An illustration of a city street scene. On the left is a modern, multi-story building with a yellow facade and a red awning over the entrance. On the right is a more ornate, historic building with a pinkish facade, arched windows, and a blue awning. Three colorful umbrellas (yellow, green, blue) are attached to the historic building. Pedestrians are walking on the sidewalks, and a luggage cart is visible near the historic building. The sky is light with stylized green trees and foliage.

Canopy, Centric, Moxy, Oh My!

There's been a global explosion of design-focused, tech-savvy hotels. And with so many to choose from, here's how to tell them apart—and find the right one for you. ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOBY NEILAN

|| TRAVEL SMARTER ||

upgraded

WITH BRANDS YOU'VE

never heard of popping up on what seems like a weekly basis, choosing a place to stay has gotten harder than ever. It doesn't help that so many of them sound the same, look the same, and promise the same amenities. In short, they're all examples of what the hotel industry calls a "lifestyle" hotel—which generally means a sense of style at a reasonable price. To help you figure out the brand for you, *Travel + Leisure* scouted the fastest-growing newcomers to see what makes them tick and how well they live up to their ambitions.



1 HOTELS

The big idea

High-end style with a (relatively) low carbon footprint, for those who like the idea of eco-friendly hotels but don't want to sacrifice comfort.

Where they are now

Miami and Manhattan

Where they're going next

Brooklyn

Starting rate

\$399

As flashy, scene-driven hotels open up at lightning speed in Miami, there's rarely much talk among developers of

environmentalism. But at the 1 Hotel South Beach, sustainability is the driving force. The airy, earth-toned lobby has a living wall and a ceiling made from reclaimed oak from the East Coast. An excellent Tom Colicchio restaurant on the first floor emphasizes farm-to-table cooking. And in our whitewashed, 650-square-foot entry-level room, we found recycled-cardboard hangers, cedar-scented bath products in big, reusable bottles, and a thoughtful welcome note made out of plantable seed paper. The hotel even invested in

a triple-filtered water system to encourage guests to reach for the tap, not the Evian.

A green ethos can sometimes make for awkward service (might I reuse my towels?), but not here: at the 1 Hotel South Beach, the youthful staff is more soulful than preachy. Room-service tea trays, for example, arrive within 10 minutes, bearing a tiny cactus as decoration. And upon checkout, guests who ask for a printed copy of their bill will be met with a polite refusal—the hotel, we were told, is trying to be paper-free. 1hotels.com.

WHY NOW?

Three trends that explain the rise in lifestyle hotels.

1. It's all about the millennials. There are two things budding jet-setters want: constant Wi-Fi and not to feel like a tourist. Hotel companies are listening—and the results appeal to more than just today's twentysomethings. According to Tina Edmundson, Marriott's global brand officer, "Lifestyle hotels tap in to a new creative class, including young entrepreneurial business types who want affordable access to art, culture, and design, as well as more-seasoned, independent travelers who appreciate singular experiences and high standards of service."
2. Travelers want to feel like part of a club. "We know a lot of people are looking for a shared experience among like-minded guests," says Barry Sternlicht,

CEO of Starwood Capital Group, whose new brand, 1 Hotels, is built for luxury seekers with a passion for sustainability. He's not the only hotelier thinking more about psychographics than about demographics. Graduate Hotels caters to alumni in college towns, while InterContinental's Even Hotels focuses on wellness. For all three, the appeal lies in a strong sense of belonging.

3. Affordable real estate and "cool neighborhoods" go hand in hand. Rapidly gentrifying areas may not be ideal for legacy brands, but they're perfect for travelers who want to feel more integrated into the fabric of a city—and be far away from its tourist traps. They're also a dream for developers. Gray Shealy,

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NUMBER OF LIFESTYLE BRANDS THAT HAVE LAUNCHED GLOBALLY IN THE PAST YEAR, AT T+L'S LAST COUNT.

executive director of the Master's of Hospitality Management program at Georgetown University, says, "Up-and-coming neighborhoods give lifestyle brands an insider's look at a location—a strategy Airbnb has leveraged." Other perks? Potential for character-

packed buildings. Construction costs can be higher in these, but guests are often willing to pay more for unique design touches.

