

These Luxurious Microhotels Prove Bigger Isn't Always Better

Courtesy of Arlo NoMad

In urban destinations like New York and London, where rates for even basic accommodations can make your eyes pop, new hotels that specialize in small, affordably priced rooms are having a big impact.

[LAURA ITZKOWITZ](#)

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On an average weekday afternoon, the sunken lounge at the stylish [Hoxton Williamsburg](#) (*doubles from \$159*) buzzes with millennials working on laptops, sipping coffee, and snacking on lemon poppy-seed doughnuts from the adjacent all-day restaurant Klein's. The lobby's vintage light fixtures and plush pastel couches make the space feel homey, and when evening falls, it takes on a casual house-party vibe as stylish neighborhood residents and out-of-towners pop by for dinner. The whole setup feels like your coolest friend's apartment, but in reality it's an evolved form of a hotel lobby that invites both visitors who crave a distinctive sense of place and locals drawn in by events programming (live music, panels, and more) that builds a sense of community.



Patrons gather at the Hoxton Paris's Planche Wine Bar.

Courtesy of The Hoxton, Paris

Established in London in 2012, the Hoxton brand epitomizes the surging [“microhotel” trend](#). After taking shape in Europe and Japan, the phenomenon is now shaking up the hotel industry in the United States (the Hoxton has already opened a second American location in [Portland](#), Oregon, with [Chicago](#) and L.A. to follow) and other parts of the world. Emerging brands offer low prices by selling smaller-than-average rooms (hence the “micro” moniker), eliminating commonly underutilized amenities like gyms, and streamlining staffing. The best of them also prioritize great design, high-tech touches, destination-worthy dining and drinking options, and happenings that lure area residents as well as guests. Room sizes average around 150 square feet, but millennial and Gen Z travelers (without kids in tow) who are visiting urban hubs, where demand and prices tend to be high, often plan to spend most of their time exploring the city anyway. For these guests, a desirable location, immediate access to a vibrant cultural landscape (both in and just outside the hotel), and low prices make up for less space.

Though microhotels have a lot in common with upscale hotel/hostel hybrids like Yotel and [Freehand](#), they feel less like college dorms since their guests don't typically share bunk rooms. They're more akin to economical boutique brands like Mama Shelter — which was born in 2008 in Paris and debuted new hotels last year in Toulouse, France; Prague; and Belgrade, Serbia — and Ace Hotel, which launched in Seattle 20 years ago. The Jane Hotel, a 2008 New York City opening, was another early pioneer of the affordable yet fashionable hotel, with a rich history and an eclectic design that makes its 50-square-foot, luxury-train-inspired cabins appealing to the young, artistically minded set.



A sleek 220-square-foot double at the Public New York overlooks Sara Roosevelt Park, on the Lower East Side.

Courtesy of PUBLIC

But the current wave of microhotels blends attractive price points, diminutive room sizes, and hipster cred in a fresh way that has spurred a steady influx of growth, particularly in New York. At its Bowery location, Amsterdam-based [CitizenM](#) (*doubles from \$144*) channels a colorful, ultramodern aesthetic, which encompasses a ground-floor coffee bar, a rooftop lounge with sweeping city views, and the Museum of Street Art, a mammoth 20-floor stairwell with murals by top street artists. All 300 rooms have wall-to-wall windows, king-size

beds with storage drawers, Eames chairs, and iPads that control everything from the temperature to the lights. Just a few blocks away, in a building designed by acclaimed architecture firm Herzog & de Meuron, sits **Public New York** (*doubles from \$150*). Opened by [Ian Schrager](#) in 2017, the hotel lures nightlife obsessives with three bars and an art space that hosts interactive theater performances and DJ-fueled dance parties. The thoughtfully designed rooms, most of which are less than 250 square feet, feature custom beds with built-in reading lights, plus soundproofed windows and blackout shades to ensure a good rest. **Pod Hotels** added to its existing properties — three in New York and one in Washington, D.C. — with a Times Square location (*doubles from \$129*) that houses the Polynesian, an upscale tiki bar from the hit-making restaurateurs behind the Grill, while **Arlo NoMad** (*doubles from \$179*) serves Italian-American cuisine at its Massoni eatery.

The Hoxton plans to enter Chicago and [Los Angeles](#), among other cities, this year; Pod's next expansions will be in Philadelphia and Los Angeles; and Arlo Hotels is already scouting a second location in midtown Manhattan. But the micro movement is also reaching new destinations. Travelers to Tijuana, Mexico, can stay at **One Bunk** (*doubles from \$48*), where colorful Mexican textiles pop against industrial-chic furnishings. (One Bunk also has a location in San Diego.) In the port city of Thessaloníki, Greece, **the Modernist** (*doubles from \$104*) brings a sleek, minimalist touch to a 1920s building, and in London, **the Pilgrim Hotel, Paddington** (*doubles from \$166*) offers 73 rooms stocked with custom toiletries and organic mattresses. CitizenM has dynamic ambitions as well, with plans for hotels in Copenhagen, Shanghai, and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as well as Boston and Seattle.



Jacques' Bar, a petite cocktail bar at the Hoxton, Paris, attracts a broad clientele with its Moroccan-inspired drinks.

Courtesy of The Hoxton, Paris

Stalwarts like Hilton and Marriott have taken notice and are seeking to capitalize on the trend with projects of their own. Hilton's forthcoming brand Motto by Hilton aims to open in 2020 in several cities — including London, Dublin, Boston, and San Diego — with rooms averaging 163 square feet. Marriott's Moxy brand has nearly 40 hotels across the U.S., Europe, and Asia, with an additional 102 projects and 18,798 rooms in the pipeline. The newest: [Moxy Chelsea](#) (*doubles from \$159*), which just opened in New York's Flower District with 349 rooms, an Italian café, a restaurant, a second-floor snack bar, and a rooftop bar. It also has self-check-in kiosks — another increasingly common staple among microhotels and an indication of how hotels of all sizes can innovate as travelers seek more streamlined experiences.