



Hacking Hotel Accommodations – How To Stay In 4 and 5 Star Hotels For An Average Of Just \$14 A Night, Anywhere In The World



SCOTT GRIMMER

**This interview is
conducted between
Brittany Lynch at
Idealmepublishing.com
and Drew Macomber
of Travelisfree.com**

Brittany Lynch: You and your wife have a really unique approach to travel. You have a hard budget each year spending nearly every night of year in hotel that you get for free. Could you tell us a little bit more about how you got into travel hacking and a bit more about your travel philosophy?

Drew Macomber: Well, originally I wanted to travel around and I was just going to hitchhike everywhere, and I actually started this process, and I want to go visit my friend Caroline. She just moved back to Ohio where she grew up. Long story short, we started dating, and I knew right away I wanted to marry her, but I didn't really have any money.

Through a long process of trying to look up tricks to travel for free, I learned about this guy who is buying \$1 coins on his credit card that earned miles. At the time you could buy batches of \$1,000 coins for \$1,000. If you earned one mile per dollar spent then you'd earned 1,000 miles, but the great thing was you could just deposit the coins right into your bank account. It was just a free way to earn miles and I was hooked. It's like my way of finding a way to travel for free and still be married, basically.

Brittany Lynch: What about your approach? You and your wife travel the world and you set a hard limit this year, I believe, and it was only spending \$20,000 a year. How do you accomplish that? That's flights, hotels, food, sightseeing, everything, right?

Drew Macomber: Yeah. I will say I know lots of people who travel maybe not for two people but people who travel on a similar budget who just stay in hostels and things like that. I wanted, basically, to improve my lifestyle, but to travel. We stay in four and five-star hotels and I like to eat out all the time.

Basically, the idea came from a hotel promotion, which I can talk about later, but I thought, "Wow. This one hotel promotion would give me 10 free nights for basically paying for three nights," and so I thought, "If I could do that all the time, I could stay in really nice hotels for cheaper than rent." The idea was really just to cover as many hotels as we can on points and to cover all the flights with

miles that we earned from credit cards. Otherwise, we're not too frugal the rest of the time, but we try to maintain that budget.

Brittany Lynch: Yeah. That's really, really cool. I think a lot of people just have no idea that this is possible, or they think that you have to sign up for dozens of credits cards or something along those lines, in order to make it happen.

One of the things that I really love on your blog is your series that you do, zero dollar trips, and you post about your past trip and write down exactly how you achieved it. One of the things that I noticed was you seem to earn your free nights through primarily three methods.

One: best rate guarantee.

Two: points and free night certificates.

Three: you referenced a lot booked when credit card giving free night or fifth night free.

Maybe let's start with the first one.

Can you walk me through what best rate guarantee is and how it works?

Drew Macomber: Yeah. With Best Rate Guarantee each hotel chain gives a guarantee that if you actually book with them and you find a rate that's lower elsewhere, they'll match that rate and give a discount. With Marriott, if you book on marriott.com and find a lower rate say on Expedia, they'll match it and give you the bonus that Marriott offers which is 25% off. If it was a \$200 room and you found it on Expedia for \$100, they'll change the rate so it's \$100 plus a 25% discount, so it would be \$75.

It gets interesting when you have bonuses. Where I'm interested is when you have a bonus that can give a free night. IHG and Choice Hotels they give an actual free night on your stay so they'll match the rate and make the first night free, but if it's only a one night stay, then that first night is just free. Similarly, Hilton gives a \$50 discount. Recently we stayed at a \$60 hotel in Turkey and they

matched the rate plus gave a \$50 discount, so it was really only \$10.

The details of that are basically that you actually have to book on whoever you're claiming the guarantee with. I actually have to book, in this case, on hilton.com, and then I don't need a screenshot, I don't need to go book on Expedia I just have to fill out a form and they actually have to go check and make sure that that rate is still alive. It's on their own time, if that makes sense.

Brittany Lynch: Yeah. If the rate disappears before they see it, then it wouldn't qualify.

