

EHL STRATEGIC GUIDE

How Hospitality Leaders Can Transition from Sustainable to Regenerative Luxury

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The background features a dark blue field with a complex geometric pattern of overlapping circles and small dots, creating a starry or network-like effect. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

Why This Matters Now

The definition of luxury in hospitality is undergoing a fundamental shift. Traditional markers such as size, opulence, and service intensity are no longer sufficient to meet evolving guest expectations. Today's travelers are seeking **meaningful, place-based, and purpose-driven experiences** that go beyond transactional service.

At the same time, growing environmental and social pressures are pushing the industry to rethink its role. Sustainability, which was once considered a differentiator, is now increasingly seen as a baseline. The emerging expectation is clear: hospitality businesses must move toward **regenerative models that create positive impact for both people and places**.

This shift is not only value-driven, but strategic. It affects how hotels design experiences, operate their business, engage employees, and position themselves in an increasingly competitive market.



Industry signals clearly show that this shift is accelerating:



Guests increasingly value **authentic, local, and culturally immersive experiences**



Demand for **well-being, mental health, and slower travel** continues to rise



Sustainability expectations are becoming **standard, not differentiating**



Talent attraction and retention depend on **purpose-driven work environments**



Destinations face increasing pressure to **manage tourism impact responsibly**



The Shift:

From

**THE SHIFT: FROM
SUSTAINABLE TO
REGENERATIVE
HOSPITALITY**

**Sustainable to
Regenerative**

Hospitality

The industry is moving from a model focused on minimizing harm to one that actively creates net positive impact.

KEY TRANSFORMATIONS:

- From property-centric to place-based experiences
- From wellness as an add-on to well-being as a core strategy
- From reducing negative impact to regenerating ecosystems and communities
- From luxury as indulgence to luxury as meaning and connection
- From service delivery to purpose-driven employee engagement
- From individual property optimization to ecosystem collaboration



POSITIONING: WHERE DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION STAND TODAY?

LEVEL 1

Sustainable Luxury

Focused on reducing negative impact through operational improvements (energy, waste, sourcing). Sustainability is a baseline, while experiences remain largely property-centric.

LEVEL 2

Place-Based Luxury

Focused on creating meaningful, destination-driven experiences. Guests engage with local culture, food systems, and communities. Well-being and storytelling become central to the offering.

LEVEL 3

Regenerative Luxury

Focused on creating net positive impact for ecosystems and communities. The business model is integrated with the destination, and success is measured by how the place benefits from tourism.



**Business
Implications:
WHAT THIS MEANS
IN PRACTICE**

BUSINESS MODELS

- Experience design must extend beyond the hotel into the local ecosystem
- Value creation shifts from volume and consumption to quality and meaning
- Partnerships with local stakeholders become core strategic assets

WHAT IS BECOMING OUTDATED

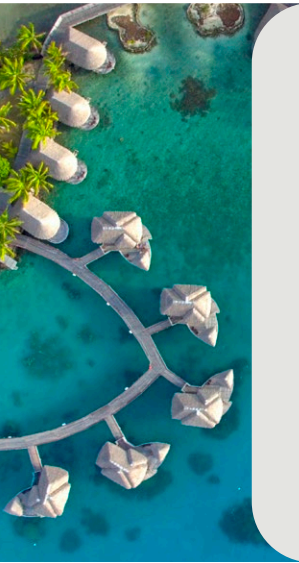
- Standardized, one-size-fits-all luxury offerings
- Wellness as a siloed service (e.g., spa-only concepts)
- Sustainability framed purely as damage control
- Employee roles limited to operational execution

WHERE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IS SHIFTING

- Toward authenticity, storytelling, and local integration
- Toward well-being-driven design and offerings
- Toward measurable positive impact
- Toward engaged, purpose-driven teams



Where this is most relevant



DESTINATION-LED LUXURY RESORTS

Properties in coastal, island, alpine, desert, or remote natural settings where the surrounding ecosystem is a core part of the guest experience



LOW-DENSITY, HIGH-VALUE EXPERIENCE MODELS

Formats that prioritize quality over volume, including villas, retreats, safari lodges, and experiential travel concepts



