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Boutique Hotels Go Hi-tech

By Chic Retreats

No matter where they're staying, hotel guests are starting to demand the very latest in technology -

from televisions to internet access. Boutique hotels get ahead of the game by integrating technology into their design.

Technology is moving fast, and hotels of all types have to anticipate the technology that will make their guests' lives easier during their stay. As consumer technology becomes more affordable, guests are no longer terribly impressed by flat-screen televisions, integrated CD players and films on-demand; they can have that at home. What does impress them is when the technology improves the service, which in turn improves their experience.

Futuristic hotels have been the subject of many treatments in film, television dramas and books. In most cases, these hotels have a clinical look and feel to them, which is not at all what today's guest wants to experience. They want the comfort, style and design of a great hotel, with the convenience that technology affords them. Forward-looking hotels of all types have recognised this and have begun to install technology systems that allow them to provide higher levels of service to guests.

Control

To make guests feel at home, hotels have learned to put them in charge. The more control guests have over their experience, the happier they are. Flexible kitchens allow guests to have breakfast whenever they want to, and technology systems allow them to set up the room the best way for them: programme your media system with exactly the right track to wake you up in the morning, control your air-conditioning from a system by the pool so that your room's just the right temperature when you return to it, or use a touch-screen to check in rather than waiting in a queue at the reception desk. These and other technological advances will give you as the guest greater control over what happens to you in the hotel and it works well both for the guest and for the hotel. Future advances could include:

- Key-less room access
- Remote ordering of food and drink
- Adjustment of room features from the pool/terrace/beach
- Service adapting to ongoing intelligence of your needs

Boutique Hotels Go Hi-tech

There are already hotels putting systems in place that remember what guests choose from the menu and what they like to drink so that the next time they visit, their favourite cocktail is waiting in their room and the right music is playing. As boutique hotels continue to adapt the available technology to exceed the expectations of their guests, they will become increasingly popular places to stay.

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More Than Rooms And Food

By Chic Retreats

In general, we have low expectations of our hotels. As long as the room is decent and the food's OK, we won't complain. Boutique hotels hope to change that attitude.

Hotel rooms aren't cheap, so what do we get for our money? In many cases, it's not much. A reasonable room that's clean, a bathroom that's functional and food that's often not as good as it should be. These hotels should now expect to come under pressure from the smaller, boutique sector, where space, design and cuisine are all important.

The rooms

Unlike mainstream hotels, where every room in every hotel is the same, boutique hotels strive to create individuality through design. These hotels will usually be designed to a theme; in some places that theme will be obvious in the room names, the furnishings, the artwork and the finishing touches, and in others it might be very subtle, such as an Asian influence, or bringing the colours and textures of the landscape into the hotel.

Above all, it's the attention to detail, comfort and style that differentiates a boutique room from other hotel rooms. Guests' needs are carefully considered from start to finish, so there is often a range of exclusive toiletries in the bathroom which in turn is fitted with the latest shower or Jacuzzi bath. The room will be cleverly designed and functional so that there's always somewhere to put your luggage, plenty of storage space and all the high-tech equipment you need to run your life during your stay. The superior levels of comfort and service at a boutique hotel is what makes it stand out.

The food

Although not all boutique hotels have a fully-operational restaurant on their premises, many have understood that the guest who likes a well-designed room will also appreciate good food and wine. Integrating an excellent restaurant into a small hotel is difficult, but if it is properly planned and executed, it can be an additional benefit to guests as well as establishing a reputation for the hotel within the local community. For guests to be staying in the hotel where all the locals go to eat is a real marketing coup - whether it's a funky city centre brasserie, or a formal restaurant in a rural retreat.

Many boutique hotels focus on the standard of their food - freshly prepared breakfasts, light lunches or formal dinners - precisely because it contributes to the overall experience of staying in a small hotel.

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