Drew Macomber: Right. Then you're screwed. If you're really, really counting on it, then you should book a cancellable rate. That's what I say. For example, I stayed recently at a suite at the Intercontinental in Istanbul. I'd normally not pay hundreds of Euros for one night in Istanbul, so I wouldn't have booked a non-cancellable rate just on the chance that they

wouldn't approve the claim. Does that make sense?

Brittany Lynch: Yeah. Absolutely. The idea is that you have to book on the actual website, like Hilton or Intercontinental, and then fill up the claim form. They'll look at Expedia or any other of those sites to see where that cheaper rate is, and if it's still active, they'll issue whatever their reward, or whatever you want to call is, to you. If not, you've got the cancellable rate so you can still cancel your room without being penalized.

Drew Macomber: Right. That's important because, I would say, two main reasons or maybe three reasons. One, the rate can go away. Two, sometimes they're just really strict and they read the terms and conditions differently than you. The other one would be that people often don't understand the terms and conditions when they're starting out, so they misunderstand some key element and then they go to claim, the guarantee.

For example, IHG and Choice you have to have it bookable in the same currency that you book the hotel in. Some people might not realize that the website is just translating it for them but it's actually charging your card in Euros and not U.S. dollar or whatever it is. Anyway, there could be one small detail you miss, and so I just say don't be over confident and make sure it's cancellable.

Brittany Lynch: Especially starting out as you're getting familiar with the rules. You mentioned two of the rules there. Are there consistent set of rules for the different chains or do they vary by chain?

Drew Macomber: They do vary by chain, but I'll give you just the basics, which would be that it has to be the exact same room type. This would be king bed, if it has a view of the beach or city view, things like that. It has to be the exact same. You have to compare the exact same room. Also, is your rate different? Does your rate include extra points? Does it include

breakfast? Does it include any extra amenities? They need to match.

This is the one that can be really fickle or not, but the cancellation deadline. One, in general, you can't book a cancellable rate and compare it to an advanced purchase rate, which are often cheaper. Similarly, you need to make sure the cancellation time matches. Sometimes one hotel can be cancelled two days in advance and then on another site it will say seven days in advance, so it's a much stricter time.

Also sometimes if it's prepaid or if you pay at the hotel, and then the big one is, this is obvious, but just to make sure that it's the bookable after taxes rate that you're comparing and you're not just on the first page. You can take a look at this blog post for more details on details specific to each hotel chain : <http://travelisfree.com/2014/07/07/hotel-best-rate-guarantees-2/>

Brittany Lynch:

One question that just popped in my mind is let's say Intercontinental where you, in theory, could get a free night. Let's say you want to go for five nights, could you book five different reservations and do it five nights in a row or do they have limitations on that?

Drew Macomber:

Right. No, you can't do that, technically. If you just did that on your account, they'd just decline the second one. Anything back to back is going to be considered one stay. IHG has a rule which is if it's either within, this is the minutia, each hotel chain is different, but in this case you can't do in the same city within the same seven days. Choice is you can't have any at all within the same 30 days. I mean, you can't have more than 1 at all within the same 30 days.

There are people who have done back to back, like husband and wife or something like that. Normally, I'm not the paranoid one, but in this case I don't want to get my account shut down and I know the rules do say one per household. The funny thing is our address is different on each of our accounts, so we probably wouldn't have any issues.

Brittany Lynch: Just to play it safe that's what you do.

Drew Macomber: Yeah.

Brittany Lynch: What are the chains that offer BRGs and which ones do you use most?

Drew Macomber: Yeah. They almost all offer them like Hyatt, Starwood, Marriott, they all offer about a 20 to 25% discount. Tend to use IHG a lot because a free night in an expensive city can save a lot of points or cash. Whenever I'm in an expensive city for a short amount of time, I tend to go for one. I sometimes go for Choice, but I find that to be a little more of a hassle. I do Hilton often if I can find, I guess,

\$60, \$70 a night hotel and get a \$50 discount. I often do that. You actually can find \$60, \$70 Hiltons in airport hotels in Turkey.

Brittany Lynch: Yeah. What would be your approach for actually finding and booking a BRG?

