Theft in Hotels: Which items are stolen the most?

Posted on

November 27, 2023

Stealing soaps or pens seems harmless for many hotel guests, however, some are so bold that they carry TVs, pianos, mattresses or even stuffed animals out of the hotel. Wellness Heaven has asked 1,376 hotel managers which items are most commonly stolen. In particular, we observe a striking difference in the theft behavior between guests in 4-star and 5-star hotels.

The main result of the study: towels and bathrobes are stolen the most – perhaps as a goodie for the next spa break? These two objects of desire are closely followed by hangers, pens and cosmetics. In addition to these “ordinary” items, there is a

number of spectacular outliers that suggest a brisk imagination of the delinquents:

The most bizarre stolen goods
Bathroom Fittings

Highly skilled craftsmanship was required of those guests who managed to steal bathroom fixtures, the head of a rain shower, a hydromassage shower, a toilet seat, a drainpipe or even an entire sink, as reported by a Berlin hotel.

A Grand Piano

A hotelier from Italy: “Once I walked through the lobby, I noticed that something was missing, and soon after I learned that three unknown men in overalls had taken away the grand piano, and it never reappeared, of course.”

Room Numbers

In a hotel in England a guest had unceremoniously removed the numbers from his hotel room door. “We didn’t notice until the next guest could not find his room”, the hotel director declares.

> How exactly the bulky goods are transported unnoticed out of the hotel remains a mystery. On request, some hoteliers informed us that this only happens in the middle of the night – using elevators which lead directly to the underground parking.

Stuffed Hunting Trophies

In a hotel in France, a guest was caught trying to steal a stuffed boar’s head. At a later date, he did receive this trophy: friends bought the precious piece from the hotel and gave it to him as a wedding gift.

Sauna Benches

In a hotel near Salzburg, the wooden benches from a sauna were stolen. The “private sauna” was located on the terrace of a spa suite. The benches were made of fragrant pine wood, which probably stirred up the guest’s desire. Only when a

subsequent guest criticized the absence of the benches (“Where should I sit in the sauna? I can’t relax while standing.”), the hotelier noticed the theft.

HiFi System

A hotel owner from Germany reports on how the entire stereo system of the spa area disappeared: Thieves had apparently dismantled the entire sound equipment overnight and loaded it in their car before they left.

Flowers

The management of a resort in the Maldives reports that it buys new flower arrangements several times a week to replace the missing ones. Maybe the demand for flowers is simply too high due to the many marriage proposals?

Thieving preferences by nationality

When classifying the delinquents by nationality, a different picture emerges. It turns out, for example, that German and British hotel guests follow a rather boring theft behavior: In addition to towels and bathrobes, primarily cosmetics and toiletries are in the focus.

In contrast, Austrians snitch in a more pleasure-oriented way: dishes and coffee machines appear high up in their theft ranking. It seems they cannot get enough to satisfy their thirst for coffee. For US Americans, pillows and batteries appear as the prime objects of desire.

Italians seem to prefer wine glasses as a hotel souvenir, while the hair dryer ranks high up in the Swiss ranking. The French, on the other hand, steal in a more spectacular manner: they represent the nation that is attracted mainly to TV sets and remote controls.

Dutch hotel guests see in their souvenirs above all the practical benefit: Their favorites include light bulbs and toilet paper.

Guests of 5-star hotels prefer expensive items: TVs & mattresses

A total of 740 hoteliers from 4-star hotels and 636 from 5-star hotels were surveyed to determine the behavior of thieves depending on their wealth. As it turns out, “Greed is good” seems to be a reliable motto especially for the well-heeled 5-star

clientele.

The probability of tablet computers being stolen in 5-star hotels, is 6 times higher in comparison to the 4-star segment. Similarly, artworks are popular objects of desire in luxury hotels (4.3 x higher theft probability). TV sets (4.9 x) and mattresses (5.4 x) are also being stolen a lot more frequently in 5-star hotels. This is quite astonishing: 11.8% of 5-star hotel managers mourn the loss of mattresses, while only 2.2% of 4-star hotels seem to be affected. In total, 91 hoteliers indicate the theft of mattresses in our survey, so at least that many were stolen in their hotels.

