



Clean as a whistle

(Part I)

Offering guests a clean, comfortable bed in a quiet environment is the main function of a hotel. However, making sure that they have access to a sparkling bathroom is also an essential, given that cleanliness is top of mind for guests! This article is the first in a series of two on bathrooms. Hope you find it informative!

History of Bathrooms^{1,2,3,4}

The ancient Greeks and Romans had public toilets, and, in some cases, indoor plumbing connected to rudimentary sewer systems. The Romans considered that going to the toilet was a social event. They met friends, exchanged views, caught up on the news and wiped themselves with a piece of sponge fixed to a short wooden handle. This was then rinsed in a water channel which ran in front of the toilet and reused. This practice may have led to the expression "getting hold of the wrong end of the stick".

In Medieval England, people used "potties" and would simply throw their contents through a door or window into the street. The more affluent would use a "garderobe", a protruding room with an opening for waste, suspended over a moat. The name probably comes from the practice of storing robes in the toilet area so that the smell would discourage fleas and other parasites. Peasants and serfs, however, relieved themselves in communal privies at the end of streets.

The first modern flushable toilet was created in 1596 by Sir John Harington, the godson of Queen Elizabeth I. His device called for a 2-foot-deep oval bowl waterproofed with pitch, resin and wax and fed by water from an upstairs cistern. Flushing Harington's pot required 7.5 gallons of water. In comparison, today's toilets use about 1.6 gallons (6 liters) per flush, i.e. close to 5 times less! Harington noted that when water was scarce, up to 20 people could use the toilet between flushes 😊!

Although Harington installed a working model for Queen Elizabeth at Richmond Palace, it took several centuries for the flush toilet to be adopted by the public. In the late 19th century, Thomas Crapper (a Londoner) developed the ballcock, a tank-filling mechanism still used in toilets today and manufactured one of the first widely successful lines of flush toilets. Crapper's name became synonymous with the devices he sold, thanks in part to Americans stationed overseas during World War I. These men, unfamiliar with the invention, referred to toilets as "crappers" and brought the term back home with them after the war.

¹ <https://www.history.com/news/who-invented-the-flush-toilet>

² <https://www.baus.org.uk/museum/164/a-brief-history-of-the-flush-toilet>

³ <https://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/The-Throne-of-Sir-John-Harrington/>

⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toilet_\(room\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toilet_(room))

Bathroom technology really arrived in the 20th century with flushable valves, water tanks resting on the bowl itself and toilet paper rolls (first marketed in 1902!). In 1992, The US Energy Policy Act was passed, requiring flush toilets to use only 1.6 gallons of water. As a result, companies all over the world moved to develop better, low-flush toilets to prevent clogging.

Hygiene in Hotel Bathrooms^{5,6}

A great hotel experience is all about relaxing and unwinding. For the length of their stay guests don't need to worry about cooking, cleaning, washing laundry or making a bed. Heaven! However, there is one place where hotels can slip up more than any other: if the guest finds their bathroom less than sparklingly clean.

A study involving 2,000 adults found that 71% of hotel guests would walk out if the bathroom was unclean. With the ability to leave a bad review online at everyone's fingertips, it's more important than ever to make sure that hotel rooms and bathrooms are setting the right impression.

In a survey commissioned by Kaldewei, when asked about the most important feature of a hotel, almost two-thirds of those surveyed (62%) named a clean bathroom. The next feature (far behind) was a large, comfortable bed (26% of respondents).

Fun Facts^{7,8,9}

- WC is an abbreviation for 'water closet', a name used in the 1900's for a toilet because back then, most were fitted in a spare closet or

⁵ <https://janiking.co.uk/blog/hotel-cleaning-importance-bathroom/>

⁶ <https://www.tourism-review.com/bathroom-is-essential-for-the-hotel-guests-news11386>

⁷ <https://www.plumbworld.co.uk/blog/what-is-a-wc-suite#:~:text=To%20start%2C%20WC%20is%20an,a%20toilet%20but%20no%20bath.>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hotel_toilet_paper_folding#:~:text=Hotels%20want%20to%20give%20their,It%20is%20subtle%20but%20effective

⁹ <https://www.forbes.com/home-improvement/bathroom/what-is-a-bidet/#:~:text=Bidets%20are%20sanitary%20fixtures%20that,by%20side%20the%20normal%20commode.>

cupboard 😊. Over time, WC has been used instead of bathroom to describe a room with a toilet but no bath.

- According to Stephen Gill, a British photographer who did a book on the *folding of toilet paper* in bathrooms, this practice is done by hotels all over the world to let guests know that their bathroom has been cleaned. The fold usually involves creating a triangle or "V" shape out of the first available sheet on a toilet paper roll. Sometimes, folding is more elaborate taking shapes like fans, sailboats, and even flowers!
- Bidets are sanitary fixtures that have been around for years in Europe and Asia, but only growing in popularity in the U.S. Both a hygiene and interior design upgrade, these water spigots for the nether regions sit side by side the normal commode. Using one for the first time can be awkward. It's hard to know just how to squat over the basin or where to point the nozzle for the best positioning. Not getting it right the first time is why so many people choose to use it for storage or as a flowerpot 😊.

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Francis Léonard, CEO

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