



# CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

## Check This Out

- ✓ **Volunteer your time and save!** Now Sage Hospitality is offering half-price discounts and possibly a free night at their 53 properties to guests who donate eight hours of time to various charities.
- ✓ The economic forecast is looking up, but travelers are hanging tough in their quest to get the best travel deals. **63% of adults in a recent survey say they plan at least one overnight trip** in the next six months, and about six of 10 say they are aggressively comparison-shopping on the Internet.
- ✓ Talk about unusual lodgings! Enjoy a stay at the 200-room, five-star Hyatt hotel inside **the Capital Gate Tower in Abu Dhabi, which leans at an angle 14 degrees more than the Leaning Tower of Pisa.** The tower is scheduled for completion in 2010.
- ✓ The holidays will be here soon, and times are still hard for many people. Consider these real-life stories and **find your own way to give back during the season:** a Sioux Falls, SD, hotel manager opened his doors to 200 homeless people for Christmas; a Michigan innkeeper offered a free vacation at his property to a needy family; and a Hyatt hotel in Chicago treated a little girl and her mom to dinner and a stay in one of their deluxe suites after reading her letter to Santa.
- ✓ **Did you know that each branch of the military runs its own lodging program?** The Navy Lodge is just one example. It operates like any hotel and has 43 properties around the world. The average room rate is 40% less than comparable civilian lodging, and the program is open to active and retired military personnel as well as Department of Defense civilian employees.

If you're looking to develop an interesting promotion for your property, there are lots of good ideas right in this issue, including this one that was reported on first by several major news organizations back in July:

**Nancy Knadler, our Territory Manager in the San Diego and Palm Springs area, and Michael Engle, her Inside Sales partner,** brought the following story to

our attention since the featured hotel is one of their accounts. **The Rancho Bernardo Inn, a San Diego luxury resort,** recently completed a very unique promotion – they offered “rooms” for \$19 a night. Yes, that's right...\$19 a night. But, of course, there was more to the promotion than just the outrageously low rate – guests had to sleep in a tent and bring their own toilet paper!

Before you start laughing, let's dig a little deeper to understand the inn's marketing strategy.

Like other luxury properties throughout the country, the Rancho Bernardo Inn, a 200,000-acre resort that boasts three pools, a golf course, three restaurants and a spa that was named No. 1 by *Condé Nast Traveler* in 2008, has been hit by the declining economy.

In a brainstorming session, the inn's staff came up with the “Survivor Package,” starting at \$219 per night. A similar promotion was run back in June and then again in August.

Customers were allowed to customize their package and pick the price that they wished to be charged, but the cheaper the price, the fewer the extras that were included.

For example, guests could lower the cost by opting to give up breakfast and luxury toiletries.

Then, for just \$19 a night, a customer could stay in a shell with a tent inside. The bed, lighting, bed sheets, towels and toilet paper were all removed.

More than 100 people took the tent offer, but look at it this way – that's 100 people more that came through the doors of the Rancho Bernardo Inn that never may have set foot in there otherwise.

Here are the package details as published on the Rancho Bernardo Inn website:

The Survivor Package Includes:

- ◆ Deluxe accommodations
- ◆ Breakfast for two
- \$219 per night
- OR...
- ◆ \$199 without breakfast
- ◆ \$179 without honor bar
- ◆ \$159 without A/C or heat
- ◆ \$139 without pillows
- ◆ \$109 without sheets
- ◆ \$89 without lights
- ◆ \$59 without linens
- ◆ \$39 without toiletries
- ◆ \$19 without bed

Resort fees apply.

Sources:

[www.ranchobernardoinn.com](http://www.ranchobernardoinn.com);  
[www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)



## Protect your bottom line and remain competitive in a still-tough market

- ◆ Stay on top of local and national legislation (see article below).
- ◆ Know where your competition stands, and invest in resources for efficient forecasting and planning.
- ◆ Pay attention to the latest trends and innovations.
- ◆ Be prepared for an emergency.
- ◆ Cut costs by knowing your ROI on every purchase.
- ◆ Better serve guests with comprehensive staff training.
- ◆ Find tangible strategies for going green (see article on facing page).
- ◆ Take action to retain top employees.
- ◆ Have a viable press strategy so you can capitalize on free promotion for your property.
- ◆ Be knowledgeable about your industry. Tap into the minds of industry leaders by attending networking events and trade shows.

Find more effective tools and tactics at [www.ahla.com](http://www.ahla.com).

## We Love Hearing From You!

Going above and beyond for your guests can reap lots of dividends. Besides return visits that generate added revenue, the positive public relations your business receives is priceless!

In the last issue, we asked what you have done to go above and beyond, and received some great responses. See if you can adapt these simple, yet effective ideas to your own business.

**Katrina Wright, co-owner of Falls Motel, Thompson Falls, MT**, goes the extra mile for her customers (literally!). She writes:

"Here's our above-and-beyond tidbit of customer service:

"Guests do not always consider road construction issues when they make their travel plans. And yet there is nothing more irritating than getting slowed down (if not completely stopped) in road construction when all you want to do is get to your destination.

