



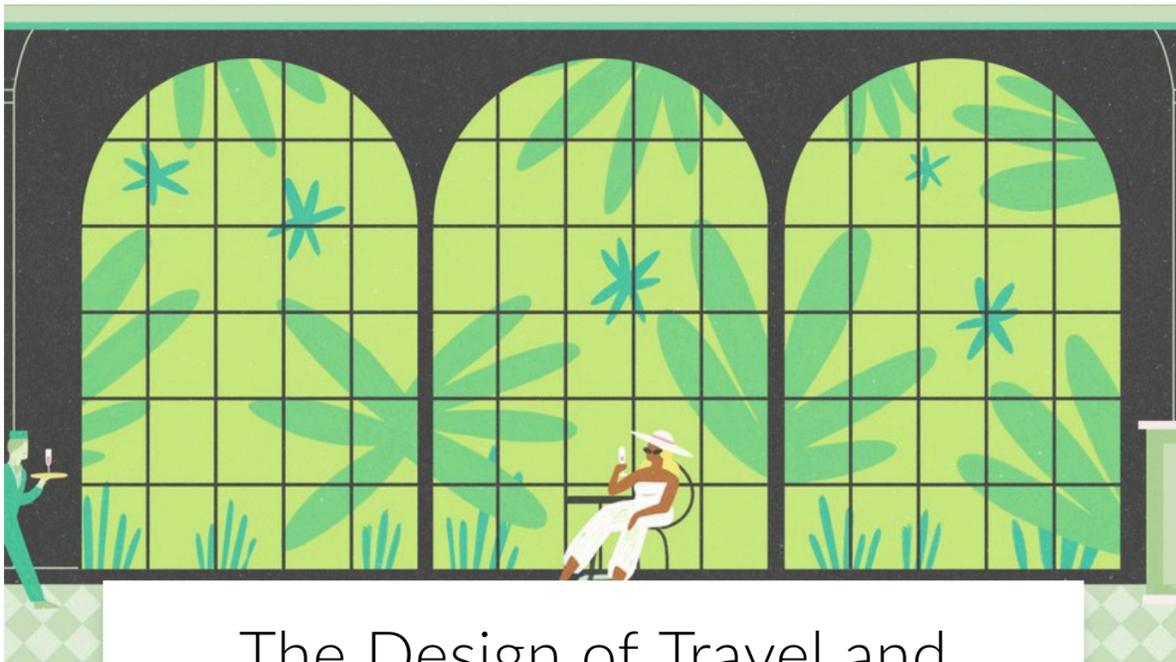
ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

## The Future of Design

Twenty years from now, the world will look quite different. With an increasingly global population, cities pulsating with tens of millions of residents, abundant technology—forward thinking is a requisite. Does one respond to the current moment or choose to shape it? Today's top designers prefer the latter. Do not expect the spectacle of rocket-car hybrids or teleportation devices in place of vanished phone booths. Instead, design experts across all fields predict that technology will integrate seamlessly into our homes and lives, changing how we live, work, and travel. Here, AD speaks with a director of design at Google, who predicts that the more technology we develop, the less we will have to use. Designer Yves Béhar waxes poetic about the future of smart homes—tech that's passive, intuitive, and hidden in plain sight. Even how we get from A to B will undergo a significant shift. (Execs at Tesla and Uber home in on self-driving cars.) Cities will adapt to population booms and changing climates. Urban planners foresee investments in energy efficiency and mixed-use structures to capitalize on limited resources. And a resilience specialist from architecture firm Gensler predicts an increase in green space—what humans will crave as our world gets ever busier and more crowded. What's our takeaway? Design will make all the difference.

### Design in 2039

How our world will look in the year 2039—according to leaders in travel, architecture, media, art, transportation, urban planning, and interior design



## The Design of Travel and Hospitality in the Year 2039

# The Design of Travel and Hospitality in the Year 2039

Say goodbye to any deep-seated notions about what makes for the best hotels, destinations, and vacation pastimes

What will the travel and hospitality space look like 20 years from now? Will we check ourselves into our hotel rooms on iPads? Use our own fingerprints in lieu of room keys? Receive room service delivered by robots? (Believe it or not, these things are all happening now.) Twenty years ago, it would have been difficult to imagine that a large swath of the earth's population would walk around with what are essentially tiny computers capable of making phone calls, sending emails, taking photos, mapping out directions, and much more in their pockets. As technology has evolved, so has the travel industry. We may have more choices than ever before, but that only means architects, designers, and others working in hospitality must focus on how they can use design to set themselves and their products apart.

To gain some insight into what travel might look like in 20 years, we asked CEOs of hotel groups, tour operators, and the CEO of one of the world's most extensive network of travel advisors what they imagine for the future. Three key themes came up again and again: the need for human connection, the value of intangible experiences, and an increasing emphasis on sustainable design.

## COMMUNITY AND HUMAN CONNECTION

Almost everyone we asked agreed that technology will never replace human connection; on the contrary, it will create a stronger need for people to connect in the real world. "As technology become mores ubiquitous and sophisticated it is also driving a craving for empathy and belonging, driven by true connection," **Matthew Upchurch**, CEO of Virtuoso—a global network of luxury travel agencies and preferred partners—tells *AD*. "This is where human touch and technology will come together; the digital tools to help create a more, fun collaborative experience," he says. "With Virtuoso Orchestrator, clients will cocreate a Netflix-style personal portfolio that builds anticipation and excitement for each new trip.

