

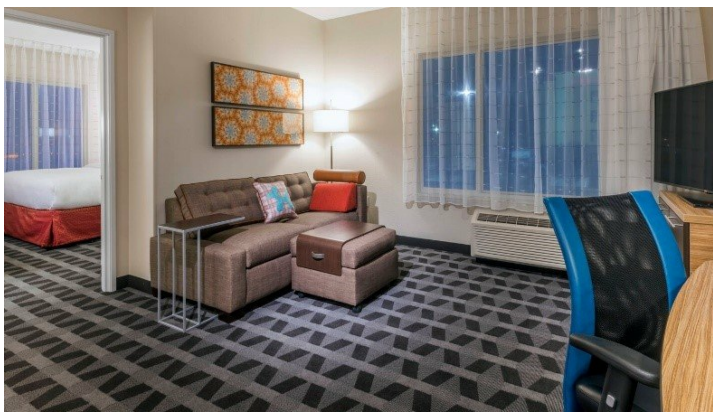
The Suite Spot for Family Travel: Development Insights for Attracting Summer Travel Demand

July 18, 2019 / By Daniel P. McCoy



As a hotel development consultant, my work experience offers my family some helpful insight, and plenty of annoying hotel-geek commentary, in planning our stays. My experience as a family traveler also informs my consulting perspective and helps provide a real-world basis for the advice I provide to clients.

The number one insight from my experience on the road with the fam is the value of suites. While typically considered in the context of extended-stay hotel demand, studio and one-bedroom suites offer traveling families much desired space. After hours upon hours crammed in a car together, most families need the extra room to spread out. One night in a standard limited-service room with three young children was enough to make the value proposition abundantly clear. Sitting in the bathroom, silently looking at my phone while waiting for children to fall asleep is not an ideal way to start a vacation. Extra or, better yet, separate space is definitely worth the rate premium over a standard room. We now plan our stops based on the availability of hotels that offer one-bedroom suites.



Source: Marriott.com (TownePlace Suites Hays, KS)

In addition to the extra space, an in-suite kitchenette is nearly a must-have for a multi-day stay. Kitchen facilities make the hotel room a functional base of vacation operations rather than just a place to crash for the night. A suite with a living area and kitchen offers an attractive option, compared to a traditional hotel room or an Airbnb rental. With an extended-stay style suite, families get the space and kitchen facilities of a residential rental, combined with the service, security, and amenities of a hotel.



Summary

As the summer travel season sets in, millions of families across the United States are setting out on their annual road trips. My family, fresh off a Spring Break trip from St. Louis to New Mexico and back, will be among those millions on our planned summer excursion to the Rocky Mountains.

1 Comments

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Source: Marriott.com (Residence Inn Branson, MO)

Speaking of amenities, the often-overlooked hotel swimming pool is another lifeline for traveling families. In my early days as a hotel consultant, I often viewed the indoor swimming pool with disdain. I couldn't imagine that guests actually used them and wondered how they could possibly be worth the upkeep and maintenance cost. I now firmly appreciate the utility and appeal of these roadside oases. After a day cooped up in the minivan, the hotel pool is the perfect outlet for my kids' pent-up energy and an ideal way to tire them out before bedtime. When there are multiple adequate options, I will always select the hotel with the best indoor pool.

These experiences as family travel coordinator have provided several valuable insights for hotel development:

- Family travelers may not be the primary guest profile for hotels in suburban or highway markets; however, the ability to successfully tap into this supplemental pool of demand can be a key to a successful development.
- Including a few suites in the room mix of a limited-service property or locating an extended-stay property within relative proximity to a highway can be a significant competitive advantage.
- Within family-friendly destination markets, extended-stay hotels may be a viable development option, even supplementing or substituting for traditional sources of long-term demand.
- An indoor pool can be a competitive differentiator in attracting demand from family travelers. Developers should think twice before nixing the pool from their plans.

About **Daniel P. McCoy**



Dan McCoy, MAI is the Managing Director and Senior Partner of the HVS St. Louis office. St. Louis is one of over 30 cities across North America where HVS has experts living and working, providing insights and solutions to clients. In the Midwest, HVS leaders are located in Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis, Nashville, Cincinnati, and Omaha, in addition to St. Louis. Dan, a native of St. Louis, earned his bachelor's degree from Truman State University in Missouri and has front-line hotel experience with Hilton and Denali Park Resorts. Dan is a Designated Member of the Appraisal Institute (MAI) and a certified general appraiser in Missouri and surrounding states. Contact Dan at (970) 215-0620 or [\[email protected\]](#).