

Reasons to Fall In Love with Laundromats

My dryer broke at an inconvenient time this week – in the middle of a conference and on the eve of out-of-state travel. To top it all off, I was stuck with a pile of washed but definitely-not-dry laundry to address.

I've always had personal and family washing and drying machines to turn to (and I have to realize how rare that is). I know I've been spoiled. So I admit I wasn't thrilled about going to an old, dingy, coin-operated laundromat and having to sit there and wait for my laundry to dry.

It's been a while since my first (and only) laundromat trip before today, so I was pleasantly surprised by today's experience. There are a lot of things to love about laundromats.

First of all, the machines are fascinating. The commercial dryers are high-powered machines that can dry a load quickly. And with transparent glass doors, they make drying clothes a spectacle of tossing, rotating clothes which is actually pretty fun to watch.

The sounds, feel, and smell of laundromats are also lovely. The one I went to was well-cooled by multiple ceiling fans, set in part to counteract the heat rising from the dryers (I assume). The sounds of the washers and dryers create a nice, soothing low-level hum. And that pleasant smell of clean laundry and detergent is all around.

There's actually a sense of community at the laundromat. Everybody's there to do their laundry – which can be something of a private thing – but everybody respects everyone else. Students are there, families are there, and even what looked like professional cleaners came in to run loads. People of all backgrounds come together at the laundromat like they come together at other institutions of daily life. For people-watching and a general feeling of at-oneness, the laundromat is a great place to be on a Sunday afternoon.

Besides the slot machines in the corner, there really wasn't that much to do while waiting on my clothes to dry. That was OK with me. I had entered into a zone which had few distractions and required actual patience. That helped to create an interesting effect which mirrored something many people experience on plane rides: I had few excuses not to get some productive things done, like answering and processing emails and reading. The laundromat could be a great place for a distracted person to go to work remotely, actually.

I still hope I get my dryer fixed soon. But I wouldn't mind if I have to go back to the laundromat again.