

Features.

Spotlight on: Millennial business travellers.



This new wave of business travellers sees work trips differently from their older counterparts. How can hoteliers juggle the needs of all of their business guests?

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Business travel isn't just about business any more. Millennials want more from their work trips than a hotel that has a business centre and room service. Social work spaces, fitness options, ethical practices and interesting design all make a hotel more appealing to younger workers.

"The 'bleisure' trend – mixing business with leisure – is one of the biggest differences between baby boomers and millennials on business trips," says Hannah Frances, consultant at [Hotel Palette](#), an agency that advises hotels on guest experience. In a [survey of 1,200 Americans](#), Hilton Hotels found that of those aged 23 to 35 – i.e. millennials, 75% said they see business travel as a perk, and 69% like to extend their business trips to add leisure time.

Conversely, only 25% of baby boomers – those aged 53 to 71 – extended a business trip for pleasure purposes in the last two years, according to a [survey of 1,728 Americans](#) by the US non-profit AARP.

Making your property just as appealing to leisure travellers as to business ones will help you tap into the bleisure trend. Below are some ideas to help with this.

Grand designs

Start by making your property feel less like an office-away-from-the-office and more like an indulgent escape. "Business centres have become redundant in favour of hybrid cafe / co-working spaces," says Frances. "Beautifully designed interiors are expected across all price points. At [The Pilgrim](#) in London, for example, the rooms are tiny, but the towels, bedding and toiletries are luxurious. It's high design in a dinky space – perfect for solo business travellers and at a similar price to a bland nearby chain hotel."



The Pilgrim, Photo: Jason Bailey

But it's not just about rooms. Young professionals prefers to work in a buzzy setting, while older business travellers typically prefer more privacy and quiet when trying to work or conduct meetings.

"Different behaviours across generations can be accommodated in hybrid spaces with defined zones for working, eating, networking or relaxing after a long journey," says Frances.

The [Shangri-La Hotel](#) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, has managed this particularly well. "We have created Co-nnect, a shared working area, specifically designed for a millennial audience accustomed to working in a shared environment," says Chris McFall, Director of Sales and Marketing.

"An upscale co-working space, it offers a versatile environment to meet, work and create – with work pods, individual work stations, private offices and meeting rooms to suit all requirements," says McFall. But just as important as the business spaces are Co-nnect's bleisure ones – a lounge, café and outdoor seating are all available for workers to take a break, grab a bite to eat, enjoy fresh air and garden views, or have a drink as the working day ends.

Fitness first

The 'gym' at many hotels is nothing more than a treadmill, exercise bike and set of free weights shoved in a dingy room – big mistake. Design agency FutureBrand Speck found that [millennials use fitness and wellness facilities twice as much](#) as baby boomers. What's more, they're highly likely to have a negative perception of a property if it has poor fitness and wellness offerings.

"Millennial travellers are more likely than older guests to ask us about routes for running nearby or where our activity training equipment is around the grounds," says Jerrod Latham, General Manager of [Wychwood Park Hotel & Golf Club](#) in Cheshire, England.

For bigger hotels, this might mean redesigning your on-site fitness facilities to make the gym feel welcoming and energising instead of depressing and bleak. And all accommodation providers can work with a local cycle shop to provide affordable bike hire, commission attractive maps showing running and cycling routes near the property, and offer basic in-room workout equipment, such as yoga mats or exercise balls.

Ethics matter

The younger generation is very socially, ethically and environmentally aware, and hoteliers should be mindful of this when looking at their employment practices and amenities, says [Kristina Dryza](#), a consumer trends expert from Sydney, Australia.

“90% of millennial travellers claim to consider a company’s ethics before booking a trip”

To appeal to this audience, it's vital that properties start "hiring for diversity", she says. A survey of 2,000 North Americans by [Intrepid Travel](#) found that 90% of millennial travellers claim to consider a company's ethics before booking a trip with them.

This means you should publish your company's ethical policies – including management diversity statistics, sustainable building design elements, responsible procurement and disposal of amenities, and local community initiatives – on your website. And you must follow through with clearly visible proof of policy implementation at your hotel. This can make a big difference as to whether those millennial business travellers come back to your hotel next time, or choose your competitor down the road.

