Postcard Inn on the Beach

Towel Tracker drastically reduces towel loss, simplifies towel service, and increases guest touchpoints at retro boutique hotel on Florida’s Gulf Coast.

Postcard Inn on the Beach is a 196 room boutique hotel located in St. Pete Beach, Florida. It has been described as “surfer-cool” (Travel+Leisure Magazine) and “seaside chic” (USA Today), with a “distinct hipster sensibility” (CNN Travel) and a “casual, come as you are vibe” (Conde Naste Traveller). Postcard Inn’s amenities include a large outdoor pool and courtyard, a beachfront bar and grill, indoor and outdoor meeting and event space, and a powder sand beach on the Gulf of Mexico.

The Pool Towel Situation
Before Towel Tracker, pool attendants signed out towels to guests. Postcard Inn’s Front Officer Manager Todd Casper explained, “We had a log sheet where all of the towels were logged out. When the towels were returned, they were all logged back in. It was very much a paper process, and it was labor intensive. Front desk employees were also involved in checking out towels when it was slower. This wasn’t very efficient, and we were always running out of towels because many people think, ‘Hey, these are great towels, they would look nice in my bathroom, and at my pool at home.’ So we were going through a lot of towels that weren’t getting returned.”

The Solution
In autumn 2018, a Towel Tracker was installed on Postcard Inn’s pool deck, which sits adjacent to the beach and waterfront. Its beach-themed wrap complements the hotel’s overall décor, and easy-to-read signs explain exactly how to take and return towels, as well as the fee for unreturned towels. Casper commented, “Since we’ve had Towel Tracker, our towel theft has dropped drastically. We haven’t had to place an order for replacement towels, because they’re getting returned.”

Additional Benefits
• Only registered guests can access pool towels
Postcard Inn’s beachfront bar and grill is a popular hangout for local residents and other people who walk in off the beach. Before Towel Tracker, some of these non-guests found a way to check out and take home pool towels. Casper explained, “They would stay here once and keep a key card after they checked out. Then they would come back every weekend, show their key card, and they were able to get towels.” With Towel Tracker, only registered guests can access clean towels. When they scan their active key cards on Towel Tracker’s RFID reader, the towel cabinet unlocks, and they can then take as many towels as they need. Inactive key cards cannot do this. Thus, Casper observed, “This problem has been virtually eliminated.”

• Increases guest touchpoints
“An unexpected benefit of Towel Tracker is the opportunity it gives you to interact with guests,” stated Casper. “They’re just kind of intrigued by it. They will frequently stop you and say, ‘Hey, how does this work? Is this magic?’ I love being able to talk to them and explain about the chip and how it actually works. It’s kind of a conversation piece with guests.”
Additional Benefits (continued)

**Reduced and redirected labor hours**
According to Casper, "Towel Tracker reduces labor, because you don’t have to have somebody out at the pool checking out towels. With Towel Tracker, it’s like there’s always somebody handing out towels 24/7. If the pool’s open, Towel Tracker’s open, and that makes staffing a lot easier.” He added, “It gives our employees more of an opportunity to walk around the pool, straighten up the chairs, clean up trash, and interact with the guests—so they can actually be more of a pool attendant instead of a towel attendant.”

**Simplifies pool towel management**
Before Towel Tracker, guests checked out towels by the pool on busy days and at the front desk on slower days. As a result, Casper stated, “We had towels going all over the place, to the front desk, down to the pool, and back and forth to housekeeping.” He added, “When a pool attendant wasn’t on duty, we’d put signage by the pool to come to the front desk. But with the design of our hotel, the pool’s on one side and the lobby is on the front. So they’d have to go from one side of the hotel to the other to get towels.”

Since Towel Tracker was installed, towels are always conveniently available on the pool deck, and overall towel management has become far simpler. “You get a text alert whenever the Towel Tracker either needs more towels or if the return bin is full,” explained Casper. “An employee wheels the return bin right into housekeeping. In housekeeping, they wash the towels and have the next return bin or clean towel rack ready to bring back to the Towel Tracker. It’s a nice, smooth process.”

**Turnkey towel solution**
Casper commented, “I was surprised by how easy the process was, using Towel Tracker. It just really made things so much easier. Once you get that process down, it’s very simple, it’s just another day and one less thing you have to worry about. The department almost manages itself.”

**Pool deck stays cleaner**
“Before Towel Tracker, we would see a lot of towels lying around the property,” stated Casper. “You’d have beach towels left in the rooms and you’d have them left on the chairs, where now, very rarely do you see that. The vast majority of the guests will return them to the Towel Tracker because they don’t want to pay the fee.”

**Summary**
At Postcard Inn on the Beach, Towel Tracker has drastically reduced towel loss, prevents non-guests from taking pool towels, ensures towels are available 24/7 right by the pool, reduces and redirects labor hours, increases staff interaction with guests, simplifies overall pool towel management, and reduces towel clutter around the pool deck. Front Office Manager Todd Casper enthusiastically stated, “The guests really love it, and the staff loves it. Everybody just loves it.”