

TRAVEL INTEL · HOTELS

A Former Facebook Employee Is Building the Hotel of the Future

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Courtesy ARRIVE Hotels



A new hotel in Palm Springs is snubbing traditional hotel services in favor of a casual and comfortable style, with a little help from modern technology.

Imagine checking into your hotel room from the hotel bar while the bartender hands over the keys. That's how **Arrive Hotels** in Palm Springs plans to welcome its guests when it opens this winter. But lest this seems like a party hotel move, Arrive Hotels' concept is built around ditching traditional hotel services, like the front desk and room phones, and replacing them with technology we use in everyday life, like texting, with the purpose of giving guests a comfortable and easy stay stripped of stodgy hotel formalities.

Other hotels have already targeted modern yet socially connected nomads (you might call them "Millennials") with technology such as smartphone room keys and a casual service attitude, but Arrive Hotels has the ultimate social network behind it--one of its founders, Ezra Callahan, was Facebook's sixth hire.

Arrive Hotels is Callahan's first hotel, but he's been working on other hospitality projects with his Los Angeles-based real estate company, Artist and Recreation, LLC since leaving Facebook in 2010.

"After spending several years working on a product that's all about connecting people virtually, I really liked the idea of trying to build physical spaces that did the same thing," Callahan told *Condé Nast Traveler*.

Arrive is currently under construction in the Uptown Design District of Palm Springs on a popular thoroughfare dotted with restaurants and shops. Built in the midcentury modern style that Palm Springs is known for, the hotel will have just 32 rooms, but plenty of space for socializing: There will be an 80-seat restaurant with indoor and al fresco dining, a 66-foot pool and a very group-friendly 20-foot jacuzzi.

"We want to reflect, and integrate with, our surroundings in a way that makes our hotel the one our neighbors recommend to their friends without hesitation, which becomes a social landmark ingrained in the neighborhood, and which draws locals in regularly to dine, drink and hang," Callahan said.

When guests, er, arrive at Arrive, they will simply walk into the hotel's restaurant and bar to be checked-in. Kurt Englund, Arrive's managing director, told *Condé Nast Traveler* that all Arrive employees will be "cross-trained" so that anyone can help out. There will be a person at the door helping with bags, and another employee parking cars, but for the most part, "everyone can help everyone out," Englund said. This "anyone can help" attitude has also influenced the hotel's hiring process. Englund said there have been applicants who weren't comfortable performing other tasks aside from the job they applied for, but Arrive is looking for people who want to do all these things.

Callahan also echoed the importance of Arrive employees to start-up hotel brand.

"To bring our vision for the Arrive brand to life, we need a full team at each property that embraces the core concepts that brand is built on and which takes pride in striving to constantly adapt and improve," Callahan said. "Watching Facebook evolve over its early years taught me a lot of valuable lessons in how to support that kind of environment."

Inside the guest rooms, which continue the midcentury modern theme with clerestory windows offering dramatic views of the desert mountains, Apple TV will be offered, along with king beds, free WiFi, Malin + Goetz bath amenities, and minibar snacks at "reasonable prices." And eschewing a common practice amongst other Palm Springs hotels, Arrive will not have a resort fee.

But what's notably missing from the guestrooms is a phone. Englund explained that guests will start communicating with the hotel prior to their trip via email and even, text message, "You can text or email in advance any special requests you might have and our staff will be monitoring all that and getting it take care of." And when you're in the room, you can simply text for whatever you need, no special hotel app required. "Our goal is not to have our guests install an app. We would use a communication method that they already have," Englund said.

Elsewhere on the property, Arrive will have the Customs coffee shop, serving Joshua Tree roasted coffee, along with an ice cream shop. And given Palm Springs's notoriety for music festivals like Coachella and Splash House, held at different hotel pools, Arrive is working on their own curated music events.

Arrive is on track for a winter opening with room rates expected to start at \$199 a night.