Drew Macomber: I recently did a blog post on this here:
<http://travelisfree.com/2015/09/02/sites-to-find-best-rate-guarantees/> .
Anyways, sites like hotelscombined.com, AllTheRooms, things like that. Kayak is a more basic example where they pull in a ton of different hotel rates. Kayak is a really easy example because you can even sort or search just for a specific hotel chain or even a specific hotel.

On my computer in the browser in one tab I'm going to have open the hotel I want to get a free night at, and then I'll go to Kayak, or HotelsCombined, or AllTheRooms, or Trivago, or one of these that search multiple sites, and then see if there's a lower rate on one of these.

Now you do have to actually click through, just like quick click through to make sure the room rate is going to be the same post-tax. I tend to try to do it pretty quickly because if you just obsess over it and it's not there ... it's either there or not and if you spend two hours doing it, chances are it's not going to be too much better than spending two minutes doing it. I try to get open a tab on two different sites, check a bunch and if it's there, I book on the hotel website and then file a claim, and if it's not there, then I might come back in another week. I'm a last minute booker.

Drew Macomber: I don't have too many weeks, but the point is I might come back one week out, two weeks out, three weeks out, something like that.

Brittany Lynch: To check for it.

Drew Macomber: The rates tend to change coming closer to the time.

Brittany Lynch:

I guess I have two questions on that topic. One, how long does it normally take you when you are doing it to go through it? Because I think you made a good point about not taking two hours or however long because at a certain point you have to, I guess, value your time and is it worth it? The second question is how often are you able to actually find a lower rate elsewhere and get your claim approved?

Drew Macomber:

It's a learning curve, I guess. I used to spend too much time and now I spend a few minutes on it. The irony of that is that when I first started out it felt like all of mine got declined and I would be annoyed, but then I would read it and it's like okay, technically that is the rule. I guess I decided to learn trial and error as opposed to reading it first. I got declined for a high percentage. Now I really don't get declined as much and I go through the process much quicker.

I'm not too sure what I would recommend. I guess if it's your first

time figuring it out, then maybe walking through and seeing the post-tax. Only walking through it then you understand it, but once you understand it, I mean I really do, I only spend five minutes. I fill out the form pretty quickly. I put a note in my Google Calendar just so I know I have a booking, and I even put the word cancel. If I don't have anything, then I just cancel it.

Also if I think I'm right. This is actually where you waste a lot of time. This is actually a good tip. I have thought of this. A lot of people will email back and say, "No, this isn't true. The terms and conditions say this." If you actually think you're right and then you really are wasting your time and what you should do is just cancel and re-book and fill out another form because you have to submit the claim within 24 hours of booking. If they've taken a while to get back to you, then I just cancel. If it's still there, then I just re-book, but you're not going to win argument.

Brittany Lynch: Right, okay. That is a good thing to keep in mind because it's probably a lot of people's natural instinct to respond back and debate it a little bit. It's good to hear how long it takes you to actually go through this process because, I guess, in my mind, as I was reading this information I was thinking, "Maybe it's going to take a few hours each claim," so that's a really good insight into how you run your day-to-day operations, travel operations.

Drew Macomber: If it's something I really actually need, then I will check back more often. I don't spend more time on it in one sitting. You know what I mean.

Brittany Lynch: Yeah. Speaking of response time, how long does it normally take them to get back to you on whether they've approved or declined it?

Drew Macomber: In theory, it should be within 24 hours. I would say usually within 24 hours and that's with most chains. Sometimes IHG takes a little bit longer.

Brittany Lynch: It should be relatively quickly for most of them.

Drew Macomber: Yeah. Yeah, I would say about 24 hours is usual.

Brittany Lynch: Let's talk about hotel promos. What is a hotel promo and how do they work?

Drew Macomber: This is what I was referencing that got me into the whole thing. This is when I first said, "I think we could live in hotels cheaper than paying rent" It can go both ways. Typically, what I mean by it is earning points. There are often offers to earn 50,000 points. IHG has been running this thing where you get 50,000 points or 2 free nights and new accounts, generally, can do the task. They have really complicated promos. That's probably a bad example. Anyway, most of them are complete three

nights and get X amount of points, X amount of bonus points.

