Capsule hotels

Thinking small

Hotels with tiny rooms, pioneered in Japan, are spreading and evolving .

With their tiny rooms and prices as low as ¥ 2,000 ($18) a night, capsule hotels have existed in Japan since the 1980s, but have not caught on elsewhere . They have, however, helped to inspire a new breed [1] of inexpensive , no-frills hotel outside Japan that are not quite as small and not quite as cheap .In 2005 easyGroup , the parent company of easyJet , a low-cost airline ,opened easyHotels in Hungary, Switzerland and Britain , with rooms from $ 22 a night . (As you would expect ,extra amenities , such as windows or television , cost extra .) The latest examples of the genre, which opened this year , have added a further twist [2] : they combine small rooms at low prices with cutting-edge [3] design and technology .

Yotel, a British company, opened its first hotel inside London's Gatwick airport in July . Its tiny rooms , or " cabins " draw inspiration from both Japanese capsule hotels and the first – class accommodation on a British Airways airliner . The " premium cabin " contains a full-sized foldaway bed , a toilet and shower , electrical points, a desk, free wireless-internet access and a flat-panel television . Room rates start at £ 25 (§ 52) for four hours or £55 per night . The company will open another hotel at Heathrow airport on December 1st , and plans a third at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport in early 2008.

Amsterdam is also the site of the first mini-sized hotel in a chain called Qbic being launched by a Dutch start-up company . Like a low-cost airline, Qbic keeps prices down with online booking and self-service check-in .
All this illustrates that an " era of experimentation " is under way in the hotel industry . Although there are no hard numbers on the quantity of capsule-like hotels around the world, both Yotel and Qbic have plans for additional properties in 2008 , which suggests that tiny rooms could have a big future .

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Notes :
(1) breed = type
(2) twist = development
(3) cutting-edge = most advanced