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## Showers seem to be winning the 'tub-o-war'

By Jayne Clark, USA TODAY

A familiar fixture is disappearing from some hotel bathrooms, though travelers might not miss it.



At the Beverly Hilton: Showers but no bathtubs in 200 of the Beverly Hills hotel's 570 rooms.

Beverly Hilton

It's the bathtub, and a growing number of hostleries are choosing to jettison this standard amenity in favor of an expanded, stand-alone shower.

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The reasons: Surveys have found that many guests, especially harried business travelers, favor a quick shower over a leisurely soak. Moreover, getting rid of the tub gives the illusion of more space in cramped bathrooms.

"It's definitely a trend, particularly in the upper end of the market," says Tom Callahan, head of the hospitality consulting firm PKF Consulting. "People like large bathrooms, and one way to give a feeling of space is if you have a large glass shower without the tub."

Among chain hotels moving in that direction:

- As part of a new room design unveiled last year, Marriott and Renaissance hotels now have the option of forgoing tubs and using the space for a shower stall and larger vanity. Most hotels making the change are putting stand-alone showers into about 60% of their guest rooms.

The chains' typical business traveler — men and women in their early 40s with six-figure incomes — "have a preference for a shower, and a more luxurious one vs. a compromised tub/shower combination," says Marriott's brand management vice president Mike Jannini.

- Hotel Indigo, the new Intercontinental brand that launched in 2004, was conceived as a showers-only lodging. The four-hotel chain (with an additional seven opening by year's end) strives for a residential feel. Tubs in existing bathrooms were ripped out and replaced with glass-paneled showers with teak benches.

- The Hilton New York, now in the final stages of a renovation, has done away with bathtubs in most rooms that have king beds. It has substituted an enlarged shower stall with a bench.

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The tubs remain in rooms with two double beds, which are popular among families.

- A major renovation last year at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills axed the tubs in 200 of its 570 rooms to give the 50-year-old bathrooms a more spa-like feel, says a spokesman.
- The 3-year-old Graves 601 Hotel Minneapolis has luxury appointments such as 42-inch plasma televisions and glass-etched headboards, but it lacks bathtubs in about 200 of its 255 rooms. Premium rooms have glass-and-stone showers with a five-head "power shower."

Intercontinental executive Jim Anhut characterizes the shift as yet another weapon in the "tub-o-war" in which hotels are attempting to rev up the luxuriousness of the bathroom. But there may be other objectives at hand.

One has to do with demographics and the difficulties that the coming glut of aging baby boomers might experience climbing in and out of a tub.

The other concerns hygiene. Anhut says bathtub cleanliness was an issue that came up in interviews while designing the concept for Indigo Hotels. "People said, 'I don't know who was in it before me. I don't know how it was cleaned. And I won't sit in it.'"

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