

BRITISH AIRWAYS

high life

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NOVEMBER 2015

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FUTURE GAZING

By the time the next 500 issues of *High Life* are published – taking us through to 2055 – travel will have changed beyond recognition. But how?

Here are the predictions from people in the know

2025

TECHNOLOGY by Murad Ahmed

Think back to a decade ago. YouTube had just been launched. Facebook was emerging on the campus of Harvard University. Apple had yet to release the iPhone. It was an era before Angry Birds and selfies, before billions carried a supercomputer in their pockets. How might technology change our lives in the next ten years?

Let's start with how you pay for things. Today, most of us hand over cash or a credit card at the counter, but that's already beginning to change. Thanks to Apple Pay, the Californian company's new payments system, transactions are already being completed by tapping a phone or smartwatch against a cashpoint. Google and PayPal have similar systems in the works. Imagine how easy paying for things abroad will be if all you needed was a phone. It could be the final death knell for foreign exchange kiosks and travellers' cheques.

Photograph: Vincent Fournier/Gallery Stock

500



Robot rock
Reem-B (pictured) was created by Pal Robotics in Spain in 2013. The photographer Vincent Fournier has explored human relations with intelligent machines

Meanwhile, Facebook and Microsoft are working on virtual reality. Both companies are building headsets that make users feel as if they have entered a different world. These devices could be revolutionary: they would allow travellers to explore lands, hotels and sights virtually before booking and exploring the real places. Facebook's founder Mark Zuckerberg described virtual reality as the 'next platform' for computing – meaning you might be throwing out your laptop and smartphone sooner than you think.

Perhaps further away is a technology that could be humanity's most powerful creation yet: artificial intelligence (AI). Google is among those racing to produce machines that can 'think', able to make independent decisions and predictions about the world around them – just as humans can. Some believe AI will create a better world, with people being supported by their super-smart digital assistants working to

solve humanity's most pressing problems, such as climate change and fatal diseases.

Others ask, what prevents these thinking machines realising humans are inferior beings, leading them to annihilate us? Stephen Hawking warns that AI would be 'the biggest event in human history... unfortunately, it might also be the last.'

That would make future-gazing itself a thing of the past. But don't be too concerned. Experts reckon it's more likely that your AI will prefer to operate a 'driverless' car to take you to the airport, while the perfect AI pilot flies you to your destination. Which would be far more agreeable than Armageddon.

Murad Ahmed is The Financial Times' European technology correspondent

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Explorations / The next 40 years

2035

HOTELS

by Martin Raymond

There'll be robot butlers and algorithmic concierges, but the future of hotels will be as much about lifestyle and community. In the coming 20 years, we're set to see an array of new technologies reshape what it means to be a hotel guest.

The rise of services such as Airbnb and onefinestay have altered the picture of hospitality, providing people with an experience that wires them into the culture of the destination that they are visiting. Meanwhile, an emerging millennial audience is demanding a more tech-enabled experience from hoteliers.

This means that the best hotels right now are upping the cultural ante. One example, Hotel Hotel in Canberra, for instance, works by layering different offerings that attract locals as well as tourists. Located in the über-sustainable, Japanese-inspired Nishi Building, Hotel Hotel has a hair salon, an eight-theatre cinema, a library stocked with art and design books, an art gallery – even a bicycle shop. As more hotels like this open, hospitality in the future won't be about lodging, but about lifestyle. With this, we will see an emergence of lifestyle hubs that offer a 360-degree immersion in the needs and requirements of the guest, where sleeping will be secondary to culture, entertainment and new media experiences.

As this new wave of cultural hubs sweeps the hotel industry, advances in technology are enhancing experiences for visitors and setting pulses racing. You'll already find hotels, which, in a move reminiscent of sci-fi film *Her*, offer a digital concierge. The 'digital helper' can be the guest's portal to everything from room temperature to room service, plus a kind of personal social secretary, even introducing guests to one other. These kinds of early examples of digital concierges suggest that over the next 20 years hotels may offer their guest digital fixes to enable them to feel more connected and to be able to behave more spontaneously. This will progress into an era when hotels become more sentient, and predictive.

