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Hotel rooms 20 years ago were twice as large as some of today's offerings

queviv, special for USA TODAY Published 12:30 p.m. ET Nov. 4, 2015



Photo courtesy of YOTEL

Twenty years ago the average U.S. hotel room clocked in at just over 350 square feet. But today's newest hotel brands are selling rooms nearly half that size, with some chains averaging 200, 183, or even just 170 square feet. How did we get here?

First, let's get it out of the way that, yes, the average hotel room in America today is still a respectable 330 square feet. But, but, but, that's because the majority of existing hotel stock was built decades ago. You'd be hard pressed to find anything currently under construction with that large of a footprint.

New boutique brands springing up across the country under familiar brand umbrellas are tiny by comparison. Rooms in Marriott's Moxy Hotels (<http://moxy-hotels.marriott.com/>) average 183 square feet. The brand also lacks a traditional reservation desk, with guests instead checking in via the bar. Rooms in Best Western's new, ahem, Vib (<http://www.bestwesterndevelopers.com/portfolio/vib.php>) and GLō

(<http://www.bestwesterndevelopers.com/portfolio/glo.php>) brands are just 209 and 249 square feet. And new hotel brand Yotel (<http://roadwarriorvoices.com/2015/11/02/yotel-new-york/>), formerly of airport sleeping pod notoriety, says its rooms average just 170 square feet.

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With all of this space saving, what traditional hotel accoutrements are hitting the cutting room floor? Marriott's Moxy Hotels director, [Vicki Poulos tells NBC News](#) (<http://www.nbcnews.com/business/travel/hotel-rooms-getting-even-tinier-check-then-squeeze-n456456>):

"It's this idea that we're giving our guests everything they want, and nothing they don't need."

So smaller rooms make way for larger public spaces. Lobbies become co-working spaces and lively bar areas where guests and locals feel comfortable spending time. Room service is replaced by modern vending machines, just as likely to dole out Apple accessories as organic snacks. Who needs a desk so long as you've got a tablet and free Wi-Fi? Just the transition from the enormous, deep televisions of the 1990's to today's ultra-thin flatscreens alone can dramatically affect the layout of each room.

And like so much in travel, much of these changes can be [chucked up to millennials](#) (<http://roadwarriorvoices.com/2015/11/02/heres-how-millennials-and-baby-boomers-differ-on-business-travel-desires/>). Bjorn Hanson of New York University's Preston Robert Tisch Center for Hospitality and Tourism tells NBC says younger customers are allowing the industry:

"Millennials make a really good excuse for smaller rooms. Every square foot taken out of a room makes it less expensive to build, maintain and air-condition. We can attribute it to millennials, but the millennials gave the industry a reason to downsize guestrooms."

Hotel staff are definitely noticing a reaction from older guests who mistakenly find themselves in some of these newer properties, and suggest that when booking hotel arrangements, compare websites. If a hotel's website reminds you more of a nightclub or buzzy cocktail bar, you may want to look elsewhere for a more traditional, and yes, more spacious hotel.

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