**Katherine Lo**, founder and president of the new hospitality brand Eaton Workshop—which has activism and community-building in its DNA—agrees. She believes travelers are looking for a sense of belonging. "The hospitality design of yesteryear

prized material luxury over everything else. Today's hospitality design has moved away from the material towards seeking the experiential (although aesthetics still do, and will always, matter)," Lo says. She predicts: "Tomorrow's hospitality design may be a reaction to the physical disconnectedness of virtual friendships and tech proliferation. The beauty of hospitality is that despite tech trends, hospitality will always mean welcoming real people to physical spaces."

## **HOTELS AND DESTINATIONS**

Though the trend in the luxury market so far has been to create larger and more homelike rooms and suites, **Ted Teng**, President and CEO of the Leading Hotels of the World, believes that as the gig economy grows (and conversely, expense accounts shrink), micro-hotels will proliferate and working remotely will become the norm rather than the exception. "I believe leisure will continue to grow, but there will be interesting changes in business travel, a segment previously fueled by generous expense accounts," Teng says. "Looking at the greater economy, it is possible that up to 25 percent of today's jobs will disappear, some becoming automated and some replaced by AI and machine learning." As the workplace becomes more streamlined, incoming generations of freelancers and contractors will desire more workplace flexibility. "As this economy further develops, it opens opportunities for contractors to work anywhere. I suspect some of them may choose to work from leisure environments, driving growth to resort areas," Teng says. "To sustain this employment model, I foresee a technology platform much like Uber's, that matches supply and demand. Do not rule out the aspect of surge pricing playing a role in this. In hotels, this could greatly affect peak season employment for housekeepers, the front desk staff, and beyond."

Zooming out onto the big picture, Lo wonders what a more dystopian city—one travelers are drawn to out of mere interest, like a safari, having fled to more utopian places—might look like in two decades. "Dystopian architecture has existed in iconic cinema like Ridley Scott and Philip K. Dick's *Blade Runner*, Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*, J.G. Ballard's *High-Rise*, and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, and even in the climate change flooded urban skylines of *The Day After Tomorrow*," she says. "Given the tenuous state of the planet due to environmental destruction, design and architecture in the future will probably exist to reconnect humans to the beauty and peace of nature."

## **EXPERIENCE OVER MATERIALITY**

"More and more, travelers value experience and community over opulence and material possessions, and I don't think this trend will disappear anytime soon," says **David**

**Rockwell**, founder and president of AD100 firm the Rockwell Group. “Hotel brands are shifting away from homogenization and uniformity, and are making individual properties more local and personalized. It’s partly a reflection of the physical isolation associated with social media and partly an acknowledgement of a basic human need. And at its core, hospitality requires a human touch.”

It’s no wonder that **Andrew Zobler**, founder and CEO of the Sydell Group, which is behind some of today’s hottest hotels, has a similar view. “Travel will continue to become more and more about immersion in the destination and things unique to that destination, including food and design,” he says. “The best hotels will be unique and special and that will extend into larger meetinghouse hotels, which to date have been largely ignored by the lifestyle movement. Hotels will take more of a view to attract a core audience than try to appeal to everyone—think about how many channels we now have on TV,” Zobler concludes.

In addition to authenticity, designing experiences in ever more remote areas will become increasingly possible. As the worldwide population grows and physical spaces become more crowded, getting off the grid will become even more desirable. **Elizabeth Gordon**, cofounder and CEO of award-winning safari operator Extraordinary Journeys, predicts that “the new thing to do will be to go where others cannot.” She believes that as Africa’s national parks get more crowded and more travelers get to experience Africa, “people who can afford it will be willing to pay a significant premium to get an exclusive and truly wild experience.”

## SUSTAINABILITY AND ECO-FRIENDLY DESIGN

“Given the tenuous state of the planet due to environmental destruction, design and architecture in the future will probably exist to reconnect humans to the beauty and peace of nature,” Lo, of Eaton Workshop, predicts.

Teng, of Leading Hotels of the World, also expects to see a growing focus on sustainability and design that is more efficiently in tune with the environment. “Before air-conditioning, buildings were designed to take advantage of natural ways to cool and heat. There were high ceilings, shades, and breezeways to cool, and natural sun, trees, and underground thermal warmth to heat,” Teng tells *AD*. “We have strayed from these building models because we do not have to rely on them for comfort. However, I see a future of returning to more natural, ecological solutions. Outside of a property, I also would expect landscaping to be more environmentally friendly, reflecting the destination.”

Upchurch, of Virtuoso, expects to see a growing trend among travelers who want to do good for the planet and its people in the future. “I believe (and our research shows) that as basic quality becomes standardized, and the differential between products even more imperceptible, that same sense of purpose and meaning will drive even more clients to focus on the impact of their travels,” he says. “They will demand that their travel investments propagate positive impacts for the planet, the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, and to benefit local economies, currently referenced as sustainability.”

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