HYATT CENTRIC

The big idea

Super-central locations and reasonable prices cater to the masses, while communal work spaces and a residential aesthetic appeal to a younger set.

Where they are now
Miami and Chicago

Where they're going next
Atlanta, New York, Paris, and a dozen other cities

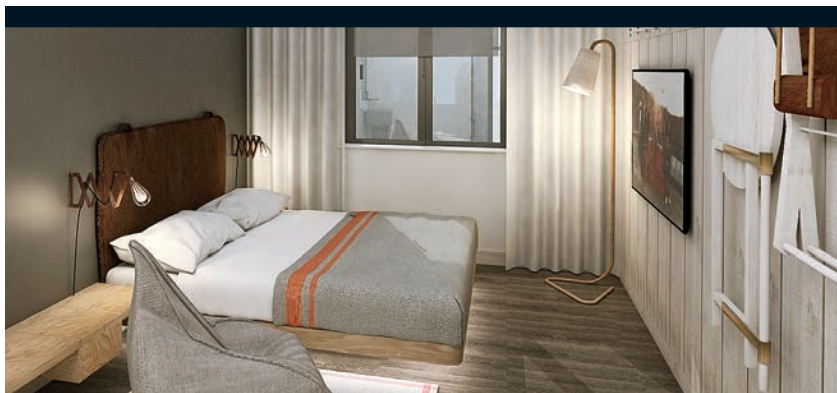
Starting rate \$229



Hyatt Centric was conceived for the “modern explorer,” an eye-roll-inducing term that could be ascribed to nearly anyone with a passport. But if broad appeal, rather than uniqueness, is what Hyatt is going for, then its first property, in Chicago’s historic Loop, gets it right. The rooms are monochromatic and soothing

(some will call them crisp; others, generic), with smart tech features like Bluetooth-enabled TVs and free high-speed Wi-Fi. There’s little to draw a local crowd besides a solid French bistro, but small details, like an onyx fireplace in the lounge and vibrant artwork in the lobby, succeed at making the hotel feel more boutique than bare-bones.

An unbuttoned vibe helps trim costs—see the stripped-down room service, which swaps carts and china for bagged-up drop-offs. But without any real links to the city—not even local snacks in our mini-bar—the brand’s promise to supply an “authentic” experience rings a bit hollow. Maybe modern explorers can find all that themselves. hyattcentric.com.



MOXY

The big idea

A budget-friendly, DIY-inspired chain (brown-bag breakfasts, self check-in) with an eclectic, highbrow design philosophy.

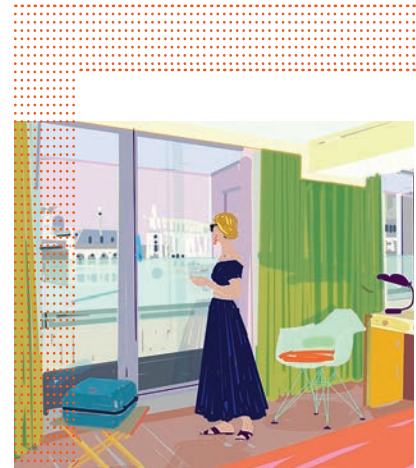
Where they are now
Milan

Where they're going next
New Orleans, Munich, London, and Copenhagen

Starting rate \$70

Owned by Marriott but developed by a division of IKEA, Moxy’s Milan debut could have been a showroom for flat-pack particleboard furniture. But the brand has aimed higher than that: the lobby-slash-bar is outfitted with colorful pendant lights and tweed-covered armchairs; the boxy but well-appointed rooms have Avedonesque floor-to-ceiling photographs; and the library “plug-in zone” is lined with shelves of design and fashion books. Moxy, it turns out, delivers on style as much as it does on value.

There are caveats, however. A location in Malpensa airport is better suited to business travelers than the creative types we saw at the self-serve coffee bar (several of the slated openings are near airports), and the “hassle-free” mobile check-in turns out to be a fantasy—by 9:30 p.m. the line snaked from the front desk to the front door. Want to explore? The bus to Central Station takes an hour. It’s a bargain not without sacrifices. mox-hotels.marriott.com.



