



Interviews.
Insider tips for creating a successful concierge service.



We catch up with Sylvia de San Cristóbal, Front Office Manager at popular Amare Marbella Beach Hotel in Spain, to get her top tips on creating a great concierge service no matter the size of your hotel and some of the lessons she's learned along the way

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Topic: [Guest experience](#)

Even if your hotel doesn't have the budget to support an extra member of staff, you can still design a concierge-style service. Sylvia Desan Cristóbal, who leads a 10-strong team of receptionist-concierges at adults-only [Amare Marbella Beach Hotel](#) in southern Spain, shares her tips on how hoteliers of any size can do this.



Sylvia de San Cristóbal, Front Office Manager at Amare Marbella Beach Hotel

"Our 236-room hotel receives a wide variety of guests," says Cristóbal. "Honeymooners, golf groups, couples celebrating anniversaries, hen parties, and holidaymakers just here for the beach or for a spa break. So we adapt our offerings to suit each guest."

Seizing the opportunity

But small hoteliers have an advantage here in that most have a more defined clientele, which makes it easier to tailor a few key packages.

Perhaps you host mainly business travellers and retired couples during the week, and young families at the weekends. Thinking about who your typical guests are and when they're staying can help sharpen your focus.

"What they want to do often depends on the age of the guests and the time of year. In spring, for example, many of our guests are less interested in the beach, preferring cultural experiences – such as day trips to Seville, three hours away. We have arranged this offering with local companies, who pick guests up – often in the same vehicle as guests from nearby hotels – then take them to Seville for guided tours."

"You can also call or email each guest in advance, and have a conversation with them, then you will know exactly what kind of trip they have in mind," suggests Cristóbal.

If they're interested in golf, for example, you might send them a list of nearby golf courses with prices and details of how to book a tee time. Another tactic used by some hoteliers is to browse guests' public social media feeds to see what their interests are. If you notice that a lot of your guests are ardent football fans, you can provide details

Click. Takeaway

Sylvia Desan Cristóbal, Front Office Manager at Amare Marbella Beach Hotel, says her three essential readymade packages if she were to open her own hotel would be:

- A curated restaurant list
- A selection of day trips
- And car-rental and airport transfer services

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see what their interests are. If you notice that a lot of your guests are ardent football fans, you can provide details of how to book tours of a famous local stadium.

Keeping things simple

To simplify your services, Cristóbal suggests devising a focused selection of standard packages – such as day trips, adventure sports and spa days. Then if the guest says they just want to relax while staying with you, you can send them your ‘Relax’ selection, which might include a special discount you’ve negotiated with a nearby spa, plus a list of your favourite cafes for lounging around in the afternoon. And when it comes to restaurant recommendations – an essential for every hotel – Cristóbal points out that you should think hyperlocal.



‘Don’t just send a menu or link’, says Cristóbal.

“Try all the places within walking distance of the hotel – most people don’t want to spend their evenings in a car or on public transport – then compile a list of the best options. Plus add in a selection of a few special restaurants slightly further away, especially those that offer excellent regional cuisine,” says Cristóbal.

And don’t just send a menu or link, she adds. Explain what the food, atmosphere and dining experience is like. Someone visiting on business is unlikely to appreciate having a lunch meeting at a café rammed with children, for example.

“No matter what you suggest, you must try everything yourself first. That’s the only way you can explain to guests how long it takes, give them insider tips and tell them the best time to visit. And it needn’t cost you anything. Most restaurants and service providers will let you try out their experience for free if you explain that you’re putting together a concierge selection for your guests,” says Cristóbal.

Creating meaningful relationships

Many hotels that don’t have concierges put up huge banks of leaflets for guests to browse, but Cristóbal thinks this is a bad idea. “Not only do they make the décor unattractive, but guests have no idea which ones to start with, so it’s overwhelming,” she explains. “Instead, keep leaflets and information behind the desk, then after talking to a guest about their interests, give them a small selection, explaining why you think they’d enjoy each one.”

Creating relationships with exclusive venues, from private gyms and country clubs to restaurants and nightclubs with great reviews, can also help give your hotel the edge over neighbouring hotels. Approach the venue managers, explain the type of guest you’re likely to send them, and see if they’ll allow your guests access, perhaps by paying a small day fee, or notifying you when a guest cancels a last-minute reservation at a popular restaurant.

If Cristóbal was to open her own small hotel and could only create three essential readymade packages, she’d offer:

- A curated restaurant list
- A selection of day trips
- And car-rental and airport transfer services

Beyond that, she’d give suggestions tailored to each client after a conversation with them.

Providing these concierge-style services can have a real impact on loyalty and word-of-mouth recommendations, says Cristóbal. She adds: “If a guest knows they’re going to get insightful advice on what to do, where to go and where to have dinner, they’re more likely to come back themselves – and to recommend your hotel to others.”