Let me start over. Normally, a hotel is going to give you 10 points per dollar spent. Every hotel chain almost every quarter gives a bonus. Hilton it might be triple points this quarter. Once every year or maybe a few times a year, a hotel chain has a really, really great promo. Lately, IHG has had a lot of great promos where in one promo I've earned 60, 70,000 points and I've done it in 2 or 3 stays.

If there's ever a time where I say, "Wow, I can earn a lot of points in a few stays," those are the ones we're talking about. A lot of points is relative to how many free nights you can get out of it. The first time I did this I got 50,000 points for completing 3 paid nights and I was in Asia at the time. I just chose the cheapest hotels. \$50 hotel in Bangkok and ...

Brittany Lynch: It doesn't matter where you stay. It could be New York or Bangkok.

Drew Macomber: Yeah. It cost me maybe \$150 to complete my 3 nights and then I got about 50,000 points. I actually got more than that, but the bonus was 50,000 points. Then the next quarter they ran a promotion where a number of hotels were only 5,000 points a night, and so for our anniversary we went to Fiji and stayed at the Intercontinental Fiji. It was going for about \$400 a night, but we had enough points for 10 nights. We spent 8 nights, so it was 40,000 points. We had a 3 paid nights that got us 50,000 points and we spend 40,000 of those points at a really luxurious hotel in Fiji.

Basically, if you think about it, considering that I needed the paid stays in the first place and paid \$150 for those, it's like \$150 for those three stays and for the eight stays in Fiji, and I still had points left over. That's a best case scenario.

Brittany Lynch: Yeah. I would say so. Not a bad exchange. That's a general idea about how promos work. Where can

you find the hotel promos? Do you just keep tabs on the hotel websites?

Drew Macomber: Yeah. In this case, I get emails from the hotels. I generally keep up with the hotels' promotions pretty easily. If you just want to browse hotel promotions that go on each quarter, there's a website called frequentflyerbonuses.com. You can browse by chain. They might have on their homepage the best that they think are going on this quarter, but it's just some guy, I think, who keeps up this blog, but it really has every hotel chains' promos all the time up to date, and sometimes you'll notice that you qualify for more than one promotion on a stay?

Brittany Lynch: Sometimes promotions are only for people who open an account for the first time and other times can participate.

Drew Macomber: Yeah, sure. Like I said, most all the hotel chains run just a promotion every quarter and it's just their marketing scheme. They're buying ads to the page that says get 50,000

points or whatever. They regularly have a promotion every quarter and their members count on that. Other times they run promotions because they actually have goals like, I don't know, maybe tourism is low in Thailand after an event or something. I'm totally making that up.

If they have another promotion where they're trying to stimulate a chain or something or a new brand, it's possible that they would have the quarterly promotion and maybe some other promotion where you're earning double points and, you're right, maybe a new member bonus. Most of the time it's very small so it's rare that it lines up.

Like I said, if you check out Frequent Flier Bonuses, if you just pick a random chain, it will be a good example of how many promotions truly go on at one time. At least once a year there's one time where I'm like, "Wow. There's a lot of promotions within this one chain."

Club Carlson when they ended their credit card everyone was pissed, so they ran this promotion where you got 30,000 points on your next stay, and it was in the middle of their triple points promotion, anyways. There are just times where there are a lot of promotions that you qualify for at once.

Brittany Lynch:

That answers my next two questions which is, do you ever stack promotions, and it sounds like that is absolutely possible. You just have to be aware of what's going on.

Drew Macomber:

Yeah. You have to enroll in them too to activate the promotion.

Brittany Lynch:

Okay, and enroll in them.

A few of the best programs are :

Marriot Rewards
Club Carlson
IHG Rewards Club
Starwood Preferred Guests
Hilton HHonors
Hyatt Gold Passport
Omni Select Guest

Kimpton Karma Rewards
Fairmont President's Club

Are there promos ever so good their worth a mattress run and what is a mattress run? You did touch on this a little, but maybe if you could elaborate a tiny bit.

