbeachstyle.com) in Santa Monica can aid your coastal décor theme with its teak chaise (\$770) and bottle lanterns (set of four, \$64).

Loews Hotels (www.lowesathome.com) offers unique serving ware like a dimpled martini glass set (pitcher with four glasses, \$44), triangle plates (set of five, \$49) and a three-tier stand (\$170).

Go modern at Le Parker Meridien (www.buyparker.com) with its Nelson™ Platform Bench (\$579), its leather Parker Chair (\$2,400) and Platform and Mattress bed (\$1,500 - \$2,200).

James Hotel (www.shopjames.com) has a sleek platform bed with attached nightstand (\$2,700-\$3,300), a playful, lightweight foam Taratino bench (\$50) and a retro-looking Lona Armless Chair and ottoman.

Check out W Hotels' (www.whoelsthestore.com) Louis Ghost Chair, a Louis XV style chair in transparent polycarbonate designed by Philippe Starck (\$334) and acrylic I-Beam table (\$290).

Ritz Carlton (www.ritzcarltonshops.com) heats up the bed battle with its Sealy Sleep Experience Plush mattress (\$829-\$1,599) and its signature Comfort Essentials bedding collection. There's even a Lulu Jane four-poster bed for your pampered pooch (\$375).

Westin Hotels' (www.westin-hotelsathome.com) Heavenly Bed (prices vary; also available at selected Nordstrom stores) needs no introduction. Check out their dual showerheads (\$130) and curved shower rods that give six extra inches of elbowroom (\$40-\$60).

Boston boutique hotel Nine Zero (www.ninezero.hoteluxury.com), who partnered with Hoteluxury at Home, sells 95 percent of what's showcased in the hotel, including furniture in the lobby, restaurant, conference room and bathrooms. Sleek, clean lines dominate designs like the lobby pyramid cabinet (\$6,000) and the Nine Zero guest room bench (\$2,800-\$3,600).

©2001 - 2006 The Wave Media.