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New York City's Pod Hotel Revolution: The Glamour of Staying Small

Pod, capsule, micro or just plain tiny - whatever you call them, these hotels are here to stay and we've got the scoop on what makes them ideal for travelers spending a night (or more) in NYC

Capsule or pod hotels may have been invented in Japan, but they're being perfected in New York City, and it's easy to see why. For starters, small rooms translate into small prices — rooms are often around \$100 — a boon in a city that has the nation's highest average room rate in the \$250 to \$300 range. There is "absolutely a market in NYC of people who don't want to spend \$500 a night," says hotelier Richard Born of BD Hotels, who launched the highly successful Pod Hotels to fill this gap.

Previously there were few mid-priced options in the city, Born explains, and they were often part of less desirable economy chains or aging tourist hotels. Alternatives like the Pod Hotels hold appeal, he says, because they're "technologically savvy, boutique and intelligently designed." These hotels may skimp on space, but not on amenities or services. Indeed, perks (flat-screen TVs, heated towel racks and high-thread-count sheets) are on par with more expensive hotel counterparts. Perhaps the most important reason pod hotels do well here is one that touches on the nature of the five boroughs themselves. After all, this is glittering New York City. How long will you be spending in your room, anyway?





The Yobot in the lobby of Yotel (Photo: Courtesy of Yotel)

Yotel

The 669-room Yotel (570 10th Ave., 877-909-6835, yotelnewyork.com; from \$129) in [Times Square](#) is typical of the capsule hotel experience, and here it starts with an efficient, quiet, discreet — and tip-refuting — luggage-handler. Said handler has metal hinges for joints, lacks a beating heart and goes by Yobot. More than just a novelty, Yobot the robot exemplifies a technological approach to the hospitality industry, which is at the root of the 27-floor Yotel. (Check-in and check-out is done at computerized kiosks.)

The question, *Where's the disco ball?* might cross your mind as you cross the Yotel threshold. Yes, part of the package is an atmosphere that feels more like a club than a hotel — there's a funky dance soundtrack in the lobby and pops of purple and white throughout. The guests, many of whom appear to have stepped out of a London fashion show for an e-cigarette break, seem to model the vibe. Of course, a club is great for a night out, but what about for a night in? Yotel delivers on that too.

Most impressive about Yotel, the largest hotel to open in NYC in 2011, is how it has revamped the concept of space, which was inspired by the design of Asian capsule hotels and that of airplanes. The rooms are called cabins, and the front desk is referred to as Mission Control. Typical rooms like the Premium View Cabin are snug at around 170 square feet, but not uncomfortably so, thanks to some amazing design features. Suitcases, for instance, slide under the bed, built high for the purpose. Sleep is a priority too; the organic and natural fiber Naturalmat mattress is topped with hypoallergenic pillows. The bed, via the press of a button, can also fold up into a couch to maximize space. As for the all-important WiFi, it's "free and super strength." [Book now.](#)



Terrace at the Yotel (Photo: Courtesy of Yotel)

Even with these space-saving conveniences, half an hour in a teeny room is likely enough, which isn't a problem as the Yotel's snazzy public spaces are as vast as the rooms are small. In fact, the Yotel fourth floor terrace is the largest outdoor hotel terrace in New York City, and that's where to go to sip a sake sangria in the [glow of the city skyline](#), before heading back for a solid night's sleep. Either way, strong coffee and an efficient check-out await you in the morning.