

Look out for shady hotel rooms

By Sarah Sobanski

Have you ever booked a hotel online and after arriving thought "wow, I wish I had a blacklight"??

Maybe you were surfing the web for your honeymoon suite on Expedia.ca or KAYAK.com. Maybe you were clicking through Trivago.ca? you told your partner it was just to see if there were any last minute deals but amen Trivago guy, amen.

When you look at hotels online, usually there are a lot of pictures of people-devouring beds, pillows galore, and the surfaces are clean enough you could eat off of them. Then you get there and you wonder where the hotel manager was staying when he took those photos, because it sure as heck wasn't wherever you are.

Well, a new app called TraffickCam is going to help clear up the confusion, while solving a less trivial problem.

The next time you go to a hotel, TraffickCam asks that you upload the real photos of your hotel room. Get those grimy walls from the angle that wasn't captured by the hotel photographer. Get the peeling grout or the chew holes near the baseboards -? you might just save a life.

TraffickCam is creating an online database of accurate hotel room photography to help catch human traffickers. The database can allow authorities to match up hotels with photos posted or sent by traffickers.

According to sources Huffington Post and Now This, traffickers often use hotels to conduct their illegal trade. Random rooms allow traffickers to change up their locations nightly, making them hard to trace.

The TraffickCam mission states: "Traffickers regularly post photographs of their victims posed in hotel rooms for online advertisements. These photographs are evidence that can be used to find and prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes. In order to use these photos, however, investigators must be able to determine where the photos were taken."

Since its debut in 2015, the site has uploaded over 1 million photographs of hotels in the U.S.

Now the site only allows people to upload photographs. The database can't be viewed on the site. That doesn't really help with making sure you don't get duped on your next vacation, but now instead of uploading your experience in a Twitter-rage, you can turn it into something worthwhile.

According to the I Will Bring Change Justice Foundation there are over 30 million slaves worldwide. The majority of human slaves are between 18 and 24-years-old, but as many as four per cent are children. In fact, 80 per cent of victims involved in slave trading are women or children. Both are exploited in the global sex trade.

In Canada, 600 to 800 people are trafficked for prostitution. According to the foundation another 1,500 to 2,200 are trafficked from Canada to the U.S. It reported domestic human slavery in Canada is most often with Indigenous or marginalized girls coerced into prostitution before their teens.

For every 800 people trafficked, one pimp or slaver is convicted. The next time you travel help make it more.