Clockwise from top
Botlr, the robot butler at
Aloft hotel; Hotel Hotel in
Canberra's futuristic lobby;
the Monster kitchen and
bar at Hotel Hotel



The hotel of 2035 will, as the norm, run background checks of guests' online identities in order to serve them empathetically. Services and physical environments will be hyper-personalised and be able to anticipate guests' needs. The more information guests are willing to reveal from their 'digital aura' (email, calendar, social media), the better these services could be. In the future, responsive, changing environments

will become more common, so a hotel room might be lit differently depending on the reason for your stay (business or pleasure), for example.

But when it comes to guessing the shape of things to come, perhaps the most novel hospitality tech I've seen recently is coming from Starwood Hotels. Walking through the corridors of the brand's Aloft hotels you may run into Botlr, a robot butler that hastens around the hotel delivering room service, sewing kits and spare toothbrushes to guests in need. No doubt future generations of robots such as Botlr will also be able to register the emotions of their guests. Using facial recognition technology, the robot butler of the future will recognise whether you are annoyed, happy, confused – and be able to behave and respond accordingly. Whatever your opinion on the rise of the hotel robot or digital assistant, for better or worse, no doubt over the next 20 years the way we tip in hotels will be one thing that will change in the industry as a result.

Martin Raymond is the cofounder of trend forecasting agency, The Future Laboratory
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Photograph: Savioke

Explorations / The next 40 years

2045

AIRCRAFT by Mike Sinnett

Man walking on the moon, Concorde travelling at twice the speed of sound, commuters catching a plane to work – when William E Boeing started his tiny airplane manufacturing company in Seattle in 1916, the changes to come were unimaginable.

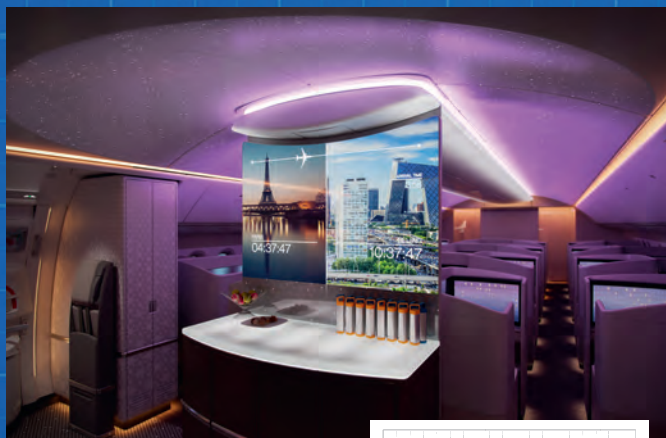
Even during my 25 years working at Boeing, I've seen a lot of change. Thirty years ago, when 767s first came into service, flying straight from St Louis to London was a revelation. The arrival of the 767 marked a monumental shift as it allowed flight over long distances such as the Atlantic Ocean without needing stop-off points. In 1990 I drove from London to Dar es Salaam in a Bedford truck, a six-month trip. The return journey via Nairobi on a BA 747 took just one afternoon.

As for the next 30 years? We are on the cusp of a complete transformation of the in-flight environment and this is where you'll notice the biggest change. Imagine being on a flight from London to Paris and hearing birdsong as you fly over the British countryside, then city sounds accompanied by visuals of the Parisian skyline. We're not too far away from this. Projectors and thin films of LEDs will mean that parts of the cabin can be coated and used as huge screens. In the near future, mobile phones and tablets will connect with in-flight systems as you board and share your favourite bands and films. Moments later when you reach your seat a unique playlist or curated cinema selection will appear ready for you to enjoy.

Outside the cabin, it's not too far off that every aircraft will use its in-built sensors to act as weather stations to collect real-time data on weather conditions as they happen. This could then be accessed by flight crews worldwide on a central database, meaning an even safer, more informed flight. Carbon emissions will continue to be reduced, and there will be a movement towards the use of biofuels and green diesels, too.

Will we see supersonic again? Maybe someday propulsion, aerodynamics and materials technology may get us to the point where we can fly at supersonic speeds with acceptable levels of economics. But we aren't there yet.

