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Hotels hire specialists to cure guests' hangovers

New “specialty concierges’ also offer tips on running, romance

By Catey Hill

Want to smell like Chanel No.5, get rid of a hangover, or score hand-shaved artisanal chocolate soap — all without leaving your hotel room? (Yeah, me too.) If you're a guest at some luxury hotels, a “specialty concierge” can take care of that.

High-end hotels are hiring highly specialized butlers and staffers who attend to very select needs of guests, be it their love lives (romance concierge), hangovers (recovery concierge), or cleanliness (bath butlers). Just this year, Westin Hotels & Resorts hired a running concierge, who helps coach hotel guests by giving running advice and tips, and last year Rosewood Hotels began offering guests the services of fragrance butlers, who bring perfume and cologne to guest rooms, in its New York, Dallas, Menlo Park, Vancouver and Saudi Arabia locations.

Hotels say these specialists enhance the guest experience. Brian Povinelli, the global brand leader for Westin Hotels & Resorts, says the hotel hired the running concierge because they thought he would “seamlessly connect with our guests and ultimately help them achieve their goals.” Pedro Lara, General Manager at Viceroy Riviera Maya, says “the soap concierge is one more way to surprise and delight guests.” And Laura Bengel, Exhale Spa’s national spa director (the spa has partnered with the Gansevoort Hotel Group to offer bath butler service) says that “the bath butler service is one way we make traveling easier for our guests.”

Needless to say, you aren't likely to find these specialty concierges at your friendly Holiday Inn. Rates at the Ritz Carlton, the Viceroy and the Rosewood — among other high-end hotels offering specialty concierges — can easily top several hundred dollars per night. Plus, you should tip these concierges and butlers about \$10 to \$20 depending on your request, says advice columnist April Masini. And sometimes you pay a la carte for hotels' butlers and concierges: For example, to enlist the services of The Ritz Carlton's BBQ butler — who provides grilling lessons and serves you a private BBQ feast — you'll pay \$245.

Here are seven unique services hotels are offering.



1. Recovery concierge, The Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans

Had too many “hand grenade” cocktails on Bourbon Street and woke up with a headache that renders you unable to look at direct sunlight? There’s a “recovery concierge” at the Ritz Carlton in New Orleans who attends to such soul-crushing hangovers. Depending on your hangover needs, he might indulge you in a little hair of the dog — specialties include the Cure Royale, a mixture of champagne and crème de cassis, and the “Hair of the Dog” Bloody Mary—or arrange for an in-house masseuse to head up to your room, or bring you fresh fruit to give your day a healthy start.

Price: Complimentary for hotel guests who book a room in the Club wing of the hotel on weekends.

Hangover tip: Make your Bloody Mary more nutritious. Sonja Franck, one of the recovery concierges, says she “throws loads of beans and citrus” into the drink. “You can find a whole tossed salad in there,” she jokes.



2. Soap concierge, Viceroy Riviera Maya

As you’re settling into your villa at the Viceroy hotel in Riviera Maya, you hear a gentle knock at the door. You expect housekeeping, maybe a complimentary bottle of champagne, but instead you’re greeted with soap — blocks and blocks of it — offered to you by the hotel’s “soap concierge,” Alberto Corona. Lest you think Corona merely dabbles in the stuff, he’ll explain your locally handcrafted, seasonal choices — infused with chocolate, lavender, anise or watermelon, among other things — and then slice you lathery layers. Upon parting, he’ll even tell you how to use it — preferably in your private, outdoor garden shower, as the natural soaps go well with the open air, he says.

Price: Complimentary for guests.

Soap tip: Look for soaps with chocolate scents if you’re on your anniversary or honeymoon as chocolate is an aphrodisiac; if you’ve been on a long flight, look for lavender smells, which are relaxing.