4-star hotel guests are content with less spectacular gifts: towels and hangers tend to be in higher demand than in 5-star hotels. The typical 4-star hotel guest is especially fond of practical items such as batteries and remote controls (theft probability 2.8 and 4.4 x higher, respectively).

Coffeemakers

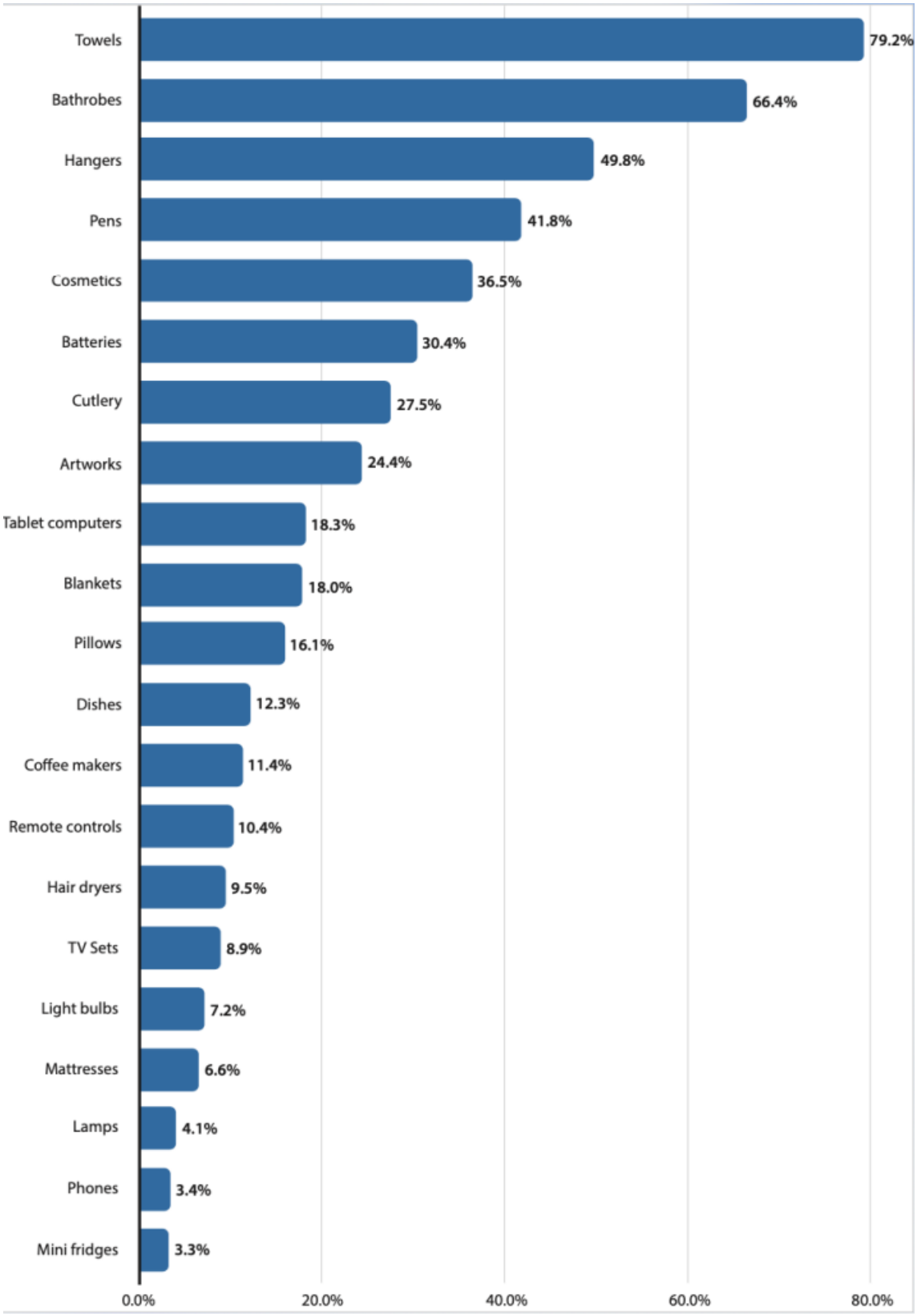
The coffeemaker, which is so popular among Austrian guests, is also sought-after by luxury-minded 5-star guests, as we observe a 4.8-fold increase in theft statistics.