Mike Sinnett is the head of future developments at Boeing
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Clockwise from top
 Project Loon by Google;
 the visionary Boeing
 777X is full of innovative
 features; Bluesmart's
 carry-on travel case



INNOVATIVE TRAVEL COMPANIES

The ones that are changing the way we explore the globe

BLUESMART

Founded: 2013

Based: Mountain View, California

When Bluesmart launched a crowdfunding project to raise money for its smart suitcase, it became the highest funded travel project on Kickstarter. What's all the fuss about? A carry-on with digital lock and GPS (accessed from an iPhone app), charger (that charges your phone up to six times) and in-built digital scales that show the weight of the case. The app records which airport the case has been through and how many miles it's travelled.
bluesmart.com

BRITISH AIRWAYS

Founded: 1974

Based: Harmondsworth, UK

The largest international scheduled airline in the UK, British Airways was the first in Europe to operate a fleet of new A380 and 787 Dreamliner planes and the first carrier to use flat beds. Future innovations include BA's work with Solena to convert landfill waste into jet fuel.
britishairways.com

GOOGLE

Founded: 1998

Based: Mountain View, California

Google's impact is almost too great to quantify. It has spawned everything from Android to new Loon balloons, which give isolated communities all over the world internet access, while Google Maps is the most used app in the world. google.co.uk

AIRBNB

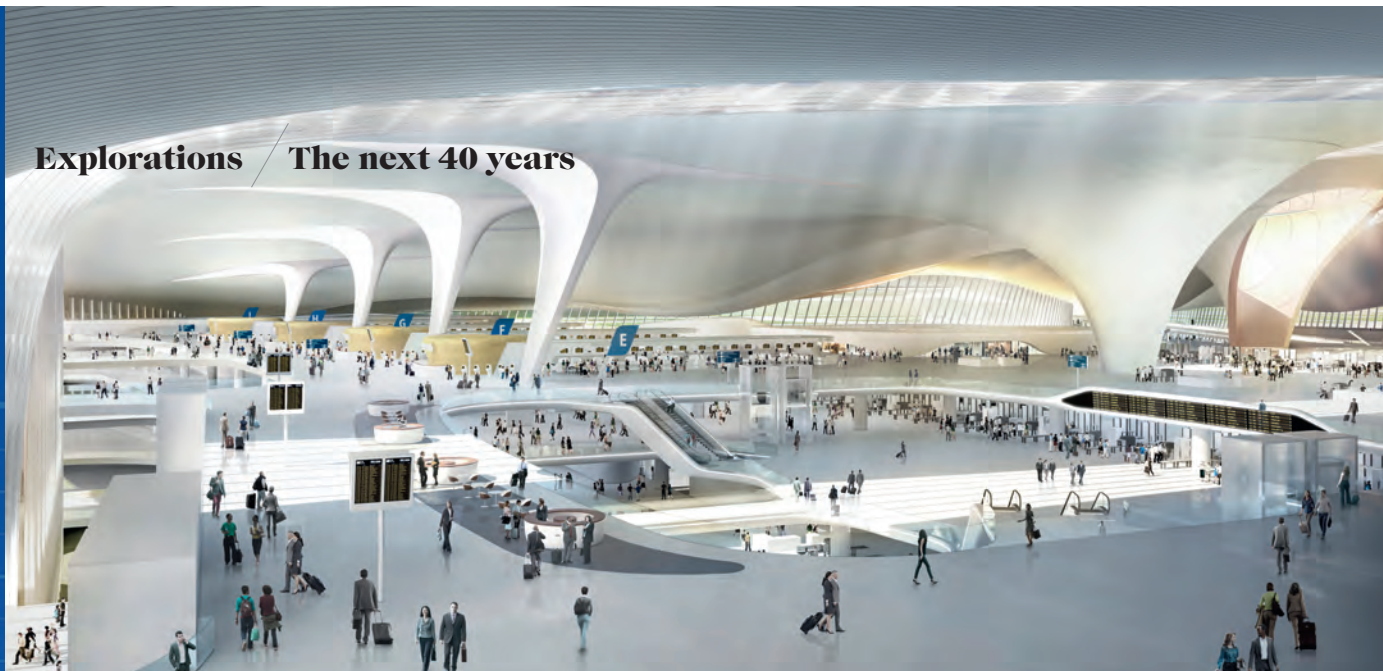
Founded: 2008

Based: San Francisco, California

Ten years ago, most people wouldn't have dreamed of staying in a stranger's home. Now, 11 million of us do this every year through Airbnb, which has fundamentally changed holiday