3. Fragrance butler, The Rosewood Hotels

Feeling, er, less than fresh thanks to those pesky airlines who won't let you bring liquids on your flight? At the Rosewood hotels in New York, Dallas, Menlo Park, Vancouver and Saudi Arabia, a fragrance butler — on call 24/7—will deliver a selection of perfumes and colognes on a silver platter to your hotel room. At the Rosewood Hotel Georgia in Vancouver, for example, the ladies can pick from scents like Chanel No. 5, Bulgari Black and Hermès Kelley Caleche; the men can opt for Giorgio Armani Acqua di Gio, Hermès Terre d'Hermes, Chanel Bleu de Chanel and Burberry Touch; or you can genderbend with a unisex fragrance like Tom Ford Black Orchid.

Price: Complimentary for guests.

How to pick the right perfume: “I always tell guests to think about how they are feeling that day, so they can choose a fragrance that reflects their personality,” says Waldo Hernandez, the fragrance butler at The Carlyle. He suggests delicate floral scents for those feeling “sweet and shy” and “anything with notes of wood or amber” for people feeling romantic.



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4. Bath butler, Gansevoort Hotel Group

When a simple bubble bath won't do, guests at the Gansevoort in New York City call the bath butler to request bath “packages” like detox, restore or

revive. The butler draws guests a bath that's between 96 and 104 degrees and then works with them to select salts and oils, which include ingredients like mandarin, neroli, lavender, chamomile and bergamot of oils and salts from Exhale spa's collection.

Price: \$65

What makes the perfect bath: In addition to the bath salts and oils, spa director Bengé says: "Don't forget the finishing touches of candles and a glass of champagne."



5. BBQ butler, The Ritz-Carlton Lodge, Reynold's Plantation

Should the Ritz's extensive restaurant menu begin to bore you, guests at the hotel in Reynold's Plantation near Atlanta can hire the hotel's BBQ butler. Dressed in an apron, the Southern-style grilling guru will come to your cottage to show you the ins and outs of everything from basting ribs and marinating pork loins to boiling brisket. (You pick what you'd like him to grill, including NY strip, ribs — and salmon.) At the end of the presentation, you'll have a full BBQ feast.

Price: Starting at \$245 per session per person.

The secret to moist, tender BBQ: "Just after grilling, wrap the meat in aluminum foil for about 10 minutes to help distribute the juices," says Executive Chef Yann Chupin.



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6. Romance concierge, Rendezvous St Lucia

If your man's idea of romance is watching the game with you and a six-pack of beer, the "romance concierge" at the Rendezvous St Lucia, a 100-room couple's-only resort, can help. She will do anything from simple romantic requests — like stocking the room with a certain brand of champagne and chocolate — to more complicated ones like private dinners on the beach with your own musician and private sunset couples cruises.

Price: The romance concierge will arrange, coordinate and customize these services for free. However, guests will need to pay for the items/services — like a romantic dinner on the beach with a personal musician (\$150) — that she delivers.

Easy way to spice things up: "Commit to spending time with each other," she says. "Choose one night each month to shut out the rest of the world."



7. Running concierge, Westin Hotels & Resorts

Some runners staying at the Westin Hotel can call up Christopher Heuisler, running concierge, for advice on anything from stretching to endurance training to proper hydration. The 25-marathon veteran travels to select Westin Hotels in cities where Rock 'N Roll marathons are taking place, where, in addition to dishing out advice, he will lead warm-up runs in the days before the race, greet runners at the finish line and dole out race-recovery goodies in Westin's marathon recovery tent.

Price: Complimentary for guests who are signed up for [Westin's VIP Marathon Package](#).

Ultimate running playlist: Heuisler recommends Lady Gaga's "Born This Way," Eminem's "Not Afraid," Adele's "Rolling in the Deep," and Daft Punk's "Get Lucky."

Running tip: "Take the first mile or two miles out of the equation," he says. "Don't start the "race" until you're two miles in. Why? Because every single runner goes out too fast and if you can hold off in the beginning, you're ultimately running a smarter race."

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