

Airports, Hotels, and Restaurants Are Embracing the New Normal

Once-familiar spaces have seen big changes in the past few months. Even more innovations are coming soon—and that's nothing but a good thing.

BY ANDREW SESSA

IF YOU VENTURED out for a road trip or weekend away recently, you already know the drill: masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer, plus plexiglass screens and more frequent cleaning at airports, hotels, and restaurants. But deeper changes will soon complement the quickly implemented hygiene protocols and MacGyver-style hacks introduced this spring and summer. Airport and hospitality designers tell T+L that more big-picture improvements are in the works. “The pandemic is inspiring us to invent new ways to bring people together and still have memorable, engaging experiences,” says David Rockwell, the architect and founder of Rockwell Group, whose projects include the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas and Nobu locations worldwide. “Design is an optimistic act.”

AIRPORTS

New technology is helping to reduce face-to-face contact and streamlining check-in, security, and boarding. Hong Kong International Airport has trialed walk-in pods that can disinfect passengers' skin and clothing in 40 seconds. Abu Dhabi Airport uses thermal scanners to check fliers' temperatures. Travelers at San Francisco International can use their own mobile devices to operate check-in and bag-drop kiosks rather than touching communal screens. In Amsterdam and Aruba, airports had already installed systems that read biometrics—your face and fingerprints—rather than boarding passes. The pandemic could provide “a kick in the pants” to accelerate the shift to contactless, says Ty Osbaugh of the architecture firm Gensler. “We won't see the traditional model of agents behind counters,” he forecasts.



HOTELS

Most properties quickly rolled out upgraded cleaning regimens. Up next? Rethinking public spaces, says Marriott executive Erika Alexander. Frequently touched accents like tabletop games, candy jars, and coffee-table books are out, she says. Aman properties in Utah and Wyoming have added space between pool chaises and restaurant tables. Design firm Meyer Davis has switched to touchless bathroom fixtures for the forthcoming Dream Hotel in Doha, Qatar; another of its clients is considering adding Mirror fitness devices to every room rather than offering a typical gym. Known for work on the Raffles Singapore, design firm Champalimaud recently handled a redo of the Mandarin Oriental in Boston, where the Premier suites now have vestibule kitchenettes with sinks—perfect for handwashing upon arrival. “We have to stay nimble and avoid assumptions about where we’ll be in three years,” Marriott’s Alexander notes, “especially when things have changed so quickly.”

RESTAURANTS

Where possible, restaurateurs have opened alfresco areas to make up for lost revenues in dining rooms. Rockwell Group has rethought takeout stations and devised outdoor seating, some of it made from concrete Jersey barriers; New York restaurant Melba has been an early adopter. Chef José Andrés’s Think Food Group has swapped traditional door handles for new pulls coated in antimicrobial copper at all 29 of the company’s locations. Tihany Design created prototypes of easy-to-clean table partitions that can be tailored to a particular restaurant’s aesthetic. (So far, they’ve had interest—if not orders—from the likes of Daniel Boulud.) While change has come quickly to some casual spots, fine-dining venues are moving cautiously, says Tihany managing partner Alessia Genova. “No one wants to stay six feet apart in the long term,” she says.



Hotels Are Adapting to New Needs, in a New Era

Lately travelers have been lengthening their trips, whether to accommodate an in-destination quarantine or simply to savor some time away from home. And creative properties are going the extra mile to help guests settle in safely. **BY CHARU SURI**

DOOR-TO-DOOR TRANSPORTATION

Through a partnership with private jet company XO, the **Resort at Paws Up** (pawsup.com), in Montana, offers discounted flights to and from the resort. The **Abbey Inn & Spa** (theabbeyinn.com), in New York’s Hudson Valley, meanwhile, can arrange travel from New York City in a private railcar.

GROCERY RUNS

The **Roundtree, Amagansett** (theroundtreehotels.com), a revamped and rebranded hotel with 10 rooms and five private cottages in the Hamptons, will pick up groceries—and grab local takeout for guests, too.

PRIVATE EXPERIENCES

Some hotels are leaning in to activities that are naturally socially distant. The **Asilomar Hotel** (visitasilomar.com), on California’s Monterey Peninsula,

is a haven for bird-watching, and the resort gives free access to apps and online classes from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to help novices get up to speed. On the East Coast, Cape Cod’s **Ocean Edge Resort & Golf Club** (oceanedge.com) pared down its larger group tours in favor of private outings and classes with oyster farmers, yoga teachers, golf instructors, and pickleball coaches.

UNDERCOVER ARRIVAL

The **Park Hyatt New York** (hyatt.com) takes privacy to the extreme with its 2,300-square-foot Presidential and Royal suites. The hotel can arrange helicopter transfers from N.Y.C.-area airports to Manhattan, a personal car and driver during your stay, and in-room butler service. Suite guests also get access to a semi-secret entrance so they can bypass the main lobby.