Drew Macomber: Yeah. A mattress run is basically when a promotion is so good and you know you can get 10 free nights out of it, or some large quantity of nights, or a lot of points that would be valuable in some way, and you have a cheap hotel near you that you don't need but would get you all those points or would get you the free nights.

For example, actually, this is another example of promotions, there is a promotion where this chain of hotels was 30 some Euros a night after taxes and it was also during a time where promotion was through points was to get two free nights at any hotel in the world. I got a room in every hotel in that city and we Ubered around and checked in.

Each of us got a room, I remember, at this one hotel. We already had a hotel in the city and we're driving outside the town to both check in to rooms because, basically, it was super cheap and we would get two free nights from a couple of these stays.

I'm now using those free nights to book a thousand dollar hotel in Bora Bora. Because I stay in so many hotels I can almost always use the hotels, but this is a case where the promotion was ending. It was a limited time offer and the hotels were so cheap there that even if I was staying there or I would wait until I needed to stay later, it would be hard for me to get it that cheap, so I decided to book a ton of rooms in the city.

Brittany Lynch:

You bring up a good point. One of the things that Scott is a big believer of is reverse engineering your trip. Knowing where you want to go first them collecting the miles. It might be more important when it comes to flying, but with hotels are you ever

worried about points being devalued or anything along those lines where for someone who doesn't live in a hotel every night of the year, would you advise that they have some idea of where they want to go and how they're going to use the points before doing something like a mattress run?

Drew Macomber: Especially with the mattress run, I guess the reason to do it is that you know ... like in this case, you really don't need the paid night, so the reason you're doing it is for the points, and I know that my two free nights are going to be more valuable than the €60 I paid for the couple nights. I guess it's pretty rare that a deal is that good, so in general it's probably now worth it.

Brittany Lynch: You just want to take advantage of it.

Drew Macomber: I will say, however, it probably depends where you want to go. If you're going to Europe, if you're going to Paris or London, every hotel chain is there. I'm going to Namibia

next week and there's one chain of hotel in the whole country. It's the Hilton in the capital.

In general, if you're earning free nights it probably doesn't matter because you can estimate the value of your free night even if you don't have plans. It's hard to know the value of your points if you can't look and say, "This would get me this many free nights," because 10,000 IHG points could be one free night in a less popular city or something, or it won't get you anything in Hong Kong or Sydney. It will be completely useless.

I'll agree with Scott. If it's points then I'd like to know what is the value based on where I would like to go the next year, and I do that by how many free nights. That's my currency is like how many free nights am I going to get? I don't really care about the value of the points, if that make sense.

Brittany Lynch: Yeah. That does make sense. There's a few things I could ask here, but I'll

focus on point. When it comes the earning points, what hotel chains do you sign up for to earn the points? I'll start with that question. What are your top five hotel chains?

Drew Macomber: I can't say I'm a loyal person really. If there's ever a time I can get a lot of free nights for little to no money, then I'd do that. I would say that IHG and Club Carlson have the best promotions for paid stays to earn free nights. This isn't a very helpful answer, but all the programs are good if you take how many points you're going to need for your trip.

Like Scott's advice, if you know where you'd want to go and you can easily look up on that website, how many points is this going to cost me in that city. Then you can take the credit card bonuses and divide by that number of points and you get the number of free nights you get.

If I'm in Cape Town and the Club Carlson card is 85,000 points and the hotels here cost like 40,000 of Club

Carlson, then I can get 2 free nights. With the IHG card if it's 70,000 points and the hotels here cost 15,000 points, then that's like whatever that is, six or five free nights, almost five.

Brittany Lynch: That makes sense. Just start with the end in mind if you have travel plans coming up. Speaking of credit cards with bonus points, we talked about that a lot in Scott's guide regarding earning points for flights. Are there maybe three top credit cards you recommend that someone sign up for if they're looking to earn points or free night certificates for hotels?

Drew Macomber: Yeah. Definitely like what I was just saying. If you're thinking about points and if you know where you're going to go, you can just divide the points offered the credit card by the points needed. In general, I'd say for people who really, really, want high-end hotels, the Hyatt card and the Fairmont card for two free nights anywhere.

