

# What to Ask Your Hotel's Concierge: The 10 Best Questions

## Highlight

The key to an amazing vacation might just be asking your hotel concierge the right questions. These 10 questions below, compiled from dozens of senior concierges and travel insiders, will unlock concierges' often underappreciated abilities.

## The 10 Best Questions

[This is the shorthand version. The experts' suggested best answers are below.](#)

1. How can you help me? Are you the right person for my requests?
2. Can you help me with transportation arrangements?
3. Can you get me good tickets for this popular club, show, or sporting event?
4. Can you recommend a top restaurant for a special occasion?
5. Where's the best happy hour in town?
6. Could you give me the low-down on where locals like to dine and shop?
7. Can you recommend a private guide or driver?
8. Can you get my special snacks, gift wrap, or help me replace a forgotten item?
9. I need a babysitter/hair cut/dry cleaner/or spa treatment. Can you book this service for me?
10. Could you recommend a hidden treasure that most visitors overlook or don't know about?

## The Golden Question

The million-dollar question you almost forgot to ask.

How safe is the neighborhood around the hotel? Do you recommend walking around or not?

## The 10 Best Answers

### 1. How can you help me? Are you the right person for my requests?

Concierges' expertise, power connections, and willingness to help vary wildly. Size up this particular concierge at the outset of your conversation with a few chatty open-ended questions.

Nettie Brown, a concierge director in Toronto, told AskMen.com, “A lot of people think we’re simply there to give out guest maps with pen squiggles and extra pillows. But good hotel concierges are some of the most well-connected people in their cities.”

“Our job is to make the impossible happen,” Kenneth Abrisor, head concierge at the Mandarin Oriental in New York, told *Travel + Leisure Magazine*. “The reward is seeing a guest’s dream come true.”

## **2. Can you help me with transportation arrangements?**

This is a rather mundane -- but often critical -- request. Here are some related questions you might forget to ask:

- How much time do I need to get to the airport?
- Can you help me arrange airport transportation?
- Does the hotel have a shuttle service to the airport?
- If so, what’s the schedule? Cost?
- Does the shuttle always run on time?
- Which shuttle pickup time would you recommend?
- Will you book it for me?
- How can I catch a cab back to the hotel once I’m downtown?

## **3. Can you get me good tickets for this popular club, show, or sporting event?**

The best concierges have this little trick down pat. They can probably get last-minute tickets for sold-out shows or for the big game tonight.

But whenever your concierge pulls strings for you, it’ll cost you. You’ll pay more than face value of the tickets. Some goes to the ticket broker and some to the concierge. It’s also customary to tip the concierge well for these special favors. After all, this is your new best friend.

## **4. Can you recommend a top restaurant for a special occasion?**

Many concierges can produce fabulous dinner reservations like magic. But don’t be surprised if they get a kickback, which isn’t necessarily a bad thing. Often the concierge calls in the booking to make sure he gets credit. And you’ll get a great dinner, seating and service.

Travel expert Peter Greenberg explains in his book, *Hotel Secrets from the Travel Detective*, “Anyone who craved great Italian food knew to go to Giorgio Finocchiaro, a legendary concierge at New York’s Mark Hotel. He didn’t just recommend a specific restaurant; he called the place and recommended *you* to them. That act of personal follow-through made all the difference in the world.”

## **5. Where’s the best happy hour in town?**

Just like concierges know the best eateries and shows around, they can also recommend a great deal on drinks and appetizers. Even if a hotel or pub doesn’t offer complimentary meals, the concierge probably knows the local hot spots to socialize and connect over tasty d’ oeuvres.

## **6. Could you give me the low-down on where locals like to dine and shop?**

Depending on your circumstances, ask questions like these:

- Where can we eat that’s kid-friendly but not fast-food?
- What dishes do locals like? What’s authentic fare?
- What time do most locals eat dinner? (It can be as late as 10 pm.)
- How can I avoid crowds in the most popular places? Avoid tourist traps?
- Where’s the best place to buy local crafts, expensive gifts, jewelry, etc.?
- Where’s the most authentic place to shop for a local specialty?

## **7. Can you recommend a private guide or driver?**

If you have extra time while visiting a foreign country, and especially if you are traveling independently, you may appreciate the one-on-one service of a guide or driver. They are helpful if you don’t speak the native language, are short of time, or find navigating local transportation too tough.

Most concierges, even in smaller establishments, have an address book chocked full of trusted guides. Asking your concierge to help you negotiate the rate also ensures some accountability in the arrangement.

## **8. Can you get my special snacks, gift wrap, or help me replace a forgotten item?**

Just ask. If you get a snack attack while in Prague, the concierge might surprise you with a special room delivery.

For a party or wedding celebration, the concierge's there for gift buying and wrapping. Forgotten phone charger, headphones, or toothbrush? Ask the concierge before rushing to buy a replacement.

Need a Mariachi band to play while you propose to your loved on San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge? Chief concierge Eric Edenfield pulled it off with great style in 2001.

### **9. I need a babysitter/hair cut/dry cleaner/or spa treatment. Can you book this service for me?**

"Whether on business or leisure travel, no one wants to spend too much time trying to coordinate, plan, or organize," said Jeanne Mills, president of the U.S. branch of Les Clefs d'Or (The Gold Keys), an international organization of professional concierges.

Just be sure to ask how much lead time is needed to book this professional service. A last-minute babysitter will be much harder to find during holidays, for example.

### **10. Could you recommend a hidden treasure that most visitors overlook or don't know about?**

This is a great open-ended question. The concierge can help you discover a breathtakingly-gorgeous view overlooking the city, a tiny museum tucked into an old home in the historic district, or an emerald jewel of a local park, perfect for a morning run or an afternoon picnic.

Sometimes these special spots are so cherished that they are purposely kept out of guidebooks and online travel chat forums.

## **The Golden Question**

The million-dollar question you almost forgot to ask.

### **How safe is the neighborhood around the hotel? Do you recommend walking around or not?**

If you are a woman traveling alone, like the QDoc often does, this tidbit can be invaluable in protecting your safety and peace of mind. Some major cities are so dangerous that even a two-block walk in broad daylight is better done by cab.

Don't take any chances of becoming a crime victim on this trip. The concierge has your back on this one, too.

## **QDoc's Q-Tipsters**

Senior travel editor Wendy Perrin gets the final word. She says, "Know what to ask for. The hotel concierge is a great resource, but you have to ask the right questions."

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by Dr. Dede Bonner, The Question Doctor  
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