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**Hotel Hotsheet**  
Megg Mueller Schulte

## Better lodging through technology

In my next life, I'm coming back as a techie. Gadgets and widgets and all that cool stuff that make life easier, or at least more fun, that's what I want to write about. So this week, I am. Let's dive into what's new in the world of hotel high-tech.



**Big enough?** Marriott hopes its 32-inch HDTV will woo guests.

Courtesy of Marriott

Going one step into the future with interactivity is the [Gaylord Palms](#) in Orlando. The massive and sumptuous resort ([see previous column](#)) has introduced iConnect, a Web-based concierge if you will. Each guest room has a flat-screen computer that goes beyond surfing the Internet. Guests can take a look at a guest directory to get information on the Canyon Ranch spa offerings; peruse the restaurant menus; use the hotel mapping system for point-to-point directions so you don't get lost looking for your conference room or pool; request an extra blanket or other needed item; get information on area attractions, restaurants and shopping; or check meeting arrangements and conference messages.

[Marriott Hotels](#) is installing flat-panel HDTV systems,

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primarily at the chain's JW Marriott, Marriott and Renaissance brands. Not just a TV with high definition, this is also an interactive system that you can plug your MP3 player into and get stereo-quality sound, or connect your laptop and use the 32-inch screen as a monitor.

Families will appreciate the interactive nature of the TV, too. Plug your video or digital camera in to the desktop panel, and you can see relive your vacation memories the same day. Or see which pictures you have to toss and recreate, if you take photos anything like I do. Kids can even hook video games up to the TV, for a super-sized gaming blast.

Marriott hopes to have 50,000 of the HDTVs in hotels in the next four years. Look for the TV systems first at the Cleveland Marriott Downtown at Key Center and the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront.

[Fairmont Hotels](#) is rolling out its self-service kiosks this year, with service slated for all properties by the end of year. The kiosk will enable guests to check in and out, choose a room, get a room key and, if you're flying on Air Canada, check in for a flight and print boarding passes. (Related story: [Self-service hotel check-in to increase](#))

**And another thing ...**

**Southwest in Philadelphia: The good and bad:** If your next stay in Philadelphia costs a bit more, you can thank Southwest Airlines, at least in part. Ever since the discount giant started flights from Philly, hotel occupancy has gone up, and so have the prices. The first four months of 2005 saw steady increase occupancy at city hotels, and around the airport specifically there was a 24% jump from the prior year, before Southwest started its service. Occupancy rates were about 85% for both Center City and airport hotels, and prices averaged \$135 a night compared to \$117 in 2003, according to [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) (registration required). And while it's a great thing to get a good deal on airfare to the City of Brotherly Love, I'm guessing hotels are the ones really feeling the love from Southwest's presence.

**Not your best average**

You think your last hotel stay was bad? Try being one of the Minnesota Twins. [The San Jose Mercury News](#) reports the team isn't having much luck with its accommodations. Three players have sustained in-room injuries that left them unable to play in subsequent games: Terry Mulholland missed a game after getting scratched in the eye by a feather pillow; Jason Bartlet missed two games when he ripped a fingernail adjusting his TV; and Juan Castro couldn't play after he got a stiff neck, ostensibly from a hotel pillow. And here I thought ball players were tough!

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*Megg Mueller Schulte is an assistant travel editor at USATODAY.com. Her column runs every Wednesday. She can be reached at [travel@usatoday.com](mailto:travel@usatoday.com).*

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