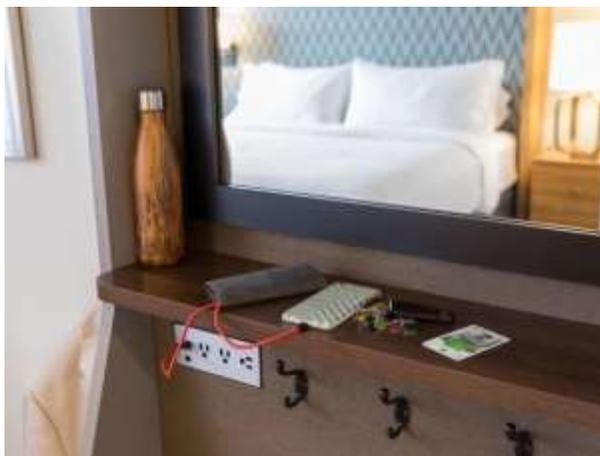


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The hotel room of the future: Here's what hotels are doing to adapt to travelers

[Nancy Trejos](#), USA TODAY Published 11:39 a.m. ET Feb. 23, 2018 | Updated 8:21 a.m. ET Feb. 26, 2018



(Photo: InterContinental Hotels Group)
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Guests have a lot of demands these days. And hotels are changing their tactics to meet those demands.

Hotels can no longer offer a simple bed and a bathroom. They have to think through every decision when designing a guestroom, from the type of mattresses to the bathroom lighting to storage areas.

“You need to engineer everything that goes into a room,” says Richard Born, co-creator of Pod Hotels, which has micro-rooms.

Here are some areas where hotels have made strides in keeping up with the preferences of their customers.

Plugs and ports

Many older hotel rooms have outlets hidden behind nightstands and desks. But hoteliers are considering the “plug-ability” of new properties when designing them and retrofitting older ones.

At Holiday Inn, the first thing hotel guests can do upon entering a room is recharge their phones. Its new H4 guestroom has a “Welcome Nook,” a place for guests to hang their coat, drop their keys and plug in devices.

Hyatt Place and Hyatt House hotels have wall-mounted outlets adjacent to the beds and in all light fixtures and lamps.

“A dead phone battery is the difference between a good day or bad,” says Jonathan Meister, vice president of design and planning for Hyatt Place and Hyatt House.

Unwanted noise

From double-insulated walls to thicker headboards to quieter air-conditioning units, there are several steps hotels can take to provide a better sleep environment.

According to a National Sleep Foundation study, 74% of 1,004 travelers said a quiet room was key to getting a good night's rest.

Hilton is testing several noise-masking-and-canceling initiatives. One is Nightingale, a device that lulls guests to sleep at a set time and switches off when they are waking up.

Wyndham is trying out a new room with a bed that has a full wall headboard to add a noise barrier. The flat-screen TV is mounted on a padded wall to avoid spreading noise to the next room.

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG)'s new avid hotels brand will have rooms with acoustic insulation between them and a mechanism to keep hallway doors from slamming.

Climate control

Thermostats may be a very small part of a hotel room, but a lot of big thinking is going into them.

Frequent travelers panel complain about room temperature and difficult-to-control thermostats. Other pet peeves: noisy air conditioning, motion sensors that turn down the temperature in the middle of the night, inconsistent temperatures, or energy-inefficient thermostats.

"This is a topic near and dear to my heart," says Kevin Korterud, a technology consultant in New Albany, Ohio.

Many hotels are now opting for smaller, less noise-producing digital thermostats that can be programmed to certain temperatures depending on the climate and humidity.

Guests now have the ability to control the thermostats at most hotels. But not too much.

Lowering temperatures drastically can cause mechanical failures, so hotels set maximum and minimum values.

At newer hotels, thermostats have occupancy sensors that can detect motion and heat to determine whether to lower or raise the temperature.

In the end, the best thermostat is one that does not have to be fussed with, says Randy Gaines, a senior vice president at Hilton.

"If you don't have to touch it when you walk into the room, I've done my job," he says.

If it seems like changing your hotel thermostat isn't working, that's because it's not! Amanda Kababbe gives us the lowdown Buzz60

Goodbye closets, hello storage solutions

Closet doors and dressers are disappearing, nooks are becoming more fashionable and the bed is serving a dual purpose with space underneath for bags.

Sleep Inn, part of Choice Hotels, added a luggage bench, reduced the number of drawers, and designed a partially open closet that allows guests to see clothes hanging.

Marriott International created an open storage system for its Moxy, AC and Aloft hotels.

Designers at the new Tru by Hilton brand have included space underneath the bed for bags, a metal bench above the air conditioner, and a storage ledge underneath the bathroom mirror.

“People want to go out and experience the city,” says Aliya Khan, a Marriott designer. “No one wants to spend time unpacking.”

Mattress makeovers

When it comes to hotel room mattresses, designers are considering much more than how soft or firm they are.

These days, they are examining products with pocketed coils, cooling gel foam, memory foam, and moisture-wick fabrics that protect the mattress. They are deciding on height, shape and size. They are testing out a variety of toppers, covers and protectors.

“Today’s mattress is much more personalized than it was 10 or 15 years ago,” says Mark Kukulski, president of Wyndham Hotel Group’s management company.

Fairmont Hotels and Resorts spent 18 months testing out mattresses, which typically last seven to 10 years.

“Realistically, it’s the one part of room that gets used the most during the guest’s stay,” says Jane Mackie, vice president of the Fairmont brand. “It has the most potential to have an upside and potential to have a downside if we don’t get it right.”

At Cambria Hotels and Suites, guests sleep on the Simmons St. Pierre Top Mattress, with features such as pocketed coil springs that conform to your shape and move independently so as not to wake up your companion.

Pillow talk

To come up with new pillows for its Comfort brand, a team at Choice Hotels headquarters tested about 100 soft and firm ones.

According to Sleep.org by the National Sleep Foundation, having the wrong pillow can lead to neck pain, headaches and even arm numbness.

“The right pillow at the right angle can stop someone from snoring or having a restless night, which is why we provide options,” says Kristopher Beck, Hilton’s director of product management.

The pillow industry has changed drastically over the years, says Kate Ashton, senior vice president of full-service brand operations for Wyndham.

“We used to see only feather or foam pillows in hotels,” Ashton says. “Now, there’s firm feather, goose feather, microgel, differing levels of filling — the list and possibilities go on.”

Ashton says that different pillow types work better for different kinds of sleepers. Even the number of pillows a bed should have is a source of debate. Size is also an issue.

Some hotels have created their own line of pillows.

Wyndham has WynRest for its full-service brands. The sustainable pillows are filled with microgel, which is made entirely from recycled bottles.

Upgraded bathrooms for more demanding guests

Bathrooms have become as important to travelers as bedrooms.

Marriott upgraded its bathrooms for its signature brand — Marriott Hotels. The new design has an open shower with floor-to-ceiling glass to make it feel larger.

“We’re spending more time focusing on bathrooms because so many of our customers have upgraded bathroom experiences in their own homes,” says Lionel Sussman, vice president of Marriott global design strategies.

Hoteliers say guests want larger bathrooms. They also want showers vs. bathtubs, so they can have more space for a vanity. Lighting has become more important. They want perks such as soothing music.

“From the economy to luxury segment, bathrooms are turning from functional to emotional places,” says Damien Perrot, senior vice president of design and technical services for AccorHotels.