

# Travel Trend: Sleep Pods & Capsule Hotels

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Remember that scene in Fifth Element, when they travel to the Paradise Planet and sleep in pod-like beds? Well I got to experience the sci-fi backpacker dream at 91 Loop recently, and, I must say, it was pretty darned cool.

Attending a blogger evening at 91 Loop last month, we were some of the lucky ones to receive a complimentary stay over in their new sleep pod accommodation.

Very chuffed with our modern key card, which when pressed would light up our sleep pods in a soft blue light so we'd know which was ours, we enjoyed a night on the town without worrying about the long trek home to Muizenberg.



Image sourced from 91 On Loop

Set up much like a backpacker or hostel, each room sleeps at least 20 travellers. The pods are designed to lie directly into the wall, like a row of horizontal 'nooks', with room for a single bed.

Each sleep pod comes with its own bed, bedding, a light, a plug for charging your tech, and a locker for storing luggage safely. Bathrooms and showers are shared, but weren't crowded.

As someone who suffers from claustrophobia at the worst of times (ahem, elevator), when we settled in for the night I found the pods surprisingly spacious and somewhat cozy. The cocoon-like sleep pod is also nice and quiet inside, which is handy in a roomful of strangers.

## Travel trend?

While on par with hostels and backpackers when it comes to affordability, the clever 'sleep pod' design allows a sense of privacy and luxury – not to mention a feeling of being transported into the future.



Image sourced from reddit.com

An overlapping travel trend is the 'capsule hotel', which is defined as a private space in a shared room and is designed for a more sophisticated experience than the typical hostel, such as free Wi-Fi and more privacy.

Surprisingly ahead of it's time, Japan was the first to open a capsule hotel in the late 70s, in order to meet the need of travelling businessmen who required a place to rest and freshen up between stops.

In 2012 China followed suit, but the capsule hotel concept only reached Europe in 2014, when the first one opened in Belgium. More recently, they've been popping up all over – from Mexico, Amsterdam, Singapore and now, closer to home, in South Africa ...

This travel trend is particularly popular at airports, where it is also referred to as 'transit hotels' (beds or pods that can be hired by the hour at international airports).



Image sourced from 91 On Loop

While the concept of small, affordable and efficient prevails, the application of the capsule hotel design varies.

From our personal experience of 'sleep pods' – which only have enough room for a single bed – to snooze pods that are paid for by the hour. The accommodation design can even make allowance for bathrooms and other amenities, resembling a tiny hotel room.

But the question is: Is this a glimpse into the future of travel or just another passing novelty that will soon be forgotten?

*For more info or to make a booking go to [www.91loop.co.za](http://www.91loop.co.za)*

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