

The ATM Conundrum

Though ATMs are becoming common in full-service hotels, many luxury properties still don't have an ATM and have decided they don't want one. Why? That's the conundrum. My best guess is that there remains a perception problem or, more aptly, a misperception that ATMs don't fit with a luxury image, and, thus, somehow make guests think less of these four- and five-star hotels.

I'd venture to say that there are very few, if any, that would argue that ATMs aren't a wonderful guest convenience and a valued hotel amenity. After all, what other amenity is more important than placing cash in your guests' hands at the precise moment they need it? Without question, credit is commonplace, but cash is still king and thus a guest necessity that will remain so for the foreseeable future.

Through the hospitality grapevine, I've certainly heard other reasons to explain hotel management's rejection of ATMs; the most common is, "There is an ATM right across the street, so we don't need one." During one of my recent trips to Boston, this was the answer I received. When I went across the street, I discovered that the ATMs were in a little, messy cubbyhole, which, apparently, was also frequented by some homeless. Like most of us, I feel terrible for those without homes, but hotel guests shouldn't have to deal with this issue.

similar services nearby. Nearby services miss the point; convenience is the point, and ATMs add to a hotel's conveniences.

Well, like most things in life, times are changing. Many luxury brands are finally jumping aboard the ATM train, which has been at breakneck speed for the last decade. Most importantly, there is a growing awareness that there are elegant ATM solutions that will blend very nicely with hotel décor. These include state-of-the-art ATMs with small footprints, custom cabinetry (both traditional and contemporary), and even through-the-wall build-outs with matching trims, where space is an issue. In addition, there is no shame in taking advantage of a pure profit opportunity (from ATM transactions) every month for the length of your agreement; the hotel incurs no expenses with respect to the operation of its ATM.

There is one caveat I'd like to mention to those who have ATMs in your hotels for guest convenience. I noticed during recent travels to various states that ATMs were located on lower levels, near parking garages, a long way down corridors, etc. You should give the location of your ATM serious consideration. Some of these obscure spots are neither convenient for guests, nor particularly safe, for that matter.

Finally, these days, guests expect to find an ATM in hotels in which they stay, especially luxury hotels. Guests pay a premium to stay at luxury hotels because they are more beautiful and the amenities are more abundant and



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If this "right across the street" philosophy is correct, then it must apply to all amenity levels. Therefore, let's take it a step further and include all hotel amenities (i.e., food, drinks, spa and gym facilities, laundry services, etc.). If we do this, luxury hotels, as premier service providers, would offer very few guest amenities, as all of them could be obtained "right across the street." As a result, by definition, luxury hotels would no longer be luxury. Of course, this is absurd, as luxury hotels rightly want to provide the very best amenities right inside their own hotels, despite

of better quality. ATM solutions are certainly among these expected amenities. Today's elegant solutions will satisfy your décor requirements. So, keep in mind that everything we do, and don't do, make a statement about who we are. Your ATM is no exception. Your perception that ATMs will not match your decor is no longer valid.

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