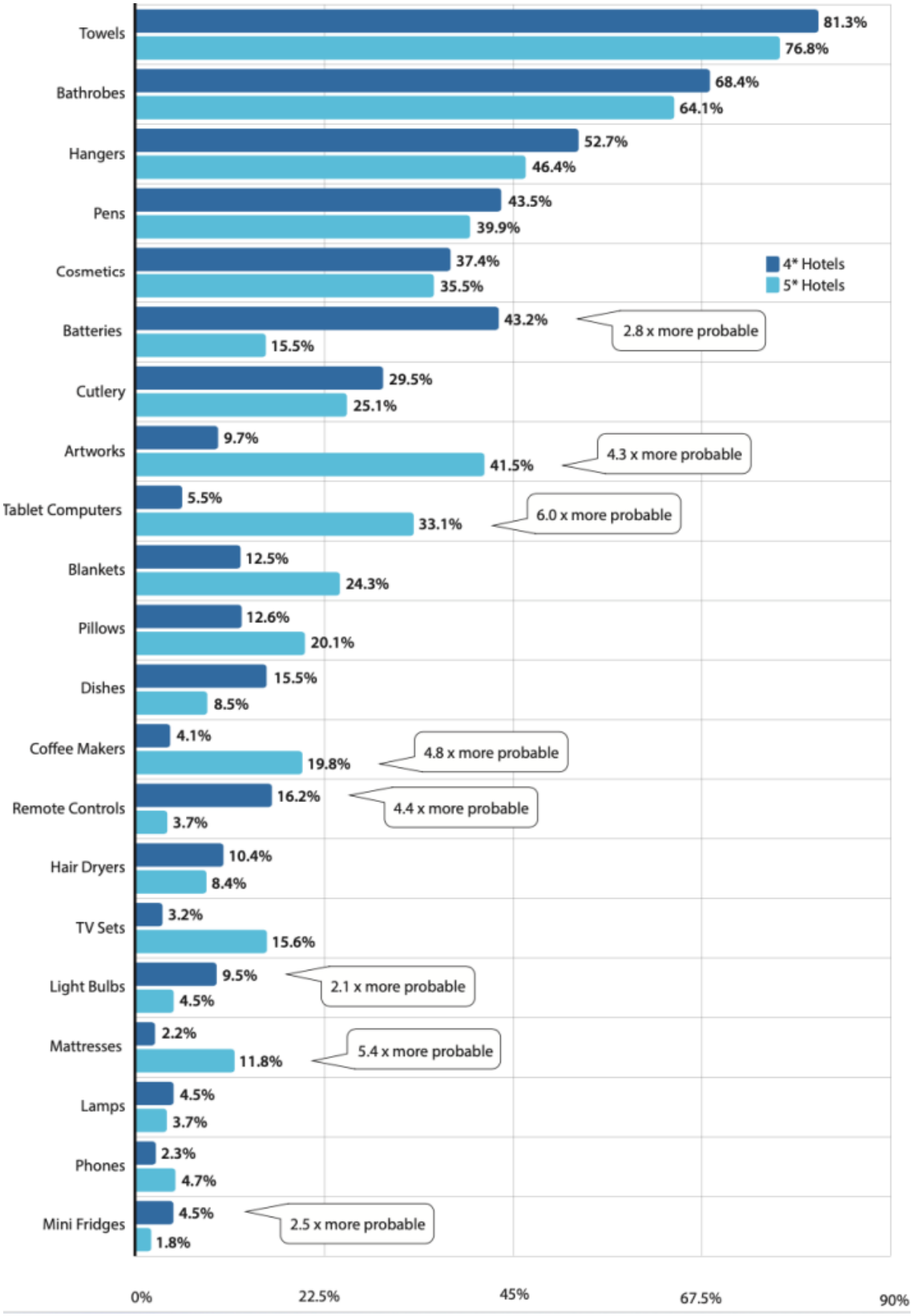
Toilet Paper

Hoteliers’ theft reports about toilet paper rolls only reach us from the 4-star segment. For luxury travellers, there seems to be no additional need for hygiene in this area.