COMING SOON

Five more brands that are about to make a splash.

TOMMIE

This affordable micro-hotel—debuting with 325 rooms in New York this winter—will have space-efficient features like flip-down desks and flexible pegboard closets. tommiehotels.com.

CANOPY

Hilton’s four-star chain will focus on the neighborhood experience—think microbrew tastings and access to trendy fitness studios—in cities like Reykjavik, London, and San Diego. canopybyhilton.com.

PROPER

Former Viceroy execs are putting sleek hotels in new tech hubs (downtown L.A., San Francisco’s Mid-Market), with food by big-name chefs and partnerships with local start-ups. properhotel.com.

SIXTY

These “urban inns” are heading to Miami, Montreal, and beyond, with mini-bars fit for a mixologist and works by young American artists. sixtyhotels.com.

CORDIS

This upscale entry by Langham pulls back on the formalities (no butlers, less marble) for family-friendly stays in Asia and the U.S. cordishotels.com.



Marriott's AC has a fiercely loyal fan base in Spain, where it has 61 hotels. So it's no surprise that the U.S. debut, in New Orleans' Cotton Exchange building, borrows from its predecessors, with *tortilla española* in the breakfast room and wines on tap in the lobby.

The formula translates well. AC delivers on what you need to be productive, like free bottled water, Wi-Fi, and outlets galore. There's no restaurant or room service, but the airy design makes you think you're in an indie hotel, complete with arched windows and high ceilings.

The Miami and Chicago locations, however, don't benefit from a character-packed building—one was a takeover of a nondescript budget hotel; the other, a new build—and their amenities are too insubstantial

AC HOTELS

The big idea

Catering to next-gen business travelers with a credo that "you get only what you need, and don't pay for what you don't."

Where they are now

Throughout Europe; Chicago, Miami, New Orleans, and more

Where they're going next

Across the U.S., Canada, and Latin America

Starting rate \$189

to add to the experience. AC Libraries amounted to two workstations in the lobby, and a calendar of events with various influencers has yet to be determined. The saving grace: the no-frills rooms are always comfortable, with fair prices, to boot. achotels.marriott.com.



THE UN-BRANDED BRANDS

Why small, independent properties have become the business of big hospitality giants.

If hotel corporations are looking to re-create the boutique experience, why not own and operate a collection of fully independent outposts? That's the thinking behind Starwood's new Tribute Portfolio, Hilton's one-year-old Curio, and Loews' OE Collection—all groupings of one-off properties, each with its own distinct personality.

As has been proven with other "soft brands" (like Starwood's Luxury Collection or Marriott's Autograph Collection), the strategy pays off. Independent hotels gain marketing and distribution channels from their parent companies, parent companies can answer the growing demand for locally tapped-in experiences, and guests can reap the benefits of a loyalty program without staying in a bland corporate box. Ultimately, it's a win-win situation for everyone involved—travelers included.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL; COURTESY OF GRADUATE HOTELS



GRADUATE HOTELS

The big idea

Alumni can relive their glory days in a college-town hotel that's done its homework on the local scene.

Where they are now

Athens, Georgia; Charlottesville, Virginia; Madison, Wisconsin; Oxford, Mississippi; and Tempe, Arizona

Where they're going next

Richmond, Virginia, and Durham, North Carolina

Starting rate \$119

Graduate Athens, a stone's throw from the University of Georgia, aims to reflect the city's preppy-but-quirky culture and prove that it "gets" its hometown better than its competitors do. In the lobby, vintage prints hang above glen-plaid-patterned chairs, and the colorful rooms mix details like Georgia-pine-green walls, bright-yellow headboards and collegiate tartan pillows. Our favorite design feature was a framed chalkboard with the chemical equation for sweet tea—a little offbeat, yet substantively Southern. Just like Athens itself.

But the hotel struggles in other ways. While the public spaces, including a coffee shop and a live music venue, are in a former iron foundry with exposed-brick walls and dramatic, beamed ceilings (all but one of the Graduate properties are in repurposed spaces), most rooms fill a lackluster two-story building across the parking lot. In other words: getting from your Athena Suite to the lobby is a bit of a buzzkill. Architectural pitfalls aside, Graduate is a step up for travelers to Athens, as it should be in other small towns, too. graduatehotels.com.



