

IS HILTON'S 'MATCH THIRD PARTY SITES' PROMISE WORTH ANYTHING?

by Andrew Chalk

Hilton claims to match prices from third-party sites if you book direct. They even claim to give you a 25% sweetener if you find a lower third-party rate. However, my attempt to reserve a room at their San Francisco Financial District Hilton property indicates that they don't do this. Rather, they use two techniques to avoid having to make good on their claim.

First, they train their reps. to ask for information that the third-party site may not have, even if that information is immaterial to the customer's claim. This is the prelude to placing an onerous level of proof on the customer, the work level of which is designed to be sufficient to deter most compensation claims.

Second, they define their published rates very narrowly, so many offers in the same hotel on the same night are 'not identical'. This may remind you of the price match promises made by electronics stores. They get custom models of amplifiers, appliances, etc. made for them so that they never have to pay out when a lower price is found elsewhere because there is nothing identical at any other retailer!

Follow through the transcript of my chat conversation with 'Robb' below (unedited, so please excuse the typos and the way the text is formatted by the their chat app). I have highlighted some of the more striking comments (like reps. cannot check online rates at third-party sites!).

Notice how the rep. hides behind a mass of policy documents (he IS able to find the links to them) to prevaricate. He is not trying to get me the best rate, he does not see his job as providing a service. This isn't his fault, he is doing exactly what Hilton told him to do.

Remember, this is how they treat a Hilton Gold member. If you don't have status it might be worse.

Ready to chat...

2:28 am

You

Hi

Robb

Hello

You

do you guarantee lowest prices here?

Robb

How may I help you today?

You

lowest

Robb

Yes, we offer the best rates available online.

You

hilton sfo financial district. 2 nights starting 8/24

you have \$258

kayak reports..

Hilton San Francisco Financial District

750 Kearny Street, San Francisco, CA

7.9

Good

2,180 reviews

Distance

1.5 mi from

KAYAK

\$225

Prestigia

\$208

AMOMA.com

\$225

12 more sites

\$259

\$208

\$208

Roomer

View Deal

roomer: \$208!

why the discrepancy

Robb

I am sorry please confirm the room type and rate again that you are able to see in a third party website.

You

one moment

https://www.roomertravel.com/rooms/San-Francisco--CA--USA/dates/2017-08-24,2017-08-26?adults=2&children=0&child_guests_ages=&reservation_id=1304_2017-08-24_2017-08-26_T_16199964_localTgsProvider_2_0_&utm_campaign=San-Francisco--CA--USA&utm_source=KAYAK_us&utm_medium=API&utm_meta=KAYAK&rate_plan_id=1&rate_plan_token=dd748216c3f9513f2d139eaa987900e7¤cy=USD&orig_price=208&marker=750gHRa24Y0xQZ2URbCU1w

Robb

I am sorry I do not have the ability to check the rates in the third party websites. Can you please help me with the exact rates, room type , cancellation policy and the tax breakdown?

2:34 am

You

\$208 on roomer.com.

standard room

ROOMS

Make yourself at home in one of the 543 air-conditioned rooms featuring MP3 docking stations and LCD televisions. Your pillowtop bed comes with down comforters. Digital programming provides entertainment, and wired and wireless Internet access is available for a surcharge. Private bathrooms with shower/tub combinations feature designer toiletries and hair dryers.

found some details

Non-Refundable

This reservation
cannot be changed or canceled.

24/7 customer support

Transferable

\$208 Book Now

Life Happens™ (Best value) How does it work?

Flexible cancellation before Wed, Aug 23

Get an 80% refund

24/7 customer support

standard special room. 1 bed, 2 guests

do your rates include taxes?

Robb?

Robb

No, the rates that are available in the room availability page are the rates per night exclusive of all taxes and fees.

You

ok. The rate I showed for the cancellable room (\$221) is also pre tax.

Robb

May I ask the bed type that is offered in the room advertised at the third party website?

2:40 am

You

1 bed, 2 persons.

I am Hilton Gold, so I get an upgrade anyway

Robb

I certainly understand however, I would require the bed type for matching the price.

You

It is your hotel.

Robb

I am sorry we are from the online reservations team.

[Please click here](#) to know more about our price match policy.

We will only be able to price match if the same room along with the same package is available at a lower rate than our website in a third party website. The cancellation policy should match as well.

If you find a qualifying lower price for the same accommodations within 24 hours after making your reservation, and if we verify your claim, we will honor the lower price AND take an additional 25% off the room rate for each night of your stay.

You

so that is the absolute best you can do? Know nothing about your own property. Not able to check a third party price online. Not able to match. All on a detail that would appear to be irrelevant given that a Gold member gets a known type of room.

Robb

You must submit a complete claim form within 24 hours after you make your confirmed reservation, and at least 24 hours before the hotel's standard check-in time on your day of arrival. The name on the claim form must match the name on the confirmed reservation for each room.

If we verify the availability and eligibility of the qualifying lower price, we'll match the qualifying lower price PLUS give you 25% off the room price for the entire booking.

2:45 am

You

I think I have provided that data during this chat. Give me the discount now.

Robb

I am sorry I will not be able to price match as we do not have rooms with non refundable deals as well.

You

Goodbye Robb. have a nice day.