INFINITY POOLS
Where does the water end and the horizon begin? That, in a nutshell, is the question sparked by the best infinity pools (also known as vanishing-edge pools, infinity-edge pools and negative-edge pools)—now a regular feature at many high-end hotels and resorts. The first such pool? At Versailles, bien sûr. And we love this one, on the 57th floor of the Marina Bay Sands in Singapore.

THINGS THAT HAVE MADE TRAVEL BETTER

From the first transatlantic flights to boutique hotels and travel apps, the world’s far-flung pockets become more accessible and alluring every day. To celebrate Delta’s 85th anniversary, we picked a (subjective) list of the top 85 innovations from the past 200 years (or so) that make travel easier, safer and more exhilarating than ever.

BY CHRIS CLAYTON, ELIZABETH DOYLE, SARAH ELBERT, STEVE MARSH & JASON OLIVER NIXON
PORTRAIT ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOEL BENJAMIN
Jet Engine
Frank Whittle was a runty, 21-year-old mat whiz in the Royal Air Force when he invented the modern jet engine in 1937. Whittle’s superiors didn’t let him fly a plane for years after entering the RAF, but being grounded may have helped him solve the first huge conundrum in aviation history: Planes cruising at high altitude are able to fly faster and farther because they encounter less turbulence, but the higher a plane flies, the worse the piston engine performs in the thin air. Whittle’s compression engine solved this problem, paving the way for the modern commercial airliner.

Space Travel
Back in 1961, when Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human to make it beyond the Earth’s atmosphere, it took the heat of a Cold War to get one of us up there. Today, billionaires such as Richard Branson and Elon Musk are planning imminent private space flight. Someday, we’ll all be able to orbit in coach.

The Guidebook
The modern travel book dates to Murray’s Handbook for Travellers, from 1836. Its publisher, the Baedeker company, quickly became the gold standard for 19th-century travelers, while Fodor’s and Frommer’s took center stage after World War II. Today, Lonely Planet, Let’s Go, Rough Guides and “prestige” books such as Mr. & Mrs. Smith compete with digital apps.

Online Travel Agencies
When brick-and-mortar travel agencies went on life support in the 1990s, online planners jumped in to fill the void. Think Expedia, Orbitz, Priceline, Travelocity— one-stop shops that book and sell hotel rooms, plane tickets and car rentals. And because every successful business model spawns a submodel, aggregators such as Kayak and Hipmunk soon arrived on their heels. Then again, you can always just go to Delta.com and take care of your tickets and wheels. Then again, you can always just go to one-stop shops that book and sell hotel planners jumped in to fill the void. Think online travel agencies.

Concierge Services
Concierges have long been the holders of the golden keys at hotels: They can arrange everything from theater tickets to far-flung demands. The term originally hails from France where the “concierge” controlled the keys to the royal household and oversaw a range of responsibilities. In the late 1990s, concierges moved from the world’s top hoteliers to stand-alone organizations (C) such as Quintessentially Lifestyle and Luxury Attache, which arrange services and unparalleled access. Luxury-minded credit cards offer similar services, too, such as American Express’ Platinum and Black cards.

You’ll likely encounter plenty of useful (and cool!) travel innovations on your next Delta trip. Here are a few we love.

Check-in Kiosks
No one likes to wait in line if they don’t have to. The automated machines were a great step in making travel even more convenient.

Lie-Flat Seats
Delta is the first airline to have full lie-flat BusinessElite seats with direct aisle access on all of its wide-body overseas planes. Many of them even feature Westin Heavenly Bedding, so your flight will soar by.

Mobile Boarding Passes
No more losing our paper boarding passes between Starbucks and the gate! Delta offers boarding passes in more than 200 cities.

Online Ticketing & Check In
Each year, more than 23 million tickets are sold in more than 104 countries worldwide via Delta.com.

In-Flight Wi-Fi
A decade ago, using the Internet at 30,000 feet was fantasy. But thanks to improvements in satellite and air-to-ground networks, today you can surf to your heart’s content. Delta now has Wi-Fi on more than 3,200 flights daily—and it was the first to announce that customers could use portable electronic devices below 10,000 feet.

Fly Delta App
You can plan your trip, buy your tickets, check in, store your boarding passes, get flight info, track your bags and more with this award-winning app for smartphones and tablets, which has been downloaded 11 million times.

