

TRAVEL HOTEL REVIEW

Hi-tech haven

Brisbane's NEXT Hotel has an app for everything but it didn't always work as expected, writes **Ky Chow**.

Rather than expensive extras few of us use, the 4½ star NEXT Hotel uses open-plan design and a mobile app to be the most practical, thoughtful hotel I can recall. Though the technology does come with a few bugs, the first NEXT hotel in the world is easy to recommend for anyone who can use a smartphone.



NEXT Hotel

72 Queen Street, Brisbane

Unique but genuinely useful room design, technology and services, plus a prime location and views.

Rates

Start from \$229 a night. Deluxe King one night \$289, weekend package with breakfast and parking, \$259.

Contact

silverneedlehotels.com/next/brisbane

Location

Bang in the middle of Queen Street Mall in Brisbane's CBD, NEXT is surrounded by shopping and easy access to the CBD for office meetings. At night the Mall becomes more of a bar and nightclub zone, but it's a safe and easy walk to the swankier South Bank and the Eagle Street Pier restaurant scene.

The room

Thanks to an open plan design, rooms are bright and spacious. The bathroom has sliding doors instead of permanent walls, which means like the trendy open kitchens that are de rigueur in homes, guests can watch TV or admire the views while at the counter preparing for the day. NEXT's mobile app can control almost every aspect



of your stay and while a little buggy, connectivity is the future of both homes and hotels. You can control lights, TV and temperature and I especially loved the ability to message hotel staff even when out and about in Brisbane. Of course, you can still call and speak to NEXT's young and friendly staff too, which is handy since the

Samsung-designed app interface could be more intuitive.

Like most technology-driven aspects of our lives, there are glitches and still some teething issues for the nine-month-old hotel. A selection of free movies is a great idea but they often wouldn't stream over the network and picture quality was average. Sometimes the TV stopped responding to the app altogether. Opening your hotel door with the app sounds promising, but was a hassle to set up and simply didn't work.

Four free mini bar items a day, including nibbles, is a sensible and welcome move, as is the free WiFi.

The bathroom

Besides being sunny and open, the bathroom features a huge shower stall (no bath) but unfortunately water pressure was



weak and uneven, sometimes stopping altogether for a brief but cold second.

Room service

Room service is 24/7 and you can get hot food even overnight, such as \$22 beef burgers and \$12 fries.

Amenities

Outside your room, NEXT's standout is the lounge, namely a feature business workers have yearned for in offices – sleep pods. Four futuristic little cocoons in curtained alcoves are perfect for a pre-flight kip. The rest of the lounge is roomy, opening out onto the 20 metre pool (not heated) and connected to a well-equipped gym. NEXT's in-house Lennons restaurant and bar specialises in rather decadent comfort food. **BA**



Barbara Wolveridge
real estate agent, Port Douglas; former director, World Golf Tours

How did you start playing golf?

In 1989, I met my future husband Michael Wolveridge, who in his time was a famous golfer and golf course designer, and he was keen for me to learn. He showed me how to play and when needed, he would correct my swing and stance.

Golf course membership

I hold long-standing memberships at The National, Mornington Peninsula and Palmer Sea Reef in Port Douglas. At the National, I played A-grade pennant; on several occasions our team won the flag. At Palmer Sea Reef, I've won the annual club championship a couple of times.

Handicap

My personal best was seven, and I'm playing off nine for the moment.

What clubs do you use?

For the past 15 years, I have played Callaway irons and Taylor Made woods; and I'm on the lookout for new clubs with a larger sweet spot. That said, stellar play is more about practice than it is about the latest equipment.

Favourite course and favourite hole

My favourite course is Royal County Down in Ireland, a must for golf history buffs. In Australia, my favourite courses are the Ocean Course at the National, designed by my husband, and Links Hope Island Golf Club on the Gold Coast. My favourite hole is the 18th at New York's Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, a short par-five on the links-style course.

Most inspiring golfer

In today's field, Rory McIlroy is an inspirational and gifted sportsman. He's young and an aggressive player, and a gentleman.

If you could play anywhere, where would it be?

Travelling for 10 years as director of World Golf Tours, I've played most of the world's top courses. One course that has eluded me and is on my "to play" list is Cypress Point Golf Club on the Monterey Peninsula in California.

Memorable moments

Two standout recollections come to mind. I was first to tee off on the Old Course St Andrews in Scotland straight after the 2000 British Open. A second memorable golfing experience was as course record-holder for the Ocean Course at the National. Not an embarrassing moment for me, but one for my match play partner, who threw his golf bag and clubs into a crocodile-infested water hazard at Sheraton Mirage Country Club – that ended his round.

Tips

Follow through your swing and don't look up too soon. I continually remind

myself: "If you look up, you'll rarely see a good shot."

Most like to have a round with

I'd love to have a game with former US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, at her home club, Augusta National. Not for the course itself, but because she is one of three females tapped for membership.

Worst thing about golf

Golfers who chronically complain about their "last bad shot". Get over it, and move on to positive thoughts that are conducive to improvement.

Why golf

Golf is a game for life and a passport to the world. Next, there's the exercise component (walk the course, don't ride) and the camaraderie.

Thoughts from the 19th hole?

Despite the frustrations, stay mindful and don't give up – your next shot may drop in.

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