

# HIGH-TECH COMFORTS

Hotels with all the mod cons

**GEEKY IS THE NEW COOL.** As our lifestyles become increasingly connected, hotels are following suit by incorporating snazzy technology into their services. We are talking tech wizardry, not just sleek sound systems and WiFi connectivity. Enter your room via iris scanning or embark on virtual walking tours with a quick tap of an iPod. And it is not only the posh establishments that are “geeking out”; many budget-friendly hotels also offer their guests creature comforts with nifty gadgets thrown in.

## THE UPPER HOUSE Hong Kong, China

This swish boutique hotel is as tech-centric as it is design-centric. Decorated with sophisticated, modern interiors tinged with natural elements, the Upper House is known for providing its guests with a “paperless” experience. Doing away with the traditional reception counters, guest registration is processed using iPads. These devices contain guest information and preferences, and allow guests to check in anywhere on the property with a member of the Guest Experience team. It is the first hotel in Hong Kong with such a practice.

The seamless service doesn’t stop there. In each of the 117 rooms, you’ll find an iPod Touch that offers in-house information, room service, local area information, weather reports, news, feedback forms and games. You can also stay connected with the world as you move from one destination to another, as the hotel’s Lexus hybrid cars are equipped with complimentary WiFi on board. Staying true to the digital age of the day, check-out procedures are further streamlined with copies of guest bills sent via email on the day of departure.



► [www.upperhouse.com](http://www.upperhouse.com)



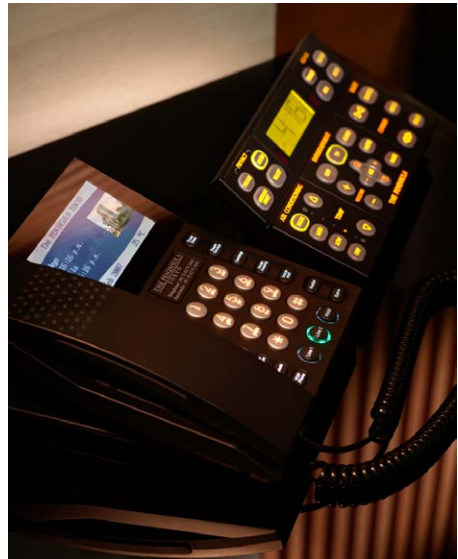
## THE PENINSULA TOKYO

### Tokyo, Japan

In a land where wielding cutting-edge gizmos are a way of life, it comes as no surprise that the Peninsula Tokyo boasts some serious in-room innovations. You won't find flashy gadgets, but unobtrusive intuitive technology aimed at enhancing the guests' stay and well-being. Precision is key: guestrooms are designed so that every control and switch is located exactly where it is required. The bedside control panel lets you control everything from temperature to curtains, including a "privacy" button to light the "DO NOT

DISTURB" sign on the door and silence the doorbell. Phones are equipped with Skype capability and can be used throughout the hotel.

Guests can request for iPods that provide virtual walking tours: "The Peninsula Eye Walk" (a 60-minute guide through some of Tokyo's popular landmarks) and "The Peninsula Art Walk" (a 45-minute tour through the hotel's art collection that features Japanese artists). The Internet radio has a selection of over 3,000 stations, and hitting the



#### EXTRA TOUCHES

- Women will love the nail polish dryer in the dressing room
- Press the "night light" button and a softly-lit path to the bathroom will appear – no more fumbling around in the dark

"spa" button at the side of the bathtub will automatically dim the bathroom lights, fade in soothing music and set the "privacy" command for the doorbell and phone. This is tailored luxury at its finest.





## BLOW UP HALL <sup>5050</sup> Poznan, Poland

Don't be deceived by its non-descript red brick façade: Blow Up Hall is every bit as fascinating as its moniker. Located in a former brewery, the 22-room “electronic art” hotel is centred around a creative interactive system – a video installation comprising a large screen showcasing footage of guests in 2,400 tiny images reassembled into one colourful collage greets you in the lobby. The décor is arty and striking, with rooms featuring video, visual and musical installations by international contemporary artists.

There is no concierge and no numbers on the room doors. Guests are given

The hotel was inspired by Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 cult film *Blow Up*

iPhones that pull double duty: they utilise recognition technology to unlock rooms and are pre-loaded with applications customised to your stay. You feel as if you have catapulted into a future existence where technology, not humans, takes precedence. It's somewhat of a surprise – considering that Poznan is one of Poland's oldest cities.

## HOTEL 1000

### Seattle, US

Imagine soaking in a bathtub as it is being filled with water flowing down from the ceiling. That is what you'll get if you book into Hotel 1000, a chic establishment in the heart of downtown Seattle. MP3 players and iPod docking stations are standard room amenities and the in-room Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) phone system is your go-to for almost everything... airline schedules, weather forecast, stock quotes, restaurant recommendations and so on.

A push of a button is all you need to indicate whether you wish to enjoy some privacy or have your room cleaned.

The intelligent bar notes when you run out of your favourite refreshments and signals staff to stock up while you are away. To check whether rooms are occupied, the hotel staff presses a silent button below the doorbell. This triggers an infrared scan of the room to detect movement – they will only enter the room for housekeeping, maintenance and private bar services if it is vacant. The fully converged Internet protocol infrastructure allows for personalisation of the guest experience, be it room temperature, art or music.



#### FANTASY GREEN

Play a round on 50 of the world's best courses at The Golf Club: a virtual golf setting comprising an infrared tracking system with two planes each with over 680 sensors calculating the velocity, spin and trajectory of the ball. It also provides real-time ball flight, interactive practice sessions and multiple hitting surfaces.

[www.hotel1000seattle.com](http://www.hotel1000seattle.com) ◀



## NINE ZERO HOTEL

### Boston, US

Be James Bond for a few nights when you stay at the Cloud Nine suite of this boutique property. An iris scanner, not keycards, gains you entry into your swanky lodgings – the first hotel in the world to install this authentication system. A digital picture of the guest's iris is taken upon check-in, and the image is then converted into a code in the hotel's private system.

In less than two seconds, cameras set up on-site can identify people, even if they are wearing glasses or contact lenses, and grant or deny them access. Entry is allowed only to those who are positively identified, and who have been previously approved by the hotel. This ensures maximum security and a safer environment for all.

The Cloud Nine suite has been patronised by celebrities like Christina Aguilera, Missy Elliott and Pink.



## HI HOTEL Nice, France

This chic 38-room hotel is fun, contemporary and equipped with endless high-tech goodies. There are nine types of rooms with quirky monikers like “Happy Day” and “Up & Down”. But tech addicts will love “Technocorner” and “Digital”. The Technocorner room is devoted to image and sound: a huge widescreen TV doubles up as a divider between the room and the bathroom, so you can watch your favourite show from the bed or bathtub. And the sofa is no ordinary couch either. Called the “sofablaster”, it is integrated with speakers and headphones, and its armrests contain a hip music collection.



Paying tribute to cyber culture is the Digital room. Walls are actually giant pixels and the furniture resembles windows of a computer. One of the “windows” is a light-box that fuses animated and still images. The in-room facilities are also controlled by



remote. Plus, it doesn't hurt that the hotel is just a short hop from the beach, with great views of the Mediterranean and the Alps. <sup>TR</sup>

[www.hi-hotel.net](http://www.hi-hotel.net) ◀