

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Travel brands embrace robotics for better hospitality

November 10, 2017



*HotelJen's robot*

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

As hotel and travel brands continue to integrate technology to drive convenience, robotics seems to be the next frontier.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Shangri-La is the latest hotel brand to innovate in customer service through technology. The hospitality brand's Hotel Jen in Asia is working with autonomous robots to deliver room service.

"Hotel Jen is proud to be the first brand in the Shangri-La group to introduce this technology," said Cetin Sekercioglu, executive vice president at Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts. "The new "colleagues" will be great team players in getting important things done well and delivered in Jen's distinctive style.

### Robotics in hospitality

Hotel Jen is introducing Jen and Jena, two robots that will be able to deliver room service and amenities from the in-room dining menu.

Guests will be able to place orders in their rooms to be delivered by the robots. Jen and Jena will be stationed within the lobby at all times, donning robot versions of staff uniforms in turquoise and pink.

Both robots stand at a little over three feet tall and are made to look like robotic butlers with their special uniforms.



The robots are able to navigate throughout the halls and up the elevators at no faster than 2 miles per hour, for safety. The robots are equipped with sensors to help them travel without bumping into anything or people.

Upon arrival to guests' room, the robots will make a phone call to the room to indicate they are there.

While a robotic presence is not in every hotel, the concept is becoming more prevalent.

#### Robotic innovation

Hotel brands are leveraging new technology concepts more often. For instance, a hotel in Japan named Henn na Hotel is staffed entirely by robots and doors are opened through facial recognition technology.

In Ghent, Belgium, a Marriott hotel installed a humanoid robot with a name, Mario, in 2015, where he welcomes guests in different languages.

Also, IBM has lent its Watson technology to act as a concierge at Hotel McLean in Virginia.

The Mandarin Oriental, Las Vegas has also appointed a humanoid robot as the newest member of its staff.

Developed by Softbank Robotics Europe, a French "Socit par Actions Simplifie" company, Pepper will work as a technical ambassador at Mandarin Oriental's Las Vegas hotel property. Nearly all industry sectors have begun to toy with artificial intelligence-powered tools and services to better engage with and respond to consumers and their needs ([see more](#)).

While not a hotel brand, Turing Robotic Industries, a San Francisco-based company focused on mobile technology, is releasing a new high-end smartphone that comes with a built-in concierge service.

Turing's smartphone is called Appassionato, meaning "enthusiast" in Italian, as well as being a play on words with the word "app." Appassionato's main selling point however is an on-board digital concierge named Sir Alan who, Turing boasts, can assist in managing every part of an owner's life ([see more](#)).

"Known to curate playful experiences, Hotel Jen, through the Relay robots, yet again proves that it can surprise and delight urban adventure-seekers," Ms. Sekercioglu said.