Luxury Mattresses

Even expensive luxury mattresses (often worth several thousand euros) are not immune to disappear: the probability for their theft is 5.4 times higher in 5-star hotels. How exactly the bulky goods are transported unnoticed out of the hotel remains a mystery. On request, some hoteliers informed us that this only happens in the middle of the night – using elevators which lead directly to the underground parking.


Towels
79.2%
Bathrobes
66.4%
Hangers
49.8%
Pens
41.8%
Cosmetics
36.5%
Batteries
30.4%
Cutlery
27.5%
Artworks
24.4%
Tablet computers
18.3%
Blankets
18.0%
Pillows
16.1%
Dishes
12.3%
Coffee makers
11.4%
Remote controls
10.4%
Hair dryers
9.5%
TV Sets
8.9%
Light bulbs
7.2%
Mattresses
6.6%
Lamps
4.1%
Phones
3.4%
Mini fridges
3.3%
0.0%
20.0%
40.0%
60.0%
80.0%


Towels
81.3%
76.8%
Bathrobes
68.4%
64.1%
Hangers
52.7%
46.4%
Pens
43.5%
39.9%
Cosmetics
37.4%
35.5%
4* Hotels
5* Hotels
Batteries
43.2%
15.5%
2.8 x more probable
Cutlery
29.5%
25.1%
Artworks
9.7%
41.5%
4.3 x more probable
Tablet Computers
5.5%
33.1%
6.0 x more probable
Blankets
12.5%
24.3%
Pillows
12.6%
20.1%
Dishes
15.5%
8.5%
Coffee Makers
4.1%
19.8%
4.8 x more probable
Remote Controls
16.2%
3.7%
4.4 x more probable
Hair Dryers
10.4%
8.4%
TV Sets
3.2%
15.6%
Light Bulbs
9.5%
4.5%
2.1 x more probable
Mattresses
2.2%
11.8%
5.4 x more probable
Lamps
4.5%
3.7%
Phones
2.3%
4.7%
Mini Fridges
4.5%
1.8%
2.5 x more probable
0%
22.5%
45%
67.5%
90%

Tablet Computers

Tablet computers, often referred to as “SuitePads” in the high-priced room categories, are stolen 6.0 times more frequently in 5-star hotels. Such tablets usually have a value of approximately 480 euros and tend to be a popular souvenir among luxury travelers.

Blankets

To complete their sleeping experience at home, some luxury oriented guests add the hotel’s blanket to their luggage. Theft of this object is 1.9-fold increased in 5-star hotels.

Trends in hotel thievery

Comparing data with our 2019 survey on theft in hotels, “Mini Fridges” have emerged as a new item of desire. 3.3% of surveyed hoteliers indicate theft of this device, leaving the mini bar not only empty, but also warm. Not cool! The theft of mini fridges is 2.5 x more probable in 4-star hotels. In comparison with 2019, several items of theft are on the rise: coffee makers (6.9% -> 11.4%), mattresses (4.2% -> 6.6%) and tablet computers (12.0% -> 18.3%) have increased significantly. On the other hand, phones (4.8% -> 3.4%), cutlery (33.6% -> 27.5%) and lamps (4.3% -> 4.1%) have decreased in theft probability.

Methods

On the methodology of this survey: The multiple-choice answers were randomized, multiple answers were possible. For example “Towels” in Fig. 1: 79.2% of surveyed hoteliers have indicated that towels were stolen at their hotel. The survey was conducted in September and October 2023.

A total of 1,376 responses were evaluated, the result can be considered as representative. The 1,376 hotels whose management participated in the survey are located primarily in Europe. 740 hoteliers were surveyed in the 4-star segment, and 636 in the 5-star segment.