

You called in your room request long in advance, gave your credit card information and the hotel confirmed by email a guaranteed reservation number. But, after a long, tiring flight, you arrive and the front desk clerk tells you there's no room for you. The lame excuses start. The hotel's all booked up solid, and many people who were supposed to check out decided to stay another night. So sorry. However, he can get you a room at a hotel nearby. Of course, the rate is a bit higher ... etc ... etc.



If that's your only choice, you may consider going to the other hotel, but not just yet. Don't get angry or demand to speak to the manager, because the clerk may be just following orders. However, be sure to tell the clerk that you're reporting this as a breach of contract, and you'll file a written complaint to authorities. Ask him to give you his name and title, as well as that of the manager.

Often, the clerk will very quickly study his/her computer, and before you can leave, tell you with a nervous smile a room just became available. If there are other guests nearby and witness your frustration, the clerk may even toss in a free breakfast and/or upgrade to a more expensive room than you've reserved. At the same low price, of course.

In some cases, the clerk was actually breaking the law in many states to deny you the confirmed room reservation. It could have been an attempt at the old bait and switch routine, and possibly the clerk and/or manager are in cahoots with the other hotel's staff. They could have an agreement to share the extra money you must plunk down for the upscale room at the other hotel.

The same demanding for your rights applies to air travel. We had a recent example of this happen to us. Our original flight left Fort Lauderdale four hours late because of mechanical trouble, and there was no weather involved. When we arrived in Las Vegas, we had missed our connection for the second leg of our trip.

When we applied at the airline desk, along with other frustrated passengers, we were told we'd be put on a wait list for the last flight of that night. We insisted that because we were not responsible for the delay, we should be on that flight. Just some excuses from the harried clerk.

Then we asked for the airline's passenger relations phone number to make a formal complaint. While we were calling, we were suddenly assigned seats on that next flight. Was it a miracle of good luck? No, it was just that we stood our ground and insisted on getting on that flight, and we won our case.

When traveling, know your rights, and when they're ignored, state your case calmly and

forcefully. You may be surprised how quickly your polite intimidations will be honored.