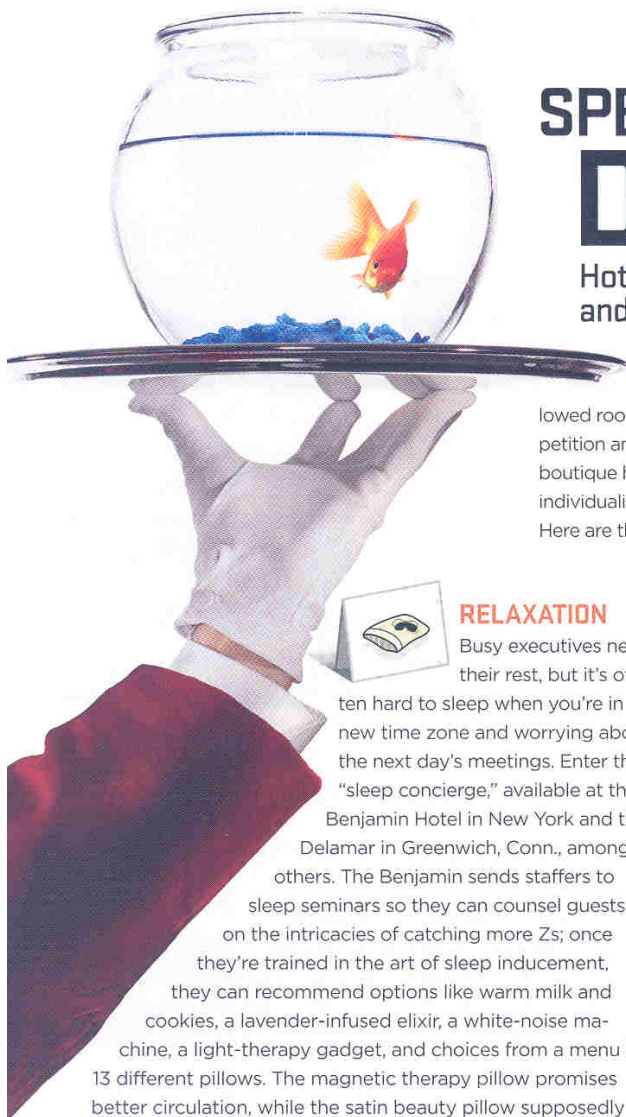


BUSINESS 2.0

July 2007

WHAT'S COOL TRAVEL



SPECIAL DELIVERY

Hotels are competing to spoil guests the most, and business travelers are reaping the benefits.

The hotel industry is flush. After years of cutbacks, corporate travel budgets are expanding, and the resulting increase in demand has allowed room rates to climb at twice the rate of inflation. But it's also spurred competition among hoteliers to cater to their clients' every whim. The popularity of boutique hotels, meanwhile, is motivating even the biggest chains to pitch their individuality—and how better to do that than to put their best services forward? Here are the biggest trends in \$200-a-night pampering.



RELAXATION

Busy executives need their rest, but it's often hard to sleep when you're in a new time zone and worrying about the next day's meetings. Enter the "sleep concierge," available at the Benjamin Hotel in New York and the Delamar in Greenwich, Conn., among others. The Benjamin sends staffers to sleep seminars so they can counsel guests on the intricacies of catching more Zs; once they're trained in the art of sleep inducement, they can recommend options like warm milk and cookies, a lavender-infused elixir, a white-noise machine, a light-therapy gadget, and choices from a menu of 13 different pillows. The magnetic therapy pillow promises better circulation, while the satin beauty pillow supposedly prevents wrinkles. Your choice is duly noted, so the same model awaits you on your return. And a good night's sleep is guaranteed or your next night is free. Guests at Kimpton Hotels, a nationwide chain of boutique inns, can relax with a tasty array of in-room massages. Choose the sake and rice massage, the brown sugar massage, or the hot stone treatment with chocolate-infused shea butter.



FITNESS

Even the most dedicated exercise junkies can lose ground with a grueling travel schedule, so hotels are making an effort to help. Many will deliver yoga mats, exercise balls, and weights to guests' rooms. At some Omni and Hilton locations, guests can upgrade to a special fitness room with treadmill, dumbbells, floor mat, stretch cord, mini radio headset, bottle of water, and minibar stocked with healthy snacks. For those who like to get their exercise outside, Hyatt hotels offer maps to local jogging trails and armband-mounted GPS receivers programmed with the hotel's coordinates to help guests find their way back. The Affinia Dumont in Manhattan will help guests make long-term fitness goals by sending up a "fitness concierge" (a certified personal trainer) to create individual exercise plans. Your plan is even kept on file to remind you of your objectives—if you want to be reminded—when you return.



COMPANIONSHIP

A goldfish might not be the first thing people think of when they're lonely on the road, but Kimpton Hotels will deliver one nonetheless. There's real science behind the chain's "Guppy Love" program: Research demonstrates that watching fish swim can reduce anxiety and lower blood pressure. Besides, these rent-a-pets are low maintenance; just return them to the front desk before you leave. The Loews Annapolis hotel in Maryland, meanwhile, will hook you up with a temporary best friend: It loans out the hotel's resident three-year-old yellow Labrador retriever, Luke, who loves to play fetch, walk around the city's historic downtown district, or sail the Chesapeake. The dog romp is free; the puppy love, priceless. — JENNIFER ALSEVER



PERSONAL ASSISTANTS

Need more than a concierge? At the Galleria Park Hotel in San Francisco, the time-crunched can hire the services of a personal secretary for \$450 a day. Not to be outdone, the Ivy Hotel in San Diego has personal butlers to unpack your bags and draw your bath—all free of charge.

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID ARKY