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The Biggest Home Tech Trends for 2021

Ahead of the CES show, residential tech experts predict a year of rollable televisions, VR toys and intelligent beds.

BY ADRIAN JUSTINS



Before CES, the world's biggest technology convention, gets under way next week, five industry experts predict the gadgets that might make their way into our homes this year.

Smart and sustainable solutions

The demand for smart home solutions will grow in 2021, predicts Stephanie Mackenzie, national sales manager at Stockland, one of Australia's largest property developers, as homeowners seek automated convenience. "Customers are becoming more tech-savvy and open to digitising their

home," she says. "They [homeowners] are looking to integrate features such as switching on the heater or cooler half an hour before arriving home."

However, while Mackenzie says Google Home — a smart home system with app and voice-control — will remain popular, she suggests some homeowners will prioritise sustainability rather than convenience. She predicts rising demand for residential solar power — solar panels connected to home storage batteries. "People love the idea of tracking their energy usage through an app, seeing how much they're saving," she says.



The roof of this two-bedroom home on Bedarra Island, Queensland, is bedecked with solar panels. Perched on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, the property comes with a one-bedroom caretaker's residence, which uses 100 per cent solar power, and spring and captured rainwater. All could be yours for A\$4.5m (\$3.4m).

Bigger screens

The global pandemic's toll on cinemas in 2020 has led consumers to recreate the cinematic experience at home, according to Laurence Mitchell, head of technology at the UK department store John Lewis. He predicts strong demand for large 8k televisions and home cinema projectors, along with "crystal clear sound solutions".

"For 2021, we expect this trend of 75-inch televisions — and larger — and 130-inch projectors to continue as customers transform their living spaces into 'at home' theatres," he says. With major sports events driving sales of large-screen displays, he predicts high demand for this year's rescheduled Olympics and European Football Championship.

Mitchell also expects immersive entertainment to increase in popularity. Sales of the Oculus virtual reality headset were up 280 per cent in 2020 on the previous year. "We anticipate that this trend will continue in 2021 as more brands get on board," he says.

This impressive Grade I-listed seven-bedroom house and mews in a sought-after John Nash-designed terrace by London's Regent's Park has an inviting media room, kitted out with a large-screen television by the current owners. The refurbished £22.5m property also has excellent views of the park and a south-west facing garden.



Wellness fixes

The pandemic, and the shift to homeworking, has also escalated interest in health and wellbeing. **Jan Vitrofsky**, founder of HEDSouth, a US home integration company specialising in making properties “healthier” for their owners, expects no let up in demand this year for home wellness tech such as air purifiers and smart lighting.

“The most important elements for a healthy home are fresh air, clean water, lighting that is in harmony with our body’s circadian rhythm and comfort features such as temperature [control] and acoustical elements,” he says.

His company can install a whole-home wellness platform called Darwin, which automatically adjusts the intensity, colour and warmth of the lights according to the time of day “to provide the most optimal environment for our bodies and minds”.

The new owners of this eight-bedroom contemporary mansion in Vero Beach, Florida, can adjust and control its lighting automatically. Using Crestron home automation, they will also have complete control of the \$20m home’s audio and video entertainment, shades, security, elevator and electricity generator.



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Better connections

Like **Vitrofsky**, Peter Aylett, partner at HTE Acoustic Interior Design, based in Vicenza, Italy, predicts wellness tech will thrive. “2021 will see a surge in sleep tech including beds that monitor your sleep patterns and can subtly change your sleeping position automatically,” he says.

For any connected home product to work reliably a robust and effective data network is essential. Aylett says that while

a wired network is the best solution, most of us use a wireless one. “Invest in great WiFi and everything else comes together,” he says.

He says that WiFi 6E, the latest industry standard will offer “faster speeds, better roaming and more reliable performance when multiple devices are connected at the same time.” Expect to see WiFi 6E products at CES and on sale throughout the year.



BETTER CONNECTIONS, HTE ACOUSTIC INTERIOR DESIGN

The main building of this 10-bedroom villa was largely constructed in the 16th century, long before the advent of data networks, but there is scope to install a home data network. A pleasant study on the first floor has views of the Umbrian countryside, while other features of the €4.5m home include solar panels and an original Roman mosaic floor.

Home entertainment

Kim Jin-hong, senior vice-president and head of global marketing centre at LG Electronics, based in Seoul, agrees that customers want products that put residential entertaining on a par with going out. The new LG Signature wine cellar allows different wines to be stored at different temperatures and humidity levels. The app-controlled unit reduces vibrations and has a black mirrored door, which becomes translucent when touched and can be opened by voice command.

But it is LG's OLED R television — a rollable screen that retracts into its stand and can transform into three viewing formats of different shapes and sizes — which encapsulates the trend for pushing the boundaries of home tech. “The TV enables owners to curate their living environment without having to permanently set aside space for a large, black screen that is only useful while turned on,” says Jin-hong.

The tech is already available in South Korea and Jin-hong says it will be rolled out (no pun intended) in territories including the US and Europe this year.



There is a wine cellar in this four-bedroom penthouse in Bangkok, Thailand, which has a large kitchen with a breakfast area. A rollable TV would make a nice addition to the spacious master bedroom, where it could be retracted when the far-reaching views of the city are preferred. The property can be yours for Bt98.9m (\$3.3m).

Photographs: Christie's International Real Estate; Savills; Edward C Butera Architectural Photography for Christie's International Real Estate.

HEDsouth
HOME ENTERTAINMENT DESIGN

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