"To help our guests avoid these trouble areas, when making

reservations, we ask which direction they are coming from and the route they plan to travel. This helps us steer them in a different direction if their plans were going to take them through construction zones. Time after time our guests rave about this little extra bit of information that saves them time and frustration."

And **Patsy Evans of the Sky Harbor Bavarian Inn in Chattanooga, TN**, shares her story:

"We have a tiny motel of only 11 rooms. Since every room has a balcony with a view of the river and city, our guests spend lots of time sitting in the rocking chairs outside. My housekeeper, Betty, decided to make our guests more comfortable. I provided the sewing machine, and she made cushions for each of the rocking chairs. Then we added lightweight blankets for those chilly nights and mornings in the spring and fall."

Thanks, Katrina and Patsy, for your comments!



**Bill Pickens**  
Maintenance Editor

## Protect Guests & Obey Federal Pool Safety Laws

Is your property in compliance? The Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act (P&SSAct) became effective last year.

The new law enhances the safety of public and private pools and spas by aiming to reduce child drownings (nearly 300 each year involving children younger than five) as well as the number of suction entrapment injuries and deaths.

Whether your business is located in an area where pools are being drained for the winter or you keep your pool ready for guests all year long, now is the time to work



through the details of the P&SSAct as well as any local regulations.

The Act requires all public pools and spas to be fitted with ASME/ANSI-approved anti-entrapment drain covers. In addition, those with single, blockable main drains or multiple drains less than 3 feet apart must provide an additional layer of protection by installing a safety vacuum release system, suction-limiting vent, or a gravity drainage system.

Figuring out which anti-entrapment drain cover is right for your pool can be challenging, but you won't need a degree in hydraulic engineering. To begin, find the answers to these few questions (but remember to turn off the pumps first!)

- ◆ Does your pool have round or square drains?
- ◆ What size is the drain opening?
- ◆ What is the flow rate (the amount of water in gallons that flows through the drain per minute)?
- ◆ What is the manufacturer's name and item number of the current drain?

With the answers to these questions, you can (in most cases) identify the correct drain cover for your pool. If not, a call to most pool supply distributors can help you get the answer you need. After all, nothing is more important than the safety of your guests. Obtain more detailed information on the P&SSAct at [www.poolsafety.gov](http://www.poolsafety.gov)

Source: [www.poolsafety.gov](http://www.poolsafety.gov)



## Maintenance News



**Katie Snider**  
HR Editor

## Human Resources News

### Greening Your Organization

In today's environment, a business cannot afford not to "go green." Simple initiatives could save money and give your employees a new sense of partnership and interest in your business. There are many ways to get started with a green program.

Management buy-in for eco-friendly initiatives should be easy since there are many benefits to going green. First, and most importantly for today's businesses, it should save money. Budgets could be saved by reusing office supplies and reducing energy expenses. As an example, the Management Association's (MRA) Green Team discovered it could save the association \$2,400 annually by switching to paper that is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) which comes from sustainable sources.

Secondly, managers will find this is a unique way to reach out to employees and get them talking. Most people are already recycling and implementing other eco-friendly measures in their personal lives, so they will probably have many good ideas to share.

Put together a small team of employees from all areas of your business. You may find this will be one committee for which your staff will eagerly volunteer, and the time commitment is minimal.

This team should be tasked to look at their immediate workspaces and see how and what resources could be saved.

Some changes suggested by MRA's Green Team include:

- ◆ Providing ceramic mugs; phase out use of disposable cups.
- ◆ Setting copiers to print double-sided versus single-sided.
- ◆ Asking employees to use only one of the two banks of lights in offices and meeting rooms.

Other suggestions for your organization or Green Team to consider may include:

- ◆ Saving documents electronically rather than printing and filing paper copies.
- ◆ Making scratch pads from spare or gently-used paper and outdated letterhead.
- ◆ Using whiteboards instead of paper.
- ◆ Reusing binders, folders, hanging file dividers, and other office supplies.
- ◆ Holding an electronics disposal day. Partner with a nonprofit organization that can make use of old computers and peripherals. Many of these items could be repurposed. Your business may benefit tax-wise from the donation.

Once your business has started its green initiative, you will probably wonder what took so long. Rather than being a burden, you'll find these efforts will benefit your business now and well into the future.

Source: *Maggie Skarich, Association Services Manager, HR Digest, MRA—The Management Association, Inc., August 2009*



### Keeping your business customers happy...your checklist for success

It's no secret that businesses are actively cutting their travel budgets, and many have even switched their designated lodging partnerships from luxury to economy brands.

If you own or manage a budget or economy property, it's time to do a quick assessment of your rooms. Can your current fixtures, furnishings and equipment (FF&E) accommodate the needs of this special – and very profitable – travel segment?

