

The World's 11 Most Beautiful Repurposed Buildings

These innovative structures honor their past lives while serving new needs

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Photo: Lou Angeles

Modern architects are undoubtedly under more pressure than their predecessors to prioritize sustainable design, which has resulted in some revolutionary eco-friendly architecture. But even with respect to the most energy-efficient buildings, it takes an average of 20 to 30 years to overcome (through efficient operations, such as the use of solar panels and temperature-regulating insulation) the climate impact of construction, per the National Trust for Historic Preservation. With environmental sustainability mirroring the zeitgeist of 21st-century life, it makes sense that creative new methods to repurpose buildings are being implemented across the globe. Adaptive reuse considers how the old bones of a structure might lend themselves to changing demands, offering a resourceful, green middle ground between the wrecking ball approach and simply inhabiting a space ill-suited to new requirements. The operators of these 11 buildings decided against scrapping all remnants of the past, instead opting to embrace the gifts of their original blueprints as they reimagined their futures.

Emporium Arcade Bar (San Francisco, California)

Emporium Arcade Bar offers among the most regal settings imaginable in which to play pool, Pacman, or skeeball. Originally opening its doors as the Harding Theater in 1926, the 12,000-square-foot Art Deco building operated as a concert hall. Harding hosted live performances (including the Grateful Dead) and was at one point used as a church and community center. It sat vacant from 2004 to 2017, when it was relaunched as a gaming venue. Historic features of the building, like its ornate molding and ceiling, were restored at time of renovation.