

DIG INTO BOTANICAL BEAUTY / THE MINIBAR CHALLENGE / PIONEERING ESSAYISTS / ANONYMOUS BAGS & SHOES / HOT 'HOODS

THE GLOSS

MAGAZINE

APRIL 2019

with THE IRISH TIMES

April

POWER FLOWERS

GLAMOUR
AND COLOUR

#MindOurselves

THE FASHION SHOW
MUST GO ON
DRESSING WITH A DISABILITY



Life House Hotel, Miami



Andaz Mayakoba, Mexico



Fauchon L'Hôtel, Paris bedroom (above) and minibar (left)



Hotel Sanders, Copenhagen

MAN *in* A SUITCASE

TIM MAGEE believes a hotel's generosity will soon be as important as its hospitality

the sustainable boxes along the way. It's generous to the environment, the local community and you - feelgood water that's zero guilt and zero bucks.

The new **LIFE HOUSE HOTEL** in Miami's Little Havana is a classy idea that's catching on. Life House has found smart ways to manage its overheads so it can be very generous and very, very, affordable - not two ideas that spring to mind in Miami. Decent pillows, luxury linens, TV streaming, Le Labo smellies and a kick-ass Marshall amp to help get you get into character with some Buena Vista Social Club or Will Smith. The rooms look and feel like a five-star but start at just over a hundred dollars. The group's second hotel opens in South Beach next month.

MINIBARS

I loved lucky bags as a kid. We live in an Instagram world with few surprises left where social media sneaks downstairs ahead of you and opens all the presents. Even pulling a cracker open on that day of the year still has a flicker of randomness that's comforting to me. So, I like minibars.

Minibars nearly became extinct. Their existence was threatened, especially in this country after the downturn. Opening the door of one of these is generally unlucky - a tomb with the thermostat set to recession is depressing.

Ireland still has too many 2011 time capsules that have seen less action than the trouser press, with a lonely bottle of full fat Coke and an odd orange drink in the making of which no actual oranges were harmed. They should all have something local - chocolates, kombucha, a beer or liquor - and something free.

Generosity should be built into the price so it can take place anywhere, from a small pub bringing around free sandwiches to a very luxe hotel.

Like **FAUCHON L'HÔTEL, PARIS**. Fauchon is as cheap as chips. Diamond chips. A swish five-star on place de la Madeleine, Fauchon's minibar is a leggy pink armoire, a curved obelisk that opens to reveal many doors and drawers. You're asked in advance if you have a salty or sweet preference - my arrival was pretty peppery because of the yellow vest strike on the slo-mo way in, but being given the

keys to my own mini Fauchon store changed that.

Opened towards the end of last year near their famous food shop, the Fauchon L'Hôtel rooms feature a dramatic enamel cabinet rammed with macarons, pastilles, madeleines, chocolates, savoury crackers and biscuits, foie gras and a proper bottle of Fauchon champagne. All complimentary. The magic cupboard refills the next day so if the *gilets jaunes* shut down the town for a week bar the *gout* you could survive without leaving your room. I brought most of the swag home to bestow like largesse - generosity that they encourage at the hotel.

ROOM SERVICE

Most hotels understandably want you at their bars or tables. They inadvertently keep you there by only offering the in-room ubiquitous sadness of a Thai green curry, bad burgers, nuked pasta and sandwiches you'd never order in real life.

I have three words for room service gods - chicken noodle soup. A bowl that has bound much of humanity together for centuries and shows that we have more in common than what sets us apart. The Jewish penicillin with matzo crackers in New York, *brodo di pollo*, *pho ga*, *udon* or ramen and on and on. I know a few clever hotels where they send you a handsome flask of broth that comes with a bowl of noodles and *al dente* vegetables on the tray. You pour one into the other and smile.

HOTEL SANDERS in Copenhagen understands this. Sanders is a gem, a cosy blend of mid-century Danish and colonial posh, dotted about with books you might actually want to read and lots of dance memorabilia from the owner, one of Denmark's best-known dancers. Sanders recommended their daily defrost of an affordable - this is Copenhagen - organic chicken miso noodle soup, designed to be drunk on their outdoors terrace but you can have it wherever you like. Like in your room.

When your typical room-service "chef" is a nocturnal caretaker whose only instructions are to open a cold-room door and set the microwave timer then why have them stack a limp, fatty, soggy, almost always bad club sandwich when you can deliver a hug, one tray at a time, with a soup for the soul. ■ [@manandasuitcase](#)

A hotel bedroom can tell you more about the generosity of the house than its public spaces. The shiny baubles of the lobby, bar and restaurant are the hotel's face. They can be nipped, tucked or plastered with make-up but what's in the room is the heart, and the acid test for generosity. That word, generosity, like hospitality, is often the last thing considered when it should be the first. Generosity will be the new buzzword in travel.

Hotels don't need to be five or even four stars to be superstars. It's the small things - an upfront offer of a late checkout, cocoa for a late arrival or tea and good toast to go for an early leaver - that can make the difference. Warning: the following contains first world problems.

THE BASICS

The first thing I look for in my hotel room after checking the air conditioning, the hotel directory and the window, then rabbit punching the pillow and bed, is the water. To get here you've been in a heated or air-conditioned bubble from roasting airports, bone-dry planes, trains and automobiles and all of the parched grubbiness that goes with them. You may want something stronger, but you really need water. The first drink in your room should be a right not a privilege. It doesn't matter if the water has come the long way from Tipperary or if the Fiji has more air miles than me, and a jug of iced tap water will do too as long as it doesn't taste like licking an old stopcock.

Andaz Mexico know a trick or two about in-room treats. At **ANDAZ MAYAKOBA** in the Yucatan their in-room water is Sky Ha' which doesn't come from pipes below but falls from the heavens. Sky Ha' is sweet rainwater that's collected before it hits the ground and then made jump through half a dozen filtering hoops ticking all of

GENEROSITY should be built into the price from the small pub bringing free sandwiches to the very luxe hotel.

