



Travel Intelligence: 8 Ways to Sleep Around

A traveler's field guide to the wild new world of lodging

By Margaret Loftus

Fall asleep swaying in the breeze in a hand-hewn wooden orb suspended in the coastal rain forest of Vancouver Island. Kick back in a sunny, art-filled SoHo flat stocked with fluffy hotel towels, Kiehl's bath products, and an iPhone loaded with your host's tips on the neighborhood's finest. Check out a pair of your hotel's Google Glass eyewear for a tech-enhanced spin around San Francisco.

Welcome to the latest wave of lodging standouts, where the most coveted amenity is connection—to locals, nature, technology, culture, and even other travelers.

"For millennials, the thought of staying in a hotel that's exactly like a hotel in another city is a negative, unlike in other generations when it was a selling point," says Bjorn Hanson, a hospitality professor at New York University. And no matter their age, Hanson says, travelers now look to lodging as an extension of the destination, often favoring novelty and cultural relevance over minibars and late checkout. The result is a staggering array of new ways to sleep away from home. In the tradition of National Geographic field guides, here we offer tips and strategies for navigating the evolving lodging landscape:

7. Hotel Gadgets: Tech Yourself Out

Mid-century Americans checked into hotels to give air-conditioning and color TV a whirl, before such appliances became household staples. Travelers still look to hotels to test-drive technology, and hotels hoping to appeal to digital natives are tripping over their discarded Ethernet cords to one-up each other with tech flash—from the cool to the curious.

WHERE TO FIND At San Francisco's **Stanford Court**, the Google Glass Explorer Package includes overnight accommodations and the use of the glasses, along with tips, such as how not to be a "glasshole" (ask a person's permission before snapping a photo of them, for one). The hotel is also working on a lobby tech bar with devices like Fitbits and GoPro cameras available for checkout, plus nostalgic throwbacks (Atari, the Sony Walkman). At the new 230-room **citizenM** in New York City, guests check in on touch-screen kiosks and control the room temperature, television, window blinds, and lighting with the swipe of a "Moodpad" tablet. Times Square's futuristic **Yotel Hotel** features a Jetsons-like robotic luggage handler and a motorized bed that expands with the touch of a button. Guests at Hiltons worldwide solicit local advice by directing questions on Twitter to *@HiltonSuggests*. And no more rousting knocks from housekeeping at the **Umstead Hotel and Spa** in Cary, North Carolina: A motion-detecting system tells management if a room is occupied.

BEST FOR Early adopters and gadget freaks.

CAVEAT Luddites, leave your pride at home: Dial the front desk for help, or miss out on the fun.

TIP Follow hotel brands on social media for perks that range from loyalty points to free nights.