



The beginnings of the hotel industry

(1 of 2)

Today, I'd like to give you a brief summary of the early days of the hotel industry. As you know, the hotel industry is an important engine of the economy, providing jobs for many people, but above all, it allows us to travel the world and learn more about the ways and customs of other peoples.

Origins of the word 'hotel'¹

The Latin words *hospitalis* and *hospitalitas* are at the origin of the words *hôte*, *hôtel*, *hôtellerie*, *hôpital* and *hospitalité*. In Old French, *hostel* is a "house where one lives", but also refers to a "furnished house used as a lodging and an inn". This meaning is thought to have emerged with the development of cities in northern Europe in the 13th century. In the Middle Ages, the words "hostellerie" or "hôtellerie" referred to the part of a monastery opened to the public used to accommodate occasional guests and pilgrims.

¹ <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C3%B4tellerie>

The genesis^{2,3,4}

Hotels are thought to have begun with the Lascaux caves in France, which were converted to accommodate members of other tribes. In ancient times, Greek spas were popular with those wishing to recover from illness or to rest. Later, the Romans built mansions to accommodate travelers on government business. The Romans were the first to build thermal baths in England, Switzerland and the Middle East.

In the early 700s, the first two hotels in history (Ryokans) appeared in Japan. These Ryokans were places of rest along the Silk Road. According to the Guinness Book of Records, *Nisiyama Onsen Kiunkan* is the oldest hotel still in operation in the world. It is located in Yamanashi, Japan. It was opened in 707 AD and has remained open ever since. It has been run by the same family for 46 generations!

In the Middle Ages, monasteries and abbeys were the first to offer shelter to travelers on a regular basis. Monks built hotels, hospices and hospitals to help them out. Hotels multiplied but, at the time, did not yet offer meals. Relais were set up to transport civil servants. They offered shelter and a chance to change horses before continuing on their way.

Numerous shelters then sprang up to accommodate crusaders and pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land. Then travel became increasingly perilous. Despite this, hotels gradually appeared throughout most of Europe. Some of them are famous, such as *the Auberge des Trois Rois* in Basel (Switzerland), which dates back to the Middle Ages.

Grand hotels

New York's first grand hotel, the *City Hotel*, was built in 1794. It boasted 137 luxurious rooms, as well as boutiques, a bar and a café, plus a public restaurant and dance hall. The price per room per night was \$1.50, and one could eat for \$3.50 per week.

The Mivart Hotel (later the *Claridge*) opened in London in 1812⁵. The first major palace, the 170-room *Tremont House* in Boston was built in 1829⁶. This hotel holds many records, including being the first hotel to offer in-house toilets and baths and free soap (a tourists' favorite)⁷.

Thanks to the industrial revolution, a middle class with good salaries and vacations developed. Travel became increasingly affordable and interesting. With the happening of trains and cars,

² <https://hoteltechreport.com/fr/news/modern-history-hospitality-industry>

³ <https://www.hospitalitynet.org/opinion/4017990.html>

⁴ <https://tourismteacher.com/the-history-of-the-hotel-industry-understanding-tourism/>

⁵ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_Hotel_\(Manhattan\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_Hotel_(Manhattan))

⁶ <https://hal.science/hal-03323754/document>

⁷ <https://tourismteacher.com/the-history-of-the-hotel-industry-understanding-tourism/>

reduced working hours and other benefits, travel was no longer the sole prerogative of the wealthy. Now, many could indulge! Increased demand was a pivotal point in the proliferation of hotels, which became increasingly popular.

Back then, housekeepers and concierges (and later, valets) already played a vital role in ensuring travelers' comfort. Unlike today, however, guests had cash in their pockets, allowing them to leave cash tips as a token of appreciation.

These days, few people have cash. Therefore, hotels need to offer an alternative way for guests to leave a tip, such as **Tip&Go**, an electronic tipping solution that can increase employees' wages by up to 30%!

That's all for today! Stay tuned for part 2 of the beginnings of the hotel industry next week, same time, same place 😊!

Francis Léonard, CEO



www.tip-go.com