



# How Hotels and Home-Exchange Services Will Adapt to a Post-Pandemic Reality

Written by [ELIZABETH HEATH](#) | Updated 06/04/20 03:35PM EDT



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The travel industry has been among the most affected by the global lockdowns and groundings that came as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As states and countries start to ease their travel restrictions and many of us start thinking about vacationing again, travelers will find a changed landscape when it comes to hotel stays and other accommodations.



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travelers can expect the next time they check in to a hotel, bed-and-breakfast, resort, or vacation rental.

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## Hotels: More Tech, Less Touch

Major hotel chains have already started to reimagine countless operational norms and designs, such as interior hallways, shared elevators, conference facilities, and sprawling breakfast buffets. They'll also need to invest millions of dollars into retrofitting and creating from scratch new systems for check-in, room cleaning, and food service. For



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Hilton CEO Chris Nassetta recently [told The Washington Post](#) that the chain, which includes Hilton hotels, as well as Doubletree, Homewood Suites, Embassy Suites, and others, was already moving towards touch-less check-in and room selection, as well as digital keys. These are made possible using the company's app, and mean that guests never have to go to the front desk to check in or out of the hotel.

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Besides Hilton, we also expect to see many of the following changes take place across other brands in the hospitality industry, at least in the short-term. Some possibilities are as follows:

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- **In-room features.** In-room features will rely more on guests using hotel-specific apps on their smartphones or tablets to turn on the TV, adjust the room temperature, order room service, and even dim the lights. Hilton and Marriott both offer apps in thousands of their hotels and are expanding the service system-wide.
- **Clutter-free zones.** Many hotels have already begun to remove clutter from rooms, so some unnecessary but high-touch hotel room items, such as throw pillows, stationery sets, or binders of property information and brochures, could start to disappear from rooms.



- **Bathroom amenities.** While hotels large and small have been making the move to refillable bottles of shampoo, conditioner, and lotion, sanitation concerns could result in a return of those small plastic bottles and individually packaged bathroom amenities, unfortunately becoming a step backwards in [their sustainability efforts](#).
- **Minibars.** Minibars might also become a thing of the past, replaced with room service snack menus. The [Kennebunkport Resort Collection](#) in Kennebunkport, Maine, has already made the switch to pre-packaged room provisions in lieu of stocked minibars.



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- **Elevators.** It's not always possible to take the stairs, but crowded elevators will likely be avoided at all costs. At the historic [Hamilton Hotel](#) in Washington, D.C., elevator capacity will be limited to two guests at a time. At Hiltons, guests will use their room card or the Hilton app to call an exclusive-use elevator.

## Changing Dining Options

Those limitless buffets, where there's often a traffic jam near the omelet station, are probably a thing of the past. Nassetta [says they'll likely be replaced](#), at least for now, with single-serve, grab-and-go trays. Across the industry, room service breakfasts will be offered more readily, with a "knock and drop" service so that no hotel staff even need to enter your room.

Many high-touch food services associated with small accommodations will have to change, says Heather Turner, marketing director of the Association of Lodging Professionals (ALP), which represents more than 1,500 licensed small inns and bed-and-breakfasts in North America. Lobby coffee service, for example, either with coffee machines or a pot left on a hotplate, will have to be removed, possibly replaced with in-room coffee delivery. "People who stay in our member properties are used to guest snacks like fresh-baked cookies and muffins," says Turner. "Those aren't going to go away, but they will change. Instead of cookie trays, for example, we'll see individually wrapped items."

Hotel bars and restaurants, so often lively gathering points, will also evolve in the era of social distancing. Standing at the bar for happy hour probably isn't going to happen, and hotel restaurants will have fewer tables spaced farther apart. Meal reservations might be mandatory, depending on how busy the restaurant is.

## Increased Cleaning and Reduced Occupancy

Industrywide, hotels are overhauling cleaning practices to increase hygiene and make guests feel safe. That may mean you break a paper seal on your door when you enter—an assurance that the room has been fully sanitized. At 25hours Hotels, once they've been



rooms and common areas. In Washington, D.C., and other states, masks are required for hotel guests as well as staff. And expect to see hand sanitizer strategically positioned just about everywhere from here on out.

Many hotels are opting to reopen with fewer rooms. Valentina de Santis, owner of the [Grand Hotel Tremezzo](#) on Italy's Lake Como, says that her family-run hotel will open this summer with only 30 of its 90 rooms available, and rooms will be on alternating floors. Guests will each receive a face mask with an Italian touch, one designed by a local Como artist.