Here are some of the basic requirements which can enhance the guest experience of most business travelers:

- ◆ A desk or amply-sized work surface installed at the correct height
- ◆ A task light with adjustable lighting
- ◆ A solidly designed, ergonomically comfortable desk chair
- ◆ Wi-Fi access
- ◆ Cell phone chargers
- ◆ Access to a printer and scanner
- ◆ For flexibility, you may also choose to keep a sturdy folding table on hand that could be easily moved from room to room, if needed. This would save you money and refixturing costs, and provide the business traveler with a suitable work surface.
- ◆ Easily accessible electrical outlets for phone charging and computer plug-in access
- ◆ Surge protectors/power strips
- ◆ Generously sized notepads, pens and pencils

By capitalizing on this trend, you can capture part of this growing market in your area.



## Send us your ideas – we'll send you \$25!

*When interviewing potential employees, what is the most interesting or probing question you ask?*

*E-mail or fax us & include your full name, property name, and address.*

## 2009 – 2010 Calendar

Trade shows and conventions are a fantastic way to find out what's new and what's happening in the industry. Here are some events scheduled for the coming months.

### **International Spa Association (ISPA) Conference & Expo**

October 5 - 8; Austin, TX; [www.ispaconference.com](http://www.ispaconference.com)

### **Green Festival**

October 10 - 11; Washington, DC; [www.greenfestivals.org](http://www.greenfestivals.org)

### **U.S. Travel Association Marketing Outlook Forum**

October 26 - 28; Little Rock, AR; [www.tia.org](http://www.tia.org)

### **AH&LA Fall Conference**

November 6 - 10; New York, NY; [www.ahla.com](http://www.ahla.com)

### **International Hotel/Motel & Restaurant Show**

November 7 - 10; New York, NY; [www.ihmrs.com](http://www.ihmrs.com)

### **Green Festival**

Nov. 13- 15; San Francisco, CA; [www.greenfestivals.org](http://www.greenfestivals.org)

### **National Tour Association (NTA) Annual Convention**

November 14 - 18; Reno, NV; [www.NTAOnline.com](http://www.NTAOnline.com)

### **2nd Annual Green Lodging & Hospitality Conference**

Dec. 9 - 11; Orlando, FL; [www.treeco.ufl.edu/Conferences](http://www.treeco.ufl.edu/Conferences)

### **The Americas Lodging Investment Summit**

Jan. 25 - 27; San Diego, CA; [www.alisconference.com](http://www.alisconference.com)

### Quick Quote

*My favorite thing is to go  
where I've never been.*

— Diane Arbus

### ✓ **Check Out**

**We hope you've enjoyed this issue.**

Your feedback, suggestions, stories, and ideas make our newsletter interesting and useful. Please take a moment to jot down your thoughts and send them to us.

**E-Mail: [check-in@americanhotel.com](mailto:check-in@americanhotel.com)**

Mail:

American Hotel Register Company  
Attention: Check-In  
100 South Milwaukee Ave.  
Vernon Hills, IL 60061

Fax: 847-743-1083

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Editor: Lynda Jeppesen

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**Jim Leahy**

### **Letter from the Chairman**

Dear Friends,

The last time I wrote I promised to continue my list of ways to deal with a world that's sometimes uncertain, sometimes scary, and sometimes out of control. Here's part three of my four-part series. May it offer you hope, consolation, and perhaps answers.

14) Be open to new ideas and to our ever changing lives. Embrace change. It's part of life's pattern. Be open to changing what needs to be changed in yourself and your world. Technology is forcing change to come faster and faster. Ignoring or resisting change is futile and causes feelings of frustration and helplessness.

15) But in this changing world, know what you'll never change! Keep your values rock solid. Be a person that you yourself respect – a person of high ideals, of grandness. Be a man or woman of honor. Create in yourself a person of values, of kindness, and of honesty.

16) Be grateful. Focus on the abundance in your life. Overlook the fact that some people may have more "things" at this point in their lives. Be grateful each day for the richness that life gives us. Be thankful even for the burdens and difficulties that life gives us; these bring about growth in us.

17) Meditate daily. I don't think it matters what you do, when you do it, or how you do it. It provides an island of peace in the daily shouting for your attention. I'm currently finding guidance in a daily meditation book that my wife gave me: "Pocketful of Miracles," by Joan Borysenko.

18) Avoid people who are hurtful, mean-spirited, or lack values. They are poisonous to our peace and happiness. But be less judgmental and critical of others who are simply different. We all have our quirks; tolerate others.

19) Seek peace in your life. Be the calm in the center of the storm. In our youth, noise and frantic activity make us "feel alive." As we mature, peace and calm in life are more appropriate. As you grow, accept the aging process and the stages that our lives pass through.

20) Be generous with your gratitude and admiration of others. Tell your family, your friends, and your co-workers "thank you," "I truly appreciate what you did," "I'm proud of you." Be specific, try to name what they did and why it was important.

Love,



The list will be continued in our next newsletter. If you can't wait or want to see Jim's previously published letters, go to [www.americanhotel.com](http://www.americanhotel.com) ▶ Check-In.

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