

# Hotel Internet charges add up for travelers

By Christopher Elliott

As I reviewed my hotel bill at Harveys Lake Tahoe recently, I noticed something unusual: Instead of charging me \$11 a day for wireless Internet, they were asking for three times as much.

“This can’t be right,” I told the clerk.

She called a manager, who firmly explained it was right: Harveys charges for wireless access not by room, but by device. Although it isn’t disclosed on its website, it is on the terms and conditions when you log in. I had glossed over it when I got online.

As for reducing my bill, the manager was equally firm in his “no”: The property outsourced its Internet to another company, and if I didn’t pay, Harveys would be on the hook for the full amount. The bill was paid, but I’m still puzzled that it could cost more to check email than to park my car.

A survey by market research firm BDRG suggests wireless Internet costs British hotel guests \$2.2 billion a year. Best Western, which offers free wireless access, released those numbers last week along with a petition to give guests free access.

The average hotel guest now pays an average of \$22 for wireless access, according to BDRG. The study also noted that some hotels that used to offer free access have now reverted to a paid model. At the same time, the need for a reliable wireless connection has “surged” in recent years, according to Tim Sander, BDRG’s research director.

*Christopher Elliott is the ombudsman for National Geographic Traveler magazine.*

**Read the whole story**