Mike Sinnett's photograph: Boeing 47444. Photographs: Google and the Google logo are registered trademarks of Google Inc, used with permission. Loon™ internet service; Boeing illustration; Bluesmart

Explorations / The next 40 years



AIRPORTS by Zaha Hadid

Whether it is by an entirely new type of aircraft, teleportation devices or some other means not even imagined yet, years from now each of us will probably be travelling through airports much more than we do today. As architects, we are now developing the innovations for use in airports in 40 years' time.

At Zaha Hadid Architects we are currently designing the passenger terminal for the new Beijing International Airport. It will have seven runways and by 2055 will be serving more than 100 million passengers each year. The new terminal will be adaptable and able to operate in many different configurations dependant on varying aircraft and passenger traffic throughout each day.

People today are already implementing biometric identification and facial recognition systems in sports stadia to replace paper ticketing. I believe this same technology will also eventually replace boarding cards and passports. Equipment installed at each gate will enable passengers to clear immigration and customs simply by disembarking from the aircraft.

Unlike many of today's airports, with separate satellite terminals linked by shuttle trains, concourses and moving walkways, the airports of the future could have only one terminal with the most compact layouts. A single, central space that serves every passenger's needs would be much easier and quicker to navigate – and minimises the distances between check-in and gate, as well as the distances between gates for transferring passengers. It's much more effective and sustainable to have a terminal that enables passengers to walk shorter distances to everywhere they need to go.

Airports are also evolving beyond the anonymous spaces solely defined by passenger flows and commercial revenues. Like Grand Central or railway stations of past centuries – built with great civic pride, optimism and ambition – the new central courts of tomorrow's airport terminals will be uplifting, welcoming and generous. As international hubs, they will be important public places and where we connect with each other; fantastic spaces – as varied and unique as the cities they serve. ■

This year, Zaha Hadid became the first woman to be awarded the Riba Gold Medal. She also won the Stirling Prize in 2010 and 2011. Her practice, Zaha Hadid Architects, is designing the passenger terminal for the new Beijing International Airport

🐦 @ZHA_News

2055



accommodation, sating the appetites of experience-driven travellers who want a more authentic break. In seven years it's gone from a San Francisco start-up to a multi-billion-dollar business. airbnb.co.uk

TESLA

Founded: 2003

Based: Fremont, California

Electric cars are set to be the future of motoring. Founded by a group of Silicon Valley engineers, Tesla is leading the way in electric vehicles, with its P85D model reaching 60mph in just 3.2 seconds. It's up there with the likes of supercars, while remaining energy efficient. teslamotors.com

TRIPADVISOR

Founded: 2000

Based: Needham, Massachusetts

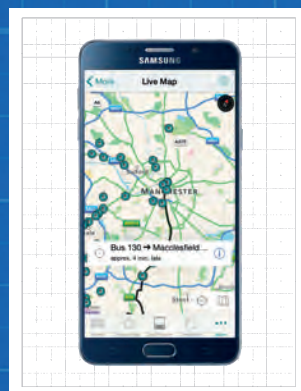
TripAdvisor's original aim was to provide reviews from guidebooks and magazines. But 250 million reviews later, it is the largest travel website in the world, comprising honest reviews – sometimes brutally so – written by real people. The site's reviews can help make or break a business, all by putting power in the hands of the consumer. tripadvisor.co.uk

HACON

Founded: 1984

Based: Hanover, Germany

HaCon's travel planning apps see 40 million journeys planned every day across Europe, combining information on taxis, car rental, bike sharing and public transport systems. hacon.de



Clockwise from above How Beijing International airport is projected to look; Tesla supercharger station; a HaCon map app

Additional words: Katie Gatens. Photographs: Render by Methanol © Zaha Hadid Architects; Tesla; HaCon/Samsung Galaxy Note 5