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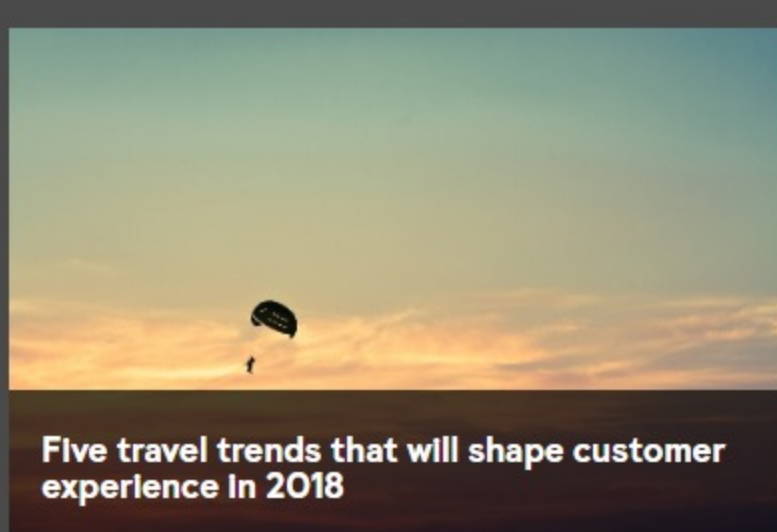
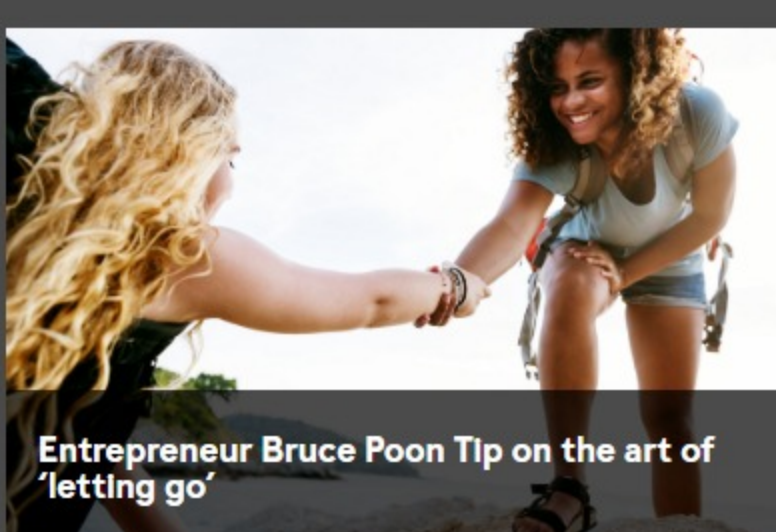
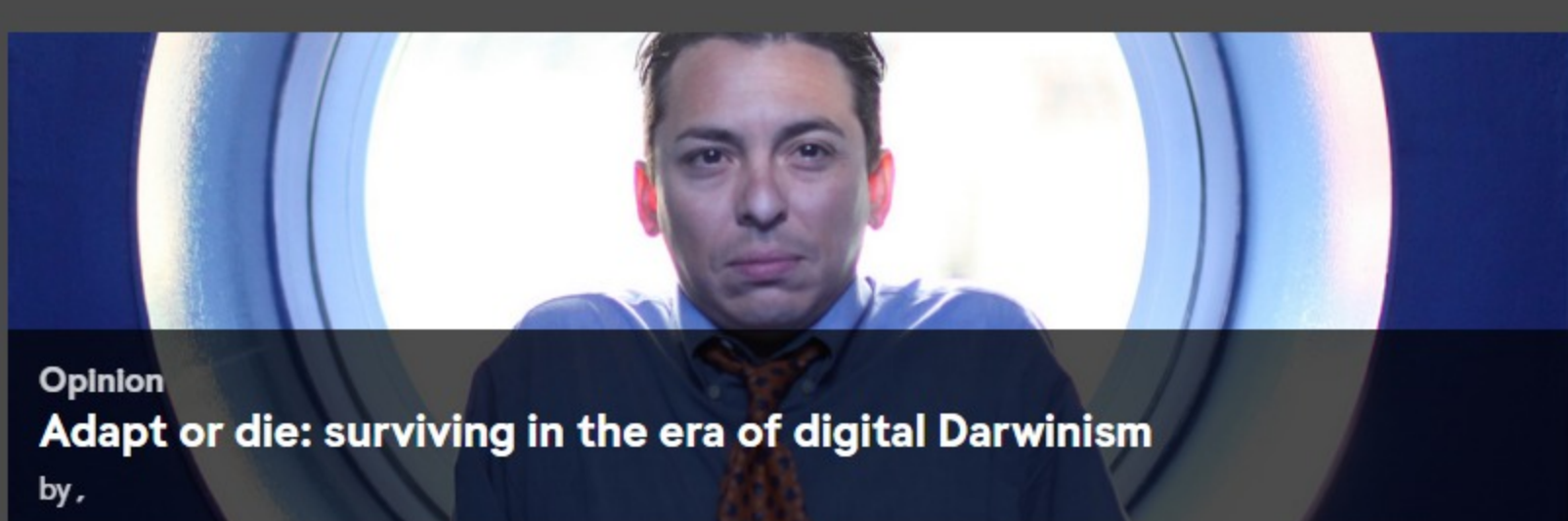
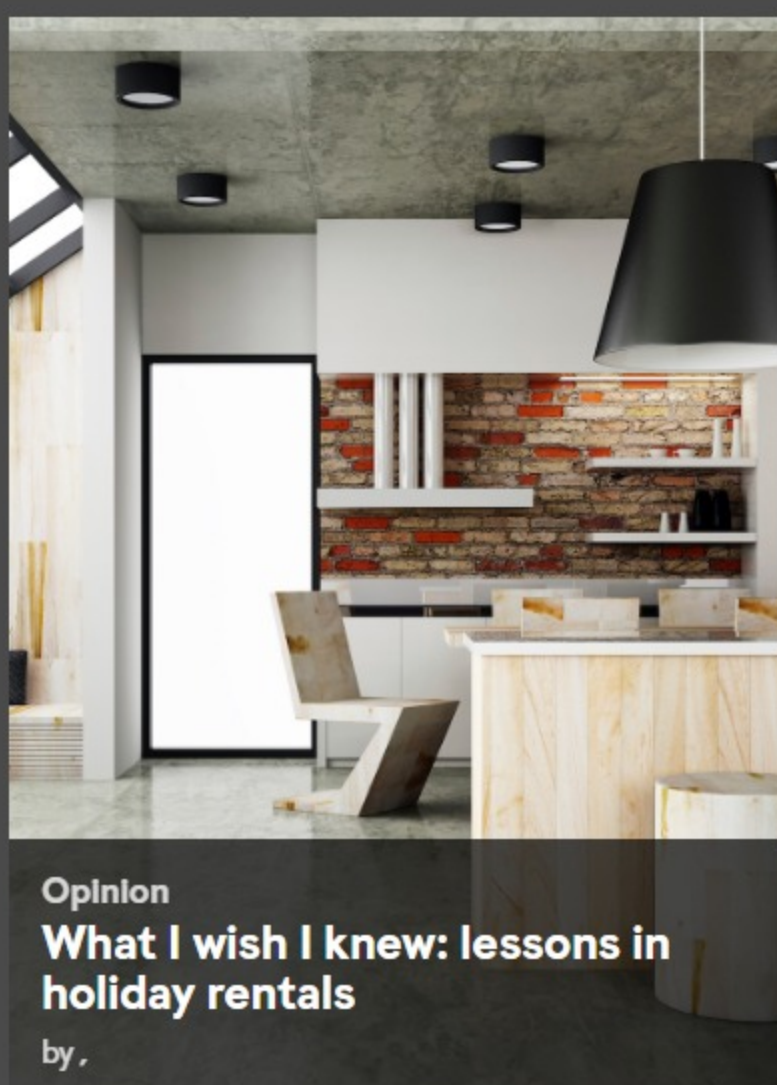
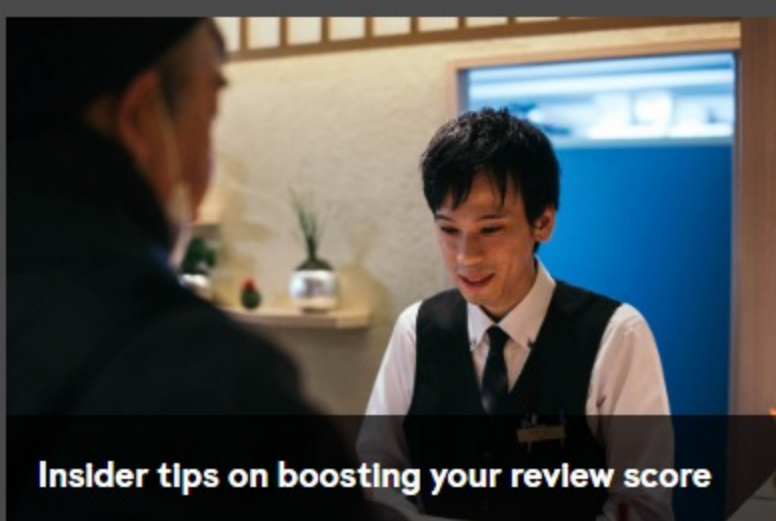
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Jill is a travel, tech and lifestyle journalist, who has written for some of the world's best-known publications

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