

Cross Current

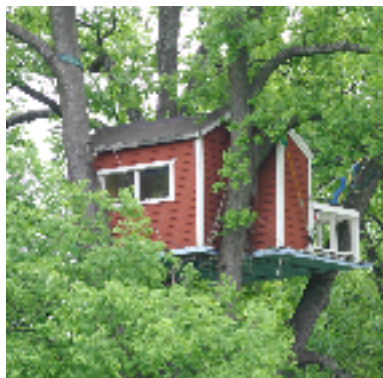


Real help for real life

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Rooms For Improvement



Even the world's most bizarre hotels are very accommodating.


Take the Hotell Hackspett in Vasteras, Sweden. One of the smallest inns anywhere, it has room for only one twin bed. But what sets the place apart is its location. The Hackspett (*Woodpecker*) is a tree house 30 feet above a city park and you can only reach it by rope ladder. Food is delivered by a basket and pulley. Though cramped, the hotel still has a kitchen, a toilet and even a porch.

For those who want something a little more expansive — for body and mind — there's the Hotel Filosoof in Amsterdam. This Dutch inn has 38 rooms, each dedicated to a different philosopher, including Aristotle, Marx and Nietzsche. There are appropriate murals, carvings and quotations, and breakfast comes on placemats featuring famous philosophical sayings.

If that's not your style, consider The Old Jail in Mount Gambier, Australia. A state prison from 1866 to 1995, the facility hasn't changed much. Showers are still communal and guests sleep on cots, four to a cell, either with strangers or family. But these days, the cell doors can be opened from the inside.

At Sweden's Utter Inn (Otter Inn) on Lake Malaren, guests enter via a cottage floating on the lake then go down ten feet into an underwater "reverse aquarium". Each room is dry but enveloped by water and fish that are easily seen through wall-to-wall windows.

Or how about the Kakslauttanen Hotel in Nordkap, Finland? Though a few customers sleep in heated glass igloos, most pay to stay in real igloos of ice and snow. The huts have no light or heat, except for down-filled sleeping bags. Also on site is a frigid swimming pool,



*Even if your life isn't
the very picture of
Christ, you are still
his masterpiece!*

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the largest smoke sauna in the world, and a restaurant constructed entirely from snow, a facility that has to be rebuilt every year.

If we use those ingenious inns as a metaphor for our temporary stay here on earth, we can learn something from each, beginning with the Swedish tree hotel. Christians, after all, must live in the real world so we can help each other and those around us when life gets tough. But spiritually, we must also stay above the fray, finding alone-time to connect with God through the ladder of prayer and worship. Paul tells us to set our hearts and minds on things above. *"For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ... So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you."* (Col. 3:1,5). Then, when we go back into the world, we remember who we are. *"Whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord."* (v.17)

As Bob Dylan once wrote in a song, "Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna have to serve somebody." Even if we don't have a formal or clearly defined philosophy of life, we all live for someone or something, adopting a code that matches our perspective. We need to be holy and wholly behind Christ. *"Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense... For in Christ lives all the fullness of God... So you also are complete through your relationship with Christ..."* (Col. 2:8)

When we find that sense of completion, our stay here takes on a whole new meaning. As someone wise once said, the only difference between a prison and a monastery is choice. Life is hard but — when we know who we are, why we're here, and where we're going — we control the cell door. We no longer have to stay locked inside our guilt and regret, envy and anger, or our sin and self-deception. Freedom is open to us, from the inside.

And it's imperative we take advantage of it because, at least from time-to-time, we're on display in a reverse aquarium with friends and family watching to see if this faith stuff really works. The good news is, it does — when we're immersed in God's love and power.

Likewise, anyone can live in cold, dark conditions when you know it's only for a short time. Like Finland's snow restaurant, earthly existence is melting away. It lasts only a season. But thanks to our salvation, our room in the grandest Hotel of all is already booked. So with reservations, and no reservation, we can check out anytime.