

If you want to create good design — travel



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Travel is not about where you go but how you experience the places you go. It's those experiences that shape your memories and your inspiration.

And every time I travel and experience something new, I always return home with pockets full of new design ideas. If you want to create inspired design in your home, you must travel.

I recently had the pleasure of travelling to Vancouver and was awestruck by the sophisticated and trendy design while staying at the Douglas Hotel, a boutique-style hotel operated by the Marriot chain and intended to reflect the design and sensibilities of the city it inhabits.

Here are my design takeaways from my "unique-boutique" travel experience in Vancouver.

It's all about the lighting. My first contact with the hotel started with the elevator. A major wow factor with a mirror surrounded by bulbs creating a 3D effect. It's a reminder: Don't overlook the power of lighting.

The bookshelves in the lobby bar have built-in LED lighting to add depth and elegance. The main lobby reception desk is a glass encased backlit Douglas fir tree — paying homage



The bookshelves in the lobby bar of the Douglas Hotel have built-in LED lighting to add depth and elegance.

to the original Douglas firs that laid the foundation for Vancouver's thriving lumber economy.

The hotel was also a friendly reminder: Don't overdo your lighting! The guest rooms were a perfect example of why you don't need pot lights everywhere. It felt like a cozy cabin with its layers of lighting that

created a warm and quiet vibe.

You can bring luxury into your home in small doses. It's the simple tricks that make a space luxurious like a boutique hotel. These details can be incorporated into your own home very simply.

Small details like bedside USB ports for cell phone charging and

an espresso machine add modern conveniences for travellers but are also ideas we can incorporate into our own homes.

The bathrooms showcased simple well-lit vanities with the latest in motion sensor technology — a true luxury that can easily be installed in any home.

Don't be afraid to mix materials. If you want to create a curated and "worldly" vibe in your own home, take a cue from the boutique hotel design pros.

Using a combination of hard and soft materials adds interest as well as texture and pattern to a space. Boutique hotels like the Douglas love to mix in carpet with hardwood and then tile.

Cover windows in heavy blackout drapery and even apply hardwood to walls like in the guest rooms where the headboard is a wood-clad wall. Wallpaper is another great, and very popular way to add texture.

A simple grasscloth makes a statement without being too busy. Soft materials are also sound dampening so they help keep a space feeling calm.

With travel comes new ideas and hotels like the Douglas have perfected the formula for design. A luxury home away from home needs to be something to captivate your imagination yet also be calm and comforting.

After all we all want to relax on vacation. Why not repeat this formula in your own home.

— *Rebecca Hay is principal of Rebecca Hay Designs Inc., specializing in the design of classically livable family homes, and is known for her design work and appearances on several HGTV programs. For more information, visit RebeccaHayDesigns.com.*

You're so vain: Finding the perfect vanity for your tiny bathroom



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Small homes are a common subject of designer scrutiny and solutions — particularly with the proliferation of downtown condos and townhomes.

How do you make a big impact in a small space? You've got to go the extra mile to make the most of every square inch. This means every furnishing and fixture has to count — your bathroom is no exception.

A small bathroom doesn't have to fall short on style or storage. The right vanity can go a long way to meeting both demands. Here are three considerations when shopping for that perfect vanity that satisfies those big 'small-space' cravings.

1. Size matters. It's not the size of the bathroom that counts, it's how you use it, right? Consider the vanity's height and depth in relation to the room, and how you use the space.

Particularly in compact bathrooms, you'll want to pay close attention to factors such as door swing, location of the toilet and tub, and the general flow of traffic.

Along with vanity dimensions come some other technical considerations. Where is the plumbing located? Do you require a single or double sinks? How will the faucet be mounted?

It's always best to consult with a professional contractor who can advise you on what's possible in your space, the scope of work and timeline for completion, and the cost.

2. Out of sight, out of mind. The type of bathroom you have will dictate which storage system will best meet your needs.

A powder room has minimal storage requirements, while an ensuite or a busy family bathroom calls for greater storage, organization and efficiency.

For small bathrooms that see a lot of action, consider installing a vanity cabinet which is perfect for tucking away towels, toilet paper, tissue boxes, and perhaps a drawer (or an under-counter caddy!) for each fam-

ily member to store personal items.

3. Styles for miles. Some see a small bathroom as a design challenge. I view it as the perfect opportunity to make a statement.

Since the space is limited, the few fixtures you have, including the vanity, need to be high-impact. Select a vanity style that stands out to you, either for its materials, shape, style, or another unique detail that sets it apart.

I've designed more than a few small but sweet spaces of all kinds. The key to a great room, regardless of its size, is filling it with the things you love; furnishings, finishes and accessories that speak to you.

One benefit of having a small space is that they're typically less costly and less laborious to renovate. So when it comes to your small but sweet bathroom, it's definitely worth the splurge.

— *Sara Bederman is principal designer for Sare Bederman Design and is known for creating stylish, thoughtfully curated and livable interiors. Visit her at sarabederman.com.*



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