With a sitting room awash in magenta and purple and a lobby covered in kaleidoscopic butterfly wallpaper, the 17-room Gilded, in Newport, Rhode Island, doesn't trade in the usual New England nautical clichés. Instead, it was inspired by nearby mansions from the Gilded Age (or, as some locals call it, the decadent era of "Keeping up with the Vanderbilts"). The ironic twist: the building once included servant quarters for employees of the wealthy. As with many Lark hotels, some old charms remain, like creaky wooden floors, hidden staircases, and oddly angled rooms.

Along with gold accents and vibrant, velvet-covered headboards, the guest rooms are stocked with iPads (given at check-in) and have free Wi-Fi and sleek (though incredibly small) bathrooms. But where service is concerned, Lark keeps things pleasantly old-fashioned. Front-desk attendants appear within seconds of a bell chime, and the general manager has been known to sit with guests for drinks on the porch. Breakfast, included in the stay, is another brand-wide, inn-inspired perk, with dainty, single-portion servings of everything from blueberry-topped oatmeal to cups of fresh fruit arranged by—what else?—color. larkhotels.com.

LARK HOTELS

The big idea

A collection of design-centric inns in popular (mostly Northeastern) vacation destinations, each with its own name, a handful of rooms, and a family-run feel.

Where they are now

Maine, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts

Where they're going next

Martha's Vineyard, Napa Valley, and Nashville

Starting rate \$129

EVEN HOTELS

The big idea

InterContinental Hotel Group's ode to healthy living, complete with calorie-conscious food offerings and in-room fitness zones.

Where they are now

Norwalk, Connecticut, and Rockville, Maryland

Where they're going next

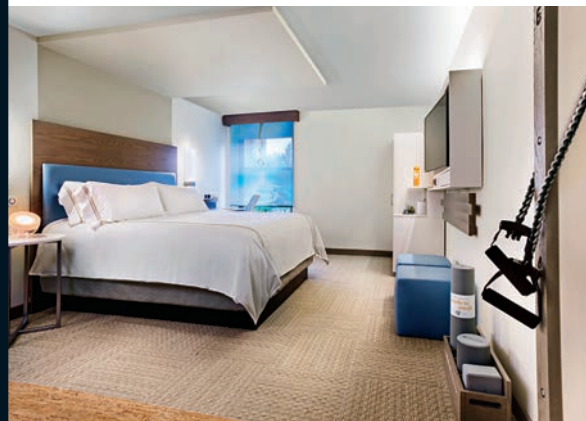
Manhattan and Brooklyn

Starting rate \$149

The first brand to be completely dedicated to wellness, Even wants to help its guests maintain physical and mental balance—something that can easily come undone on the road. Its key components—Keep Active, Rest Easy, Eat Well, and Accomplish More—are more than just marketing-speak: they're the product of thorough research, during which IHG documented guests' at-home habits and dissected every way

in which the experience of traveling can be disruptive to sleep, fitness, nutrition, and productivity.

The end result meets the mark, as it's nearly impossible to make bad choices at Even's first fitness zones. The end result meets the mark, as it's nearly impossible to make bad choices at Even's first fitness zones. Connecticut. At check-in, guests receive maps of outdoor running routes and reusable water bottles to stay hydrated (there are fill-up stations on each floor). As an alternative to the lobby gym, the spacious rooms have balance balls, yoga mats, and resistance bands, plus a workout manual and videos by celebrity trainers. Healthy foods help keep the momentum going: at the aptly named Cork & Kale, the menu slants toward superfood-packed salads and wine rather than burgers and beer. Overall, the experience feels surprisingly motivating—lazy travelers, be warned. evenhotels.com.



REPORTED BY: Nikki Ekstein, Allison Weiss Entreklin, Jacqueline Gifford, Katie James, Brooke Porter Katz, Amy Tara Koch, Greg Dates, Sandra Ramani, and Valerie Waterhouse.

FROM TOP: RARE BRICK; COURTESY OF EVEN HOTELS



“TRAVEL CREATES SO MANY POSSIBILITIES FOR DISCOVERY AND GROWTH.”

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