

HEALTH & WELLNESS



Hella Neumann practices yoga at the front desk of the Marriott Marquis San Diego and Marina.

In-room yoga: Downward-facing dog on demand

By Katherine Klahn
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NATIONAL REPORT—Hotel guests are saying goodbye to dragging their mats downstairs for a yoga class and instead crying a happy namaste to sweating, stretching and perfecting their tree pose in the privacy of their guestroom.

In San Diego at the Marriott Marquis and Marina, yoga is brought to guests in a very distinct way. Local yoga instructor Hella Neumann has designed an in-room yoga program that all guests can access from their rooms. She developed a program that allows guests to watch and participate in yoga classes from the comfort of their room through the hotel's on-demand TV service. On the videos, Neumann teaches yoga just as she does in the hotel's downstairs studio, where a variety of classes, in addition to yoga, are offered.

Neumann—who was dubbed Wellness Warrior by Jan Hulahan, the hotel's director of sales and marketing—encourages guests to take healthy selfies, which are self-taken photos of the person doing healthy things such as practicing yoga.

Neumann originally came up with the program to offer guests a way to practice yoga at any time of the day. "The idea behind this is that guests can do yoga early in the morning in their pajamas, or from the comfort of their room," she said.

Neumann noted the videos are each approximately 10 to 20 minutes in length. "The longest is *The*

Meditations, and it's 19 minutes. All of the videos are different in length," said Neumann, adding that another video, *Sun Salutations*, runs for 10 minutes.

"The idea behind it was to keep it quick and short because, sometimes, they don't have that much time in the morning to do a full workout. So, it varies, but guests have the option also to choose to do a couple of videos together so that they can work out for a full hour," said Neumann.

Hulahan said the hotel currently has a stock of 200 yoga mats. If guests want to practice yoga on demand with Neumann, they call the front desk. The front desk will then dispatch an associate to deliver a yoga mat to the hotel room. The number of hotel mats is adequate now, though Hulahan said the intention is that the 1,360-key hotel will eventually be fully stocked with a mat in every room.

According to both Neumann and Hulahan, one strange measure of

their success has been the number of bath towels on the ground inside guestrooms. The hotel's housekeeping department has found a number of towels in front of the TV, which signals to Hulahan that guests are sometimes opting to put the videos on without calling to the front desk for a mat.

Neumann also says it is the hotel's location that makes in-room yoga and other healthy programs a success. "We are located in sunny San Diego. There is a specific lifestyle here. We eat healthy here," she said. "When guests come here from different parts of the country and world, we embody the lifestyle of San Diego because yoga is very popular in Southern California," she said.

IHG's EVEN Hotels brand was created to serve guests who are looking to stay healthy and fit while traveling, according to the company. In-room yoga is part of its overall goal to be a healthy hotel chain. "The number-one insight we've learned from guests when we were developing EVEN Hotels was that they didn't have access to equipment or classes that meet their needs when they travel. There's nothing more disappointing when you head down to the fitness center with a limited amount of time, and you find dated machines or a line to use the equipment," said Jason Moskal, VP, lifestyle brands, The Americas at IHG.

Moskal further noted that the in-room yoga trend is centered around offering guests the flexibility they desire. "Guests really want flexibility, and have responded positively to the fact that they now have the ability to choose whether they take a class, strength train or work out in their room. We provide the options they need to fit their lifestyle and schedule. Sometimes, guests may only have a few minutes in the morning to work out, or they like to

do so in private, so the in-room training zone is a great option for them," he said.

EVEN's operating model for offering guests in-room training is broad in that it offers a huge variety of possibilities to the guest. "Guests can exercise in their guestroom using the in-room training zone, which includes a foam roller, yoga mat, yoga block, core exercise ball and the EVEN Hotels Trainer, which is a mounted fitness wall, that includes a stretch band and braided cords. The brand developed several fitness videos that range from five to 30 minutes, which helps show guests different ways to use the equipment," said Moskal.

Kimpton Hotels has made the yoga mat as essential as a pillow by stocking each room with one. "Each Kimpton guestroom closet is stocked with a custom-designed Gaiaam yoga mat for complimentary use, allowing guests to use them at their convenience throughout their stay. To help guests get in the Zen zone, in-room TVs are also equipped with free on-demand fitness programming," said Pete Koerner, SVP, Kimpton.

At Kimpton, yoga the old-fashioned way is still offered. Guests can practice in the hotel's studios at most locations, although in-studio yoga often comes with an edgy twist. "Our hotels will often times partner with local studios or gyms and offer unique local or seasonal twists to our yoga program," said Koerner.

For example, the Hotel Monaco Alexandria, VA, will arrange for a yoga class to be taught at a local studio; the Surfcomber Hotel in Miami offers poolside and beachfront yoga; and the Hotel Monaco Pittsburgh offers a Moonlight Monday class taught by a local studio on the hotel's rooftop Rialto suite outdoors when the weather allows.

But, the trend is not just for brands. Independent, wellness-minded boutique hotels are in on the offering.

New York's Hotel on Rivington offers guests private in-room yoga taught by a certified yoga instructor, according to Adam Perabo, community marketing director for the hotel. If guests fill out a feedback card after their session, they'll also get a free \$10 gift card to Juice Press, the café located on the hotel's main floor.

"Whether they do yoga once a week or once a day, we can keep our guests on a regular yoga schedule," said Perabo. **HB**



Kimpton Hotels offers in-room yoga mats and also in-studio group classes, such as this one taught on a rooftop at the Hotel Monaco in Pittsburgh.