

5 ways the hotel of the future is already here

By [Abha Bhattarai](#) August 31



As you check into your hotel room this holiday weekend, you may be welcomed by a robot.

Hotel companies around the world have been racing to incorporate new innovations into their properties. Here, a look at some futuristic technology that may greet you during your next hotel stay.

1. Voice-activated rooms

You'll never have to get out of bed again, promises Aloft Hotels. Thanks to its Project: Jetson, guests at two of the company's properties can control their thermostats, lights, even music preferences, with the sound of their voice, Starwood

Hotels & Resorts said in a statement:

Wake up hot at 2 am.? Simply ask Siri to adjust the temperature on the thermostat by saying "Hey Siri, cool the room" to your desired setting.

Singing in the shower but want a new track? Say “Hey Siri, put on my morning playlist.”

The voice-activated rooms in Boston and Santa Clara, Calif., will come equipped with iPads that guests can use to browse the Internet and check the weather forecast.

“Forget the phrase ‘at the touch of your fingertips,’” Brian McGuinness, global brand leader for Aloft Hotels, said in a statement. “Today’s traveler wants a level of personalization unlike ever before, and that means being able to control their hotel experience with the sound of their voice.”

2. Robots to greet you at the door and bring you champagne

This spring, Hilton Worldwide added a new staffer to its roster: Connie, a concierge robot that can dole out restaurant recommendations and guide you to the hotel gym.

The robot, powered by IBM’s Jeopardy-winning Watson computing system, uses a number of applications to greet guests and answer basic questions about hotel amenities, services and hours of operation. “The more guests interact with Connie, the more it learns, adapts and improves its recommendations,” according to Hilton.

Connie’s friend, Ava — powered by iRobot — often greets guests at the Hilton Tysons Corner. She has served as a translator for foreign travelers and helped guests remotely sign in to meetings. Last year, two service members dialed in from Kuwait and used the robot to “walk” around the American Red Cross’s Salute to Service Gala in the hotel’s ballroom.

“With Ava, we learned things we never expected to learn,” Jonathan Wilson, vice president of product innovation and brand services for Hilton, [told The Washington Post](#) in January. “That is an example of something we can use to make our customers’ lives easier and more convenient.”

[\[Hilton tests guest-greeting robots\]](#)

At Aloft Silicon Valley, Botlr, billed as the world’s first robotic butler, serves a similar role. The robot, who wears a painted-on shirt collar, is likely to bring “razors, toothbrushes, smartphone chargers, snacks and even the morning paper to any of the hotel’s 150 rooms in two to three minutes,” according to [The New York Times](#).

3. Virtual reality

If your real-life vacation isn’t as exciting as you’d hoped, virtual reality headsets at Marriott International promise to transport you to somewhere a bit more glamorous — to Beijing, say, or Chile.

“VRoom Service,” which the hotel giant rolled out last fall, allows guests at a handful of properties to borrow Samsung Gear VR headsets for 24 hours at a time. The devices are pre-loaded with three videos that follow travelers to destinations around the world.

“Virtual travel is another way to [meet the next generation of travelers],” Michael Dail, vice president of global brand marketing at Marriott, [told Skift](#). “We wanted to add a storytelling element because so many millennials are content creators themselves.”

A number of other hotel companies have taken similar measures. Holiday Inn Express, Hilton and Best Western have all turned to [virtual reality videos](#) to market their properties to younger customers.



4. A rainforest on the roof and a beach in the sky

The upcoming Rosemont Hotel in Dubai promises a number of over-the-top amenities: luggage-handling robots, digital waterfalls and a man-made beach atop the 53-story building. But perhaps the loftiest part of the \$550 million project is an attempt to create a rooftop rainforest that spans 75,000 square feet and includes streams, a splash pool and a “prehistoric Jurassic-inspired marsh.”

The 448-room hotel, to be operated by Hilton’s Curio Collection, is slated to open in 2018.

5. Your idea here

At Marriott, executives are looking to guests for their innovative ideas.

Some of the [hundreds of ideas](#) the company has gathered over the years: Neck pillows with built-in music, an app for selecting toiletries, free beer during check-in and vending machines filled with olives, dried fruit and other healthy snacks. An initiative called ‘Don’t worry, your first bag is on us,’ would cover the cost of customers’ luggage fees, while a room-service app would allow guests to order food using their smartphones.

Browse through other user-submitted ideas and see Marriott’s favorites [here](#).