

When I was 13 we stayed as a family in a motel in Melbourne's South Yarra. No one in our family had stayed in a motel before so this was an exciting experience – I suspect as much for my parents as for us kids.

Mum, Dad, me, my older brother and my younger sister; that's five people in two rooms. The three older kids had left home by this stage, which enabled my frugal parents to be uncharacteristically indulgent.

The motel was beyond exciting. The television had a remote control. We switched channels just because we could. I recall it as a deeply satisfying experience. Flick... *Bonanza*. Flick... *BP Pick-a-box*. Did you know that motels have a bathroom called an ensuite? Did you know that motels provide little packets of soap for free? For free!

When I started travelling for work in my late 20s I kept the hotel soap, thinking that if ever I was outed as an imposter I was at least set for life with soap. Today I will admit to being blasé about staying (for work) in fancy digs. I can tell they're fancy digs by the fittings, which brings me to Salt's Law of Uppity Accommodation: the more expensive the hotel, the more complicated the plumbing.

The thinking seems to be: we want to charge a motza to stay in this hotel so we had better design some pretty fancy plumbing. Can't have a common basin set with hot and cold taps. Let's reimagine it as a raised cone with no bench space because that would encourage unstylish guests to create clutter.

Not only that, but instead of a hot tap and a cold tap let's have a single spout



BY BERNARD SALT

Deluxe? It's deluded

operated by sensors. But let's hide the sensors and make the guests guess where they are! I mean, why have hot and cold taps when hard-to-find sensors are so much fancier?

The same logic applies to showers. Let's not have wall taps and a shower rose in the ceiling. Let's have multiple shower heads and multiple flow and temperature controls. More controls equals sophistication, you know.

I once stayed in a hotel in Delhi where the

shower contained vertical pipes to enable water to squirt sideways from head to toe. A sideways shower: how fancy is that? Hotel designers the world over clearly think guests will have no problem paying a premium if only they can get access to a sideways shower.

Then there's the work desk. I often write this column in a hotel room. I am sure hip hotel designers have colluded to put the power socket in the skirting board, in order to force middle-aged guests to scramble around on their hands and knees.

Dear hotel designers, I want to let you in on a secret. Business travellers arrive in hotel rooms late and they leave early. We don't want fancy; we want practical, self-evident taps, basins, showers and power sockets.

Same with bedside telephones. Why is the room-service icon so faint and small? Some phones are so complicated I've Googled the hotel's number and rung reception on my mobile. "Hi, I am staying in your hotel. I can't work out how to use the phone or shower."

It's more than 45 years since I stayed in that swish motel in South Yarra where, without any experience, we kids managed to shower and to operate the TV. Why is it that today, with far more travelling experience, I feel out of place in some accommodation?

Sometimes the market doesn't want sophistication; sometimes the market wants simplicity and functionality. Now, if you'll excuse me I have to get down on my hands and knees to power up my laptop.