



High-Tech Hotels

By: [Scott Steinberg](#)

February 5, 2009

Here we take a look at some hotels and manufacturers that are doing some exciting things in technology to attract new customers, from business travelers to nerds, who just want to play video games.

Remember the days when articles about high-tech hotels included such bleeding-edge technology as ubiquitous Wi-Fi, or (gasp!) flat-panel TVs? Now, those technologies are not only preferred, they are required by the savvy traveler.

Here we take a look at some hotels and manufacturers that are doing some exciting things in technology to attract new customers – from business travelers to nerds who just want to play video games.

Opening in late 2009, Las Vegas' CityCenter will debut some of the most advanced guestroom technology available. [Control4](#) is on the scene, providing personalized automation for every guestroom. For example, as guests near their room, the room lights will turn on automatically, curtains will part, and the TV will turn on to display a list of automated controls that each guest can personalize. The Control4 system will also offer climate control, music, wake-up calls, and more. Green settings let you "green your stay" by choosing light level, temperature, and how often linens and towels are changed. Best yet, settings are remembered for the duration of your visit.

Farther north, [Hotel 1000 in downtown Seattle](#) recently added Microsoft Surface to its Studio 1000 suite, located next to the lobby. Guests are presented with the 30-inch display in a table that recognizes touch, gestures, and more. They are able to interact with the virtual concierge, which offers guests 100 points of interest in the area. Or they can check out previously loaded photo albums and videos and even insert their own memory cards or sample music.

Microsoft Surface isn't the only technology you'll find in the walls of this hotel, however. The tech-minded 1000 features a multi-million-dollar technology infrastructure: touch-screen VoIP phones, intelligent private bars, ambiance controls with infrared technology, 40-inch [LCD](#) HDTVs, electronic "do not disturb" functionality, and digital audio docking stations in every room.

Virtual golf is available for those who want to practice their swing before hitting the links. Oh, and there is that ultra-groovy electronically operated privacy screen between bath and guestroom!

Not to be outdone, San Francisco's [Hotel Tomo](#) is inspired by Japanese pop culture, and that goes hand-in-hand with technology. Gaming Suites are outfitted with a [PlayStation 3](#), [Wii](#), bean bag chairs, and a 6-foot LCD projection screen—not to mention some colorful artwork.



On the right side of the country, [Nine Zero](#)—a boutique hotel in Boston—also features some wow tech. The hotel's Cloud Nine penthouse suite on the 19th floor requires a retinal scan to unlock the door. That's right, only your eyes and those of approved guests can unlock the suite, marking a future trend in the hotel industry. Biometrics instead of key cards. Very 007.

If retinal scans don't get your juices flowing, consider [Hotel Sax](#) in Chicago. The outfit has partnered with Microsoft to bring you The Microsoft Experience. Certain guestrooms feature [Zune](#) mp3 players and [Xbox](#) game stations, but the real draw is the luxury lounge that lets guests play, watch, listen, and relax in the ultimate entertainment environment.



Figure 1: Hotel Sax Microsoft Experience

While the rooms at [New York City's Pod Hotel](#) are on the smaller side, there is no shortage of geek chic features to keep the savvy tech traveler entertained. The Pod Community Blog, for example, is a customized message board for hotel guests that allows them to interact with each other and ask questions or make requests during their stays. The blog is also a resource guide for the curious traveler, as the hotel posts all the latest events happening around the city. A Survival Guide even lists all the affordable, fun things to do in NYC, such as free events, cheap places to eats, BYOB restaurants, and happy hours. Each guestroom features an LCD flat-screen TV and [iPod](#) docking stations to boot.



Figure 2: iStudio

The city also boasts the [Tribeca Grande](#)—a great place for hipsters to meet and greet, and for the Apple crowd to find a place to lay their weary heads. Book an iStudio, and you'll be armed with all the latest Mac technology, including a loaded G5 with film, photo, and sound-editing software for the filmmaker set, an iPod, and a [Bose SoundDock](#). The hotel also features a state-of-the-art 98-seat theater!

It's not always the whiz-bang features however, that keep guests comfortable and connected. Many hotels are making little differences, like the [Mandarin Oriental](#) in New York, where a Distributed Antenna System ensures that guests won't experience dropped calls. The W hotel network recently launched its Wired2Go service, where hotel guests can borrow laptop computers plus all the accoutrements any business

traveler would need. [Ritz-Carlton](#) Chicago also just premiered its [Blackberry](#) Break program to help meeting-goers recharge their devices whilst enjoying blackberry-themed goodies. Cute.

Manufacturers are making life more convenient for the hotel guest, as well. In fact, DOCOMO interTouch is taking control to the next level by creating software that will allow guests to use their touch screen phones to control their environments – including lighting, temperature, and TV stations. The technology is not yet ready for primetime, but aims to remove unnecessary remote controls from cluttering your suite.

And finally, we're big fans of [pureroom.com](#), which finds hotels for the allergy-sensitive folks out there who sneeze at the slightest irritant. Hotels that participate feature rooms with cutting-edge purification systems so you won't cough and sniffle your way through vacation.

Whether you are a business traveler who needs to stay connected, a hipster who can't live without the latest personal gadgets, or just someone who enjoys all the benefits technology has to offer, one thing is certain: Your tech-traveling days are far from over.