Turner says that many of the ALP member properties will reopen with a reduced number of rooms as well. "Many of our properties have rooms that are accessed from a shared corridor, with entrances right across the hallway from one another," she says, adding that some rooms will be blocked for now. She also says that some states might begin to require 24 to 48 hours between guest stays (the CDC already recommends a 24-hour gap), so properties will need to adhere to that rule if instated.

## Vacation Rentals and Villas

The vacation rental business was hit equally hard by pandemic-related closures and the global travel shutdown. But as people begin to travel again, the private, exclusive-use experiences offered by Airbnb, VRBO, smaller rental agencies, and independent owners may be more appealing than traditional hotel stays. These properties can provide a getaway with less risk of mingling with other guests or being in high-traffic areas. Already, vacation villa owners in Italy are reporting that family groups are looking to rent large properties for their exclusive use for periods of one or two weeks or longer.

Occupancy and hygiene rules for independently owned properties have to adhere to state regulations more so than those imposed by the rental agency. However, Airbnb has introduced a two-part [Enhanced Cleaning Initiative](#) for its more than 6 million member properties worldwide. Its Cleaning Protocol follows guidelines established by the CDC, and includes a recommendation that hosts wait 24 hours before entering a recently



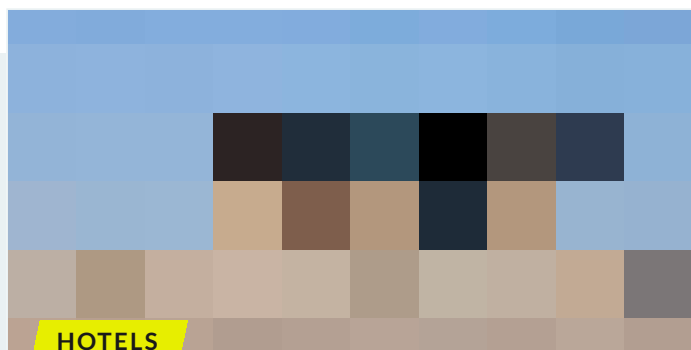


Participation in either initiative is optional for hosts, but the company emphasizes that it's in hosts' best interest to adhere to the guidelines. "Enrolling in our Enhanced Cleaning Initiative, with guidance and resources provided by Airbnb, is the best way for hosts to show guests that they take cleanliness and sanitation seriously," an Airbnb spokesperson told TripSavvy.

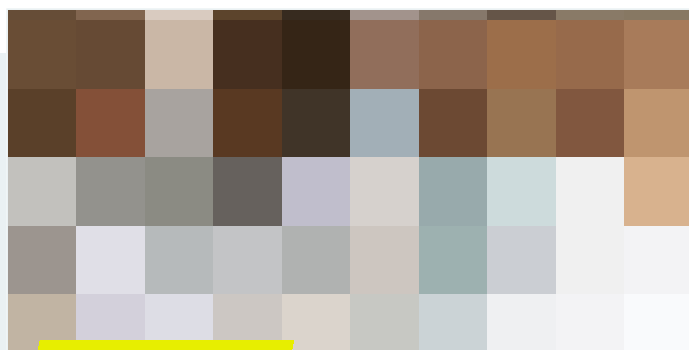
## A Situation in Flux

Evident during the past few months, the minute a "new normal" emerges, the situation changes. The same is surely true for hotels and accommodations and for virtually every aspect of travel in the post-pandemic era. Accommodations will continue to adjust their policies and practices as the pandemic evolves, while retaining where possible the things that so many of us find special about staying in a hotel, bed-and-breakfast, or vacation rental—whether that's service, amenities, or other. A lot of the changes brought to the industry by the pandemic will likely remain permanent with others reverting to pre-pandemic flexibility, but travelers will learn to roll with the changes as they begin to venture out again.

