

## On the hotel-ification of home.

### ESSAY: INN STYLE

Words  
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Interior designers have found themselves fielding an increasingly familiar request in recent years. In Sydney, New York and London, private residential clients are asking for restorative bedrooms, spa-like bathrooms, restaurant-style dining spaces and, in some cases, breathtaking entrance hallways—in short they want their homes to feel more like hotels. With everything short of room service on the wish list, it would seem that these clients want to feel as if they are anywhere but home. Yet this curious trend also offers a window into the contemporary experience, reflecting how various aspects of modern life are converging and changing the way we think about the spaces we live in.

Alex Hawkins, a strategic foresight editor at the Future Laboratory, a trends intelligence consultancy, believes the “hometel” trend, as it has

spaces during the pandemic, and an increased focus on home life, showed us that even small design touches could create moments of escape at home, reinforcing an already growing trend that associated spatial design with self-care. “In other words, people are looking to replicate the restorative experiences they’ve enjoyed in hotels within their own homes,” says Hawkins.

The lines between residential and hospitality interiors were already blurring in the years before the pandemic. Ett Hem, for example, is a 25-room, Ilse Crawford–designed luxury hotel in Stockholm, that opened in a 100-year-old home in 2012.<sup>2</sup> Guests often liken their stay to spending time at a (very wealthy and hospitable) friend’s house. Every element of the hotel is designed to foster a sense of intimacy and ease: You are free to help yourself

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come to be known, has its roots in the COVID-19 pandemic. Confined to our homes, we were able to give greater focus to the routines and rituals that gave shape to our days. Formerly mundane tasks were reframed as simple pleasures: brewing a morning coffee, making the bed with fresh sheets or taking a long soak in the tub; and as normality gradually returned, some have found themselves strangely nostalgic for that quieter life.<sup>1</sup> There is an urge to hold on to a time that allowed us to bond with family and hone new domestic skills. “The pandemic fundamentally changed how people perceive their living spaces,” Hawkins says. “People now want spaces that offer calm, comfort and a touch of luxury—essentially turning their homes into personal sanctuaries, wherever they can afford to.”

Once we would have sought this sanctuary in a hotel but the lack of access to hospitality

to anything, from the food in the kitchen to bicycles and raincoats for trips out. Furnishings are relaxed and homey, arranged as if they have been collected by the owner over a lifetime rather than sourced by a design team.

This “softening” of hospitality spaces has since given way to an altogether more fluid approach to domestic spaces. “The pandemic definitely challenged the notion of home, not just from a work/life balance, but in the demand of the home to accommodate other areas of life, like

(1) According to Krystine Batcho, a professor of psychology at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York, nostalgia plays a role in maintaining emotional stability. Lockdown nostalgia can be understood as a response to conflicting emotions about the end of the pandemic: relief that restrictions had been lifted, but lingering unease about the economic uncertainty it had created and the threat of catching the virus.

(2) Crawford also led the design of Ett Hem’s 2022 expansion after two neighboring townhouses came on the market. As part of the project, three apartment-style suites were created for long-stay guests.

relaxation and fitness,” says Jejon Yeung, the principal of Brooklyn-based architecture and design firm Worrell Yeung. Requests from the firm’s clients have ranged from the practical—integrated reading lights next to the bed—to the decidedly decadent, with one recent project including a “spa shed” complete with jacuzzi, outdoor shower, dry sauna and gym. Yeung also sees the trend as part of an ever-growing wellness industry that was estimated in 2024 to be worth \$1.8 trillion. “The desire no doubt comes from a narrative of luxury, fitness and wellness, and [our clients] wanting that incorporated into their daily environment. Comfort is always a top priority in our conversations.”

Aside from convenient space-saving features and wellness amenities, the mood of a luxury hotel can be captured in unconventional approaches to design. “Boutique hotels can make guests feel at home given their more intimate scale, but their added bonus is that they often offer unique features most homeowners may feel less confident about including in their own residences,” explains Yasmine Ghoniem, director of Australian interior

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design studio YSG.<sup>3</sup> This can include “eclectic furniture, daring tones on walls or even ceilings, and paying particular attention to lighting.” For a home project in Mosman, a suburb of Sydney, for example, clients wanted a “tranquil, tonal and textural intensity” and a focus on areas for rest and respite; the studio used a rich palette of dark wood, travertine and neutral colors enlivened with jewel tones, a bold approach typically the preserve of statement design hotels.

(3) The term “boutique hotel” was coined by hotelier Steve Rubell in 1984, when comparing the size and more intimate feel of a small hotel he had opened with his business partner, Ian Schrager, to a small boutique instead of a department store. The pair had previously opened the iconic Manhattan nightclub Studio 54.

(4) Social media has been credited with making interior design more accessible and democratic, but it has also led to the rise of a “fast-homewares” industry that has a significant environmental impact; each year, Americans throw out more than 12 million tons of furniture.

An undeniable factor in the popularity of “hometel” is the proliferation of the trend on social media, where airbrushed and even AI-generated hotel-inspired interiors proliferate endlessly, and where content creators set up guest rooms like hotel suites, replete with stacks of fluffy towels, travel-sized toiletries and the sort of snacks and bottled drinks one might find in a mini bar. Digital media has made consumers more design-conscious than ever before, not to mention more easily influenced.<sup>4</sup> Hawkins references the renewed popularity of *Architectural Digest*, which he said “has become a star player in [media company] Condé Nast’s portfolio” by leaning into “a new wave of celebrity house content”—namely its *Open Door* video series, which allows the public to peep inside the homes of the rich and famous.<sup>5</sup>

The founders of Danish interior design firm Space Copenhagen, Signe Bindslev Henriksen and Peter Bundgaard Rützou, have observed this phenomenon with a mix of despair and optimism.<sup>6</sup> “There is a growing desire to incorporate picture-perfect experiences into our personal living spaces,” they say, reflecting on how social media is creating a homogenized global design landscape. “However, we have also noticed a countertrend that prioritizes human-centered values and choices in the spaces around us. This is a response to the fast-paced and shallow consumer society that lacks permanence and genuine value.”

At good neighbor in Baltimore, which started as a café, founders Shawn Chopra and Anne Morgan have been slowly growing a retail store and hotel that offers a more intimate and personal experience, rooted in its community. Its seven shoppable guest rooms include products by local makers as well as carefully chosen pieces from further afield. “The idea was to create a spot that feels like home,” says Chopra. “It allows people to live with these objects; to touch and to feel them. When you leave a space that’s beautifully designed and has an amazing feeling, you want to bring some of that back with you.”

It’s proof that, while informed by contemporary influences—social media, the global wellness movement and the lasting impact of the pandemic—the “hometel” trend is rooted in something deeper, reflecting an enduring search for comfort and connection in our homes. As the world becomes noisier, faster-paced and more

screen-based, our craving for slowness, mindfulness and well-being will only grow. Whether we find solace in a home that emulates the luxury of a hotel or indeed the reverse, the “hometel” trend is a timely reminder of the role of our homes in nurturing our contentment and happiness.

(5) Some of the most memorable moments from *Open Door* episodes include rapper Wiz Khalifa’s weed bar, tennis player Maria Sharapova’s regulation bowling alley in her basement and the revelation that actor Maggie Gyllenhaal plays the theremin.

(6) Space Copenhagen’s notable projects include 11 Howard—a Manhattan hotel that was designed to feel more like a home than a hotel—and the redesign of the three Michelin-starred Copenhagen restaurant Noma.