If you're planning a trip to Paris or London or whatever, two free nights

doesn't sound like a lot. I do over 300 a year, but considering how expensive even the points hotels are in London, two free nights can be really good and they'll be super nice hotels.

Otherwise, my favorite card is the IHG card. The IHG card you can get it for 70 to 80,000 points usually and the hotels range from 10 to 50,000, but you get 5% of your points back when you use them. IHG has a sale every two months where they put out a list of hotels that are 5,000 points a nights. That's a promo, but you could potentially get 14 nights out of the credit card.

Then the other thing about the credit card is the annual fee is waived for the first year, but then it's \$49 a year, and if you pay the annual fee you get a free night at any hotel. It's only \$49 but if you are in Paris, the Intercontinental Hong Kong would be €400 a night, or Hong Kong, or Sydney, or Bora Bora. That's the only credit card I really keep paying the annual fee on because it's \$49, and

because you actually get a free night every year, and I get 10% of the points I earn back. I would say that's probably my favorite hotel card.

Brittany Lynch:

That does sound like a really good deal and the annual fee is a lot lower than other credit card offers I've see for sure. It sounds like you play a diverse strategy where their free night certificates are great from maybe those really expensive hotels, as you mentioned, in Paris, or Hong Kong, or Bora Bora, and points are usually better for cities where you can get 10 or 15,000 points per night, or if IHG releases are less 5,000 points a night. Would you say that's basically right?

Drew Macomber:

Yeah, that's totally my strategy. It's like if there are cheap points hotels, particularly good value, there's a number of hotels that I could list that are really cheap on points, category one, category two hotels, but they're pretty expensive. If you found one of those in a nice city, like Budapest, then I tend to use my points that

way. In big cities that are really expensive, then I tend to use free nights like you say, or best rate guarantees. If it's also an expensive city I try to get a best rate guarantee for a free night.

The only time I change that up is when I really see a promotion. If it's point breaks, like that list of 5,000-point hotels with IHG, then I don't really have a plan. The best plan is to chase the promotion. The same thing on the earning side. Last quarter this is what actually happened. I earned two free nights plus 50,000 points for 3 nights of paid stays. If there's ever a promotion like that, then I don't really care [00:40:00] what city I'm in or whatever. I tend to just pay for it unless there's some absurd reason not to.

Brittany Lynch: Yeah. That makes a lot of sense. I don't know if you have these stats off hands, but if you have an estimate of how many nights in 2014 you stayed in a hotel, and of those nights, what percent were from

points, what percent were from promos or credit card perks, and what percent from BRGs.

Drew Macomber: I stayed at 99 different hotels last year, and 62% of our stays were with points, and 38% were paid for with cash. It ends up being close to a million hotel points and \$7,000, and that's pretty much for a year of hotel stays. It worked out to about \$14 per hotel per night.

Brittany Lynch: Within the points are you putting your BRGs in that category?

Drew Macomber: Yeah. I don't have it in this post, unfortunately.

Brittany Lynch: That's okay.

Drew Macomber: I broke down what hotel chains I used. I would say BRGs are a once a month kind of thing.

Brittany Lynch: Okay. That's good to know. Obviously, you do it so much that it gives us a good point of reference. One thing that we didn't touch on earlier is are the credit card perks

you referenced a lot, free fifth night, or credit card gave a free stay, what is that? Where is that coming from?

Drew Macomber: That was a little confusing because that credit card went away. Club Carlson gave a benefit when anytime you redeemed points they give you a free night. Everyone would just book two nights at a time, so it was basically always half off, but that benefit just went away. Most program, almost most, do a fifth night free and it's just built into their program. Hilton, you have to be an elite member but you get elite membership when you have a credit card. The others like Marriott or whatever, when you price out five nights they just average, it just makes you pay for it.

Brittany Lynch: A lot of the credit cards and/or higher loyalty programs give you that additional perk.

Drew Macomber: Exactly. Yeah.

Brittany Lynch: Just a few more questions. You've been really awesome so far, so I appreciate it.

Drew Macomber: No worries.

Brittany Lynch: What are hotel discount codes and where could you find them?