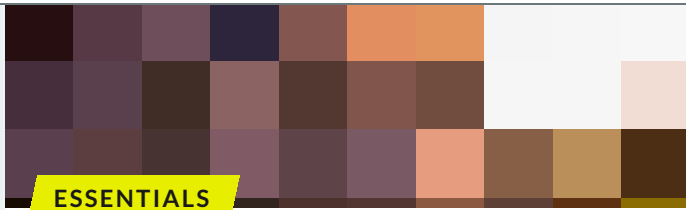
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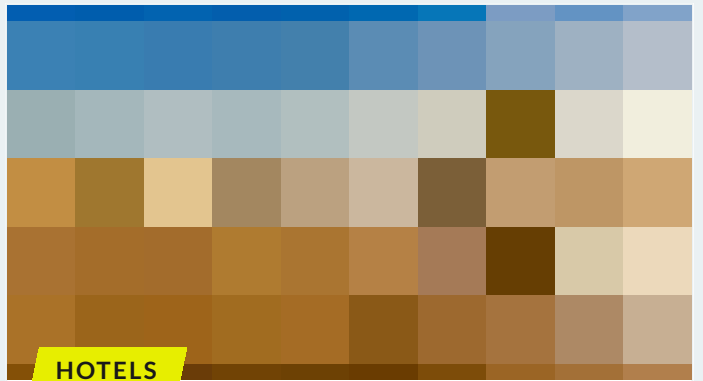
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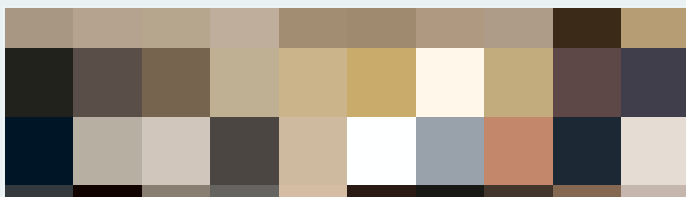
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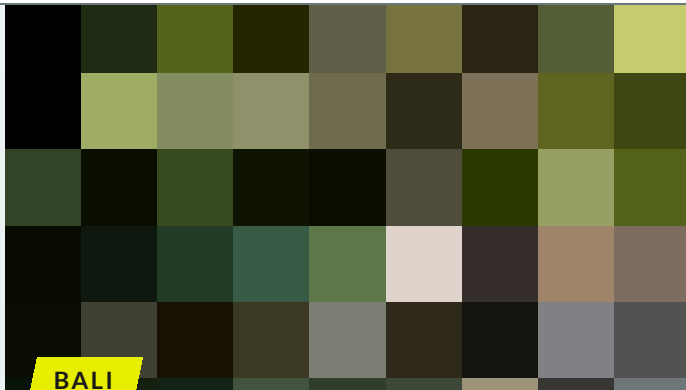
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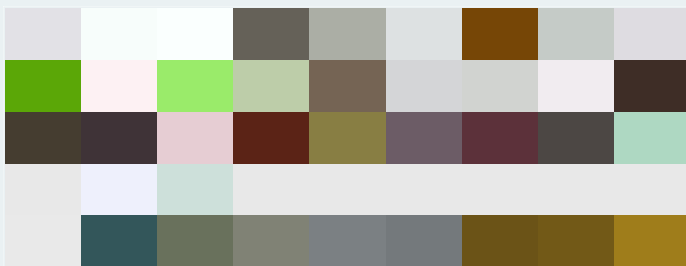
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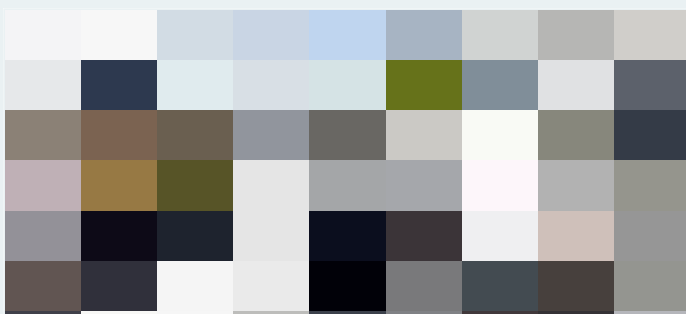
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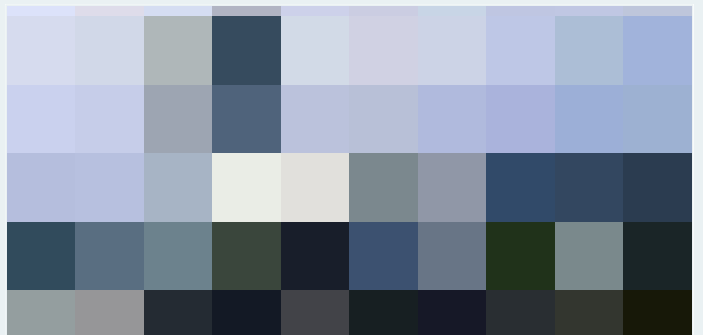
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