In-Flight Meals
Delta has raised the bar on airline food with award-winning chefs such as Michael Chiarello refining in-flight BusinessElite menus on certain routes.

Flight Attendants
Imagine if you had to get up to get your own drink. Yeah... exactly.
23 UNIQUE HOTEL OFFERINGS
Ever wanted to learn the ancient sport of falconry? The Greenbrier in West Virginia offers lessons. Or head to the Maasai Mara game reserve in Kenya and Cottar’s 1920s Safari Camp for Maasai warrior training. Today, hotels are helping travelers immerse themselves even deeper into the local culture.

24 VOLUNTOURISM
Global travelers are increasingly choosing to mix travel and philanthropy, from building soccer fields to helping orphaned lion cubs. Some well-regarded programs include Roadmonkey, Globe Aware and Habitat for Humanity—but there are many more.

25 ECOTOURISM
We can get behind environmentally responsible travel that often pairs pristine natural environs with sexy ecolodges—from Samasati Nature Retreat in Costa Rica to Bulungula Lodge in South Africa, co-owned by Xhosa villagers.

26 THE EURO
The official currency of the eurozone debuted in 1999 to eliminate fluctuation risks and exchange costs while encouraging trade between the 18 member countries, thus making it easier for tourists to spend, spend, spend.

27 THE BOEING 747
The jumbo jet, queen of the skies! Boeing debuted this two-story commercial jet in 1969, and it flew its first commercial flight (with Pan American World Airways) from New York to London the next year. Since then, the 747 fleet has logged 42 billion nautical miles—or 101,500 trips from the Earth to the moon and back.

28 EVOLUTION OF CRUISE SHIPS
The passenger cruise industry began in England in the 1840s, and it quickly burgeoned, offering both steerage and plush transatlantic crossings. The industry recalibrated thanks to large passenger jets in the 1960s. Today, the cruise industry attracts 20.1 million passengers worldwide. And while some cruise liners are enormous, smaller ships cater to those who want a more intimate experience. Think the historic Sea Cloud or lines such as Seabourn, Silversea and SeaDream Yacht Club.

29 SKYPE
Remember when you had to pay soaring long-distance rates to talk to loved ones back home? Or seek out an international calling card? Skype (and Google, Facetime, etc.) made that unnecessary with Internet-based voice and video calling.

30 TRAVEL GUIDE APPS
There’s an app for every facet of travel these days, including the all-important city guide. Many are crowd-sourced, including TripAdvisor’s and one called Gogobot. Others, such as Tripomatic, specialize in itineraries by organizing your activities around specific travel days.

31 THE BOUTIQUE HOTEL
Thank British lifestyle guru/hotelier Anouska Hempel and American style setter/hotelier Ian Schrager for launching the “boutique” hotel trend in the 1980s. So what are the tenets of a boutique property? Unique design and architecture. Attention to service. Location. The ability to “surprise and delight.” Think of the trend as a response to the impersonal and sprawling hotel trend of the 1970s. Today, hoteliers such as Sean MacPherson (NYC’s The Marlton) and Jeff Klein (LA’s Sunset Tower)—along with hotel groups such as the Ace and André Balazs Properties—continue to move the needle.

32 TRAVEL GUIDE APPS
There’s an app for every facet of travel these days, including the all-important city guide. Many are crowd-sourced, including TripAdvisor’s and one called Gogobot. Others, such as Tripomatic, specialize in itineraries by organizing your activities around specific travel days.

33 THE BOUTIQUE HOTEL
Thank British lifestyle guru/hotelier Anouska Hempel and American style setter/hotelier Ian Schrager for launching the “boutique” hotel trend in the 1980s. So what are the tenets of a boutique property? Unique design and architecture. Attention to service. Location. The ability to “surprise and delight.” Think of the trend as a response to the impersonal and sprawling hotel trend of the 1970s. Today, hoteliers such as Sean MacPherson (NYC’s The Marlton) and Jeff Klein (LA’s Sunset Tower)—along with hotel groups such as the Ace and André Balazs Properties—continue to move the needle.

34 TRAVEL GUIDE APPS
There’s an app for every facet of travel these days, including the all-important city guide. Many are crowd-sourced, including TripAdvisor’s and one called Gogobot. Others, such as Tripomatic, specialize in itineraries by organizing your activities around specific travel days.
36 COMMERCIAL TRANSATLANTIC FLIGHTS

The first U.S. aircraft to carry passengers across the Atlantic was a Pan Am Boeing 314, which flew from Port Washington, New York, to Southampton, England, in 24 hours and 30 minutes, for $373 one-way.

37 MICHELIN GUIDE

In 1900, brothers Andre and Edouard Michelin were trying to sell some tires when they introduced the first edition of the Michelin Guide, a free pamphlet containing maps of France and a list of car mechanics and hotels. By 1926, the brothers had expanded beyond the French border and introduced the star system. Today, the guides employ a mysterious, completely anonymous network of “inspectors” to rate the best restaurants all over the world.

38 TRAVEL AGENCIES

The first travel agency is attributed to Englishman Thomas Cook, who began planning excursions in 1841 (then called “leading outings”). About three decades later, he and his son formed Thomas Cook & Son. Eventually, airports moved out of the city and became sprawling institutions accessed via multilane highways. Still, they retained a certain glamour: In the 1970s, travelers often dressed up to catch their flights. Today, the airport has come full circle. Bespoke shopping and high-end restaurant options abound, and rail services to city centers are being implemented and upgraded. Airports in locations such as Singapore, Amsterdam and Hong Kong have become the stuff of legend.

40 THE RETURN OF THE AIRPORT

Pre-World War II airports occupied prime locations close to city centers: Think NYC’s LaGuardia, Tempelhof in Berlin and Croydon in London. Eventually, airports moved out of the city and became sprawling institutions accessed via multilane highways. Still, they retained a certain glamour: In the 1970s, travelers often dressed up to catch their flights. Today, the airport has come full circle. Bespoke shopping and high-end restaurant options abound, and rail services to city centers are being implemented and upgraded. Airports in locations such as Singapore, Amsterdam and Hong Kong have become the stuff of legend.

41 GPS

When the U.S. Department of Defense put the first and final satellite in place in 1995, the global positioning system, or GPS, came online, eventually giving everybody—a little political wrangling—the ability to know exactly where they are on our planet.

42 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

43 NATIONAL PARKS

Congress began setting aside land as national parks and monuments in 1872 with the creation of Yellowstone National Park. Dedicated to preserving and protecting the country’s most stunning natural and cultural lands, the move showed foresight and wisdom, and these often sprawling spaces—now numbering 404 parks, 2,486 national historic landmarks and 49 national heritage areas—are some of the United States’ most-visited places, having drawn more than 11 billion visitors since the creation of the National Park Service in 1916.

44 THE INTERNET

Thank you, Alfred!

45 TAXICABS

Named after the taximeter, which measures how far a vehicle has traveled, gas-powered taxis first started appearing on major city streets around the turn of the 20th century. (There are now more than 11,000 yellow taxis in NYC alone.) Before that, you had to hire a horse-drawn carriage. Or walk. In fact, some of today’s newest taxis are going back to the basics: legs, pedals, wheels. From London to Seattle, you can hop in a pedicab, or let someone else do the legwork. For an updated take on a traditional taxi, just pull up your Uber, Lyft or Taxi Magic app on your smartphone.

46 GAME CHANGERS

People say there’s delays on flights. Delays, really? New York to California in five hours, that used to take 30 years, a bunch of people used to die on the way there, have baby, you would end up with a whole different group of people by the time you got there. Now you watch a movie and go to the bathroom and you’re home.” — LOUIS C. K.

47 CELL PHONES

A phone. That travels with you. Genius. The first “noncar” mobile phone was the Motorola DynaTAC 8000x (i.e., “The Brick”), which weighed 2.5 pounds, ran for 20 minutes and had very limited talk time. The first one sold for $3,995 in 1983. The first flip phone was the Motorola StarTAC, which debuted in 1996, and now, of course, we have our miraculous smartphones.

48 CREDIT CARDS

Not that we didn’t love traveler’s checks, but what a concept! An almost, not quite open-ended loan, attached to a piece of plastic, taken all over the world.

49 AIRPORT NAP CABINS

Sometimes you get tired on a plane. There’s Maglione in Munich; Take Five in Amsterdam and London; Sheraton in Moscow; Starbucks in Atlanta, Philadelphia and Dallas; and Grand Hyatt in Dubai.

50 FLIGHT DECKS

These one-bedroom apartment-like rooms are coming back: Think the recently opened Sky Suites at the Delta Sky Club in Atlanta, which was created in partnership with design guru Thom Filicia.

51 RADAR

The Germans pioneered the idea of tracking objects by bouncing radio waves off of them, but multiple countries refined radar technology before and during WWI. Military defense, air traffic control and the forecast would never be the same.

52 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

53 GPS

When the U.S. Department of Defense put the first and final satellite in place in 1995, the global positioning system, or GPS, came online, eventually giving everybody—a little political wrangling—the ability to know exactly where they are on our planet.

54 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

55 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

56 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

57 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

58 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

59 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

60 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

61 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

62 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

63 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

64 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

65 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

66 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

67 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

68 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

69 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

70 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

71 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

72 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

73 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

74 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

75 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

76 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

77 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

78 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

79 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

80 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

81 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

82 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

83 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

84 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

85 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

86 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

87 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

88 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

89 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.

90 THE SEAT BELT

Truly a lifesaver, whether you’re traveling or not.
SEE PAGE 75 FOR PHOTO CREDITS

**WINGLETS**
The bent tips on some planes’ wingtips help reduce drag, preventing a “tornado” effect in the airflow behind the plane caused by the differences in pressure on the top and bottom of the wings. Their use was promoted in the ’70s in response to the energy crisis.

**HOSTELS**
From student-friendly bunkhouses to no-frills hotel rooms, hostels have played a key role in democratizing travel (i.e., keeping the poor backpacker in cheap wine and baguettes—not that we’d know anything about that).

**PORTABLE DVD PLAYERS**
Flights with children suddenly became a whole lot more enjoyable! Now many people travel with tablets or mini-laptops (and children’s headphones), but either way: A happy child is a happy parent.

**MAGNETIC ROOM KEYS**
The original mechanical key lock that operated thanks to a pattern of holes, aka the VingCard, evolved into the modern-day key card in the 1980s. Sensors scan the programmed magnetic strip on the credit card-sized key card, thus allowing entry into a hotel room.

**RENTAL CARS**
Thank Joe Saunders of Omaha, Nebraska, for opening the first car rental company in 1916. After World War II, the car rental industry blossomed in tandem with the growth of the airline industry. The airport car rental industry began with Warren Avis in 1946 at Detroit’s Willow Run Airport.

**TRAVEL CHANNEL**
The folks behind the channel bet on the fact that we’d tune in to travel vicariously through its globetrotting hosts. And they were right (big-time).

**THE STARCHITECT**
Frank Gehry was a well-respected 68-year-old architect when he finished the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. Gehry’s rippling titanium meringue of a museum revitalized the Basque capital, bringing in 1 million visitors a year and changing international expectations of what architecture is supposed to do and who it can attract. And it gave Gehry the most recognizable name in his profession since Frank Lloyd Wright. In fact, a whole new term was born: Now people refer to him (and other big names in his field, from Rem Koolhaas to Herzog & de Meuron) as “starchitects.”

**GLOBAL ENTRY**
The program allows low-risk travelers who have been vetted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection to breeze through customs when returning to the U.S. Place your passport in the automated kiosk, scan your fingerprints and make a customs declaration and you are good to go. TSA PreCheck works similarly on a domestic level and allows “known” travelers to bypass the standard security lines at American airports.

**COIN CARD**
The Bluetooth card allows all of your credit and bank cards to be stored on one supercard. Plus, when paired with your phone, you can get an alert if you leave your Coin behind. onlycoin.com

**HIGH-SPEED RAIL**
Built in Japan in 1964, the world’s first bullet train covered the 320 miles from Osaka to Tokyo in about three hours, topping out at 170 mph (the 2014, or next version of that train can hit 250 mph). Today, high-speed rail whisks tourists and commuters to all manner of destinations around the world, including the famous London-to-Paris Eurostar line that zips beneath the English Channel.

“Right now, I’m hankering for new adventures. . . . Ninety percent of the time I’m having romantic-comedy fantasies in which I’m wearing little pencil skirts and hurrying down to the subway.” — MINDY KALING

**THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC THE FANNY PACK**
The National Geographic Society was formed 126 years ago, and since then many of us stricken with a particularly American variety of wanderlust have amassed a stack of these famously yellow windowpaned magazines. Everything you needed, right around your waist! At least until they became so uncool that “Weird Al” Yankovic included them in his song “White & Nerdy.”

**COMPRESSION SOCKS**
Most of these are pretty distracting. But compression socks are recommended for those who are at risk for blood clots—or deep vein thrombosis—on long flights. Three cheers for knee socks!

**THEME PARKS**
How can you resist a kid’s dream come true? Take them to meet Anna and Elsa at DisneyWorld. Or to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter. Or to the Hello Kitty Land in Japan. Or to Legoland. Or Busch Gardens . . .
LUGGAGE TRACKERS
You can track your checked bags using Delta’s mobile app on your smartphone, or at Delta.com, but if you want to do it yourself, the FAA-approved TrakDot tracker uses a chip embedded with microelectronics and cell technologies to relay your bag’s progress. It even enters “airplane mode” in flight and sends you a text when you land to let you know your bag arrived with you.

TRAVEL IN POP CULTURE
Provence hasn’t been the same since English writer Peter Mayle wrote up his “year,” and there’s no telling how much industry Frances Mayes stirred up under the Tuscan sun. Think what Eat, Pray, Love did for Bali, and A Room with a View lured us to Florence to seek love among a postcard-perfect backdrop. Looking back in time, thank Herodotus for his explorations of Egypt, Marco Polo for his China syndrome and Mark Twain for being an innocent abroad. And haven’t we all channeled a bit of On the Road or Into the Wild?

ECO-FRIENDLY HOTEL PROGRAMS
A trend illustrated brilliantly by the doughnut-shaped waste-reducing bar of soap offered to guests at the Jupiter Hotel in Portland, Oregon.

INSTAGRAM
The nagging impulse to pull out your smartphone and snap whatever vista or monument lies before you is sometimes castigated as being egotistical or self-involved. But with Instagram, there’s more and more evidence that it’s well meaning—we really just want to share. Is that so different than taking a Polaroid?

84
AGRITOURISM
Today’s foodie travelers boast about eating at restaurants that support local producers (think Manresa in Los Gatos, California). And some are taking that notion to the extreme by planning trips to “agritourism” regions marketed for their culinary bounty. Think Tuscany, with its celebrated vintners and cheesemakers. Many farms allow visitors to stay on site, such as Oregon’s Abbey Road Farm B&B, home to a cherry orchard and dairy goats.

75
INFIGHT ENTERTAINMENT
Long gone are the days of $5 headsets and trying to situate yourself in your seat so you could see a sliver of Three Men and a Baby playing on the screen six rows up. Today, there are numerous monitors, if not individual screens in each seatback, allowing you to pick the movie, TV show, music or game to pass the time. Most also feature a real-time, interactive map to answer the always-present question: “Are we there yet?”

80
WIRED HOTEL ROOMS
Personalization is a buzzword in the lodging biz right now. At Hotel 1000 in Seattle, for example, guests can control room temp and music selection via a wall panel connected to the building’s greater IP infrastructure. In-room Wi-Fi, meanwhile, has become a requisite amenity at hotels everywhere.

81
TRAVEL IN POP CULTURE
Provence hasn’t been the same since English writer Peter Mayle wrote up his “year,” and there’s no telling how much industry Frances Mayes stirred up under the Tuscan sun. Think what Eat, Pray, Love did for Bali, and A Room with a View lured us to Florence to seek love among a postcard-perfect backdrop. Looking back in time, thank Herodotus for his explorations of Egypt, Marco Polo for his China syndrome and Mark Twain for being an innocent abroad. And haven’t we all channeled a bit of On the Road or Into the Wild?

85
ROOFTOP BARS
We’re not sure when the first rooftop bar opened for business, but we’re guessing it’s sometime around the construction of the first skyscraper. Beverage + view + sky = Win. Unless it’s packed and steaming hot outside and people are doing upside-down margaritas, in which case, maybe not.

82
ECO-FRIENDLY HOTEL PROGRAMS
A trend illustrated brilliantly by the doughnut-shaped waste-reducing bar of soap offered to guests at the Jupiter Hotel in Portland, Oregon.