

The Sandman Inn

“Meraki allows us to compete with the newer, 3-diamond properties nearby. WiFi is as important to our guests as cable television.”

Jason McCarthy, General Manager, The Sandman Inn

Challenge

A mid-century tourist motel with 113 rooms spread over a half-mile... some buildings with limited electrical

Quotes from traditional ISPs exceeded \$20,000 per bid

Traditional solar solutions required hundreds of hours of labor to integrate and manage

Results

Established a ubiquitous indoor/outdoor network for hotel guests for under \$10,000 in equipment costs

The Meraki solar device only took 30 minutes to install and requires minimal labor to manage

“Solar WiFi” has proven a very marketable amenity in a highly competitive vacation accommodation market



The Sandman is a mid-century hotel in downtown Santa Barbara that has expanded over the decades to comprise 113 rooms over about half a square mile. Its owners wanted to stay competitive in a very tight market by providing guests with extremely strong and reliable wireless internet access.

General Manager Jason McCarthy solicited bids from traditional wireless vendors, but found that a basic installation would cost over \$20,000. Jason asked Patrick Siefe, owner of Cleandata Computer Consulting, to help him. Patrick had discovered Meraki and supplied a quote at one quarter the cost of previous bids. He got to work deploying a mixture of Meraki Indoors, Outdoors, and Wallplugs in the various Sandman guest buildings, filling in weak signals with extra devices until most of the property was blanketed with WiFi.

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And then there was another complication: Some of the Sandman's remote buildings didn't have electrical outlets in the right places. After all, even wireless radios need to plug in somewhere.

Patrick quickly realized that the cost and mess of digging trenches and extending electrical conduit out to those buildings would blow out his budget before they even plugged in a single repeater.

Patrick began looking at creative solutions. Solar appealed to him, but the complexity of rigging a traditional WiFi radio to a solar array and battery, and managing the power supply seemed more trouble than it was worth. And then Meraki unveiled its Solar unit, a completely integrated wireless device and power supply in one. "There was no power out there," he said. Since it would have been too expensive to extend electrical outlets to the roof, the solar unit was a perfect fit. In addition, said Patrick, "it's neat, clean, looks good, and it's green."

In the space of 30 minutes, Patrick had climbed up on the rooftop, angled the solar array, secured the post, and the troublesome building was online. The device found the Meraki network, configured itself, and made itself available on the Meraki Dashboard, so Jason and Patrick could verify it was working.

Jason says, "We've been real happy with it. Meraki is very cost-effective and easy to manage."

Jason says that although the solar unit has been online now for several months, he will begin publicizing "Solar WiFi" as a unique amenity beginning on Earth Day 2009.