Drew Macomber: There's a flyer talk thread you can follow here:
<http://www.flyertalk.com/forum/hotel-deals/934858-general-list-codes-promos-orbitz-hotels-com-expedia-travelzoo-etc.html>

Drew Macomber: Yeah. When you go to the miles and points, when you go the hotel deals, it's usually the first thing. It says general list of codes and promos. In this case, it could mean a few different things, but this could be what we're talking about. In this case, there are sometimes promo codes that give \$50 off of an Expedia stay when you spend \$300, but multiple times within the last year, Orbitz has run one where they give \$100 off, a \$100 stay or more. I don't know how they plan to make

money on that. We would just book \$100 a night hotels one night at a time, so I just had to check in everyday, but it was pretty nice.

Most of the times they're pretty lame, but this thread is always being updated. Most of the time I would say it's 20% off. At the very least you can get 20% off on just a regular booking, which isn't a big deal, but it's usually better than Hotwire price line, anyways. There's usually some kind of promo code, but I really keep an eye on that thread because sometimes they're just something really awesome like \$100 off.

Brittany Lynch: Yeah. That's a really valuable one.

Drew Macomber: Yeah. That one's nice. I don't know if this is up your lane, but there's a site called Roomer, R-O-O-M-E-R, Travel and it just re-sells rooms. If someone's prepaid for a room and they can't use it, instead of being screwed they sell it back to Roomer and Roomer sells it at a discount.

Brittany Lynch: It's such a great idea.

Drew Macomber: Yeah. It's like Airbnb of prepaid rooms. I've never gotten one yet, just because I can never, so maybe that's not good sign. I really like it, so I recommend it even though I haven't used it.

Brittany Lynch: Yeah. I think you mentioned in one of your blog posts that they just don't have as much inventories. You have to be in city where the deal is or knowing you're going.

Drew Macomber: You need to be lucky, I guess.

Brittany Lynch: Yeah, exactly. It's such a cool concept I would love to see that grow even larger. Final question, I promise. Since you stay in hotels so much, what are some tips for enjoying your stay the most or getting the most out of an actual stay unrelated to points? Maybe free

food or drinks, late check out, other upgrades or services.

Drew Macomber: This is still related to points, but I'll throw this one in just because I thought of it when I saw that question. It never hurts to have a status. I try to tell people not to be too entitled about it because people can act like dicks just because their card says gold on it or whatever. I'm getting free breakfast tomorrow morning at a really nice hotel and that normally wouldn't be free. At the last hotel we were at we had club lounge access.

This is a good example. We were at a Hilton and because of the credit card, we have gold status, and because of our gold status they gave us access to the executive lounge where they had free drinks and food in the evening. It was actually pretty nice. They had nice desserts, and calamari, and chicken, and whatnot. That was in the evening and we had free breakfast.

That couldn't be two meals and I'm treated all special just because I have a credit card. I didn't do anything to earn it. The other thing, actually I got long-winded but this is what I most recommend, there's a site called StatusMatcher and it's just a reference, but in general I just try to remind people that you can match from one status to another. I might have been able to get gold status because I have platinum status from the IHG card, and even though that's pretty worthless, I might have been able to status match to something else. Then you can just go around in that circle. You get a lot of benefits for a lot of nothing.

Brittany Lynch: Right. Hotels try to incentivize you to come to their hotel with that higher status.

Drew Macomber: Exactly. Yeah.

Brittany Lynch: That's really cool. I didn't know that.

Drew Macomber: They assume that you're staying in hotels a lot if you have gold status or whatever, so they want your business. That's one tip. As far as with value that's not points related, I have opinions. I always try downtowns so that I don't have to pay for transit and I walk everywhere, but probably not as good] as breakfast.

Brittany Lynch: Yeah. What I really like about your approach is, like you said from the very beginning, there's people who maybe have the budget that you have but they're staying in hostels. I love that you're not skimping out on the experience of the travel. You like to stay downtown, and pretty good accommodation, and you sustain it over a very long period of time, so I think that that's just so cool. That was really my last question. Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me Drew

Drew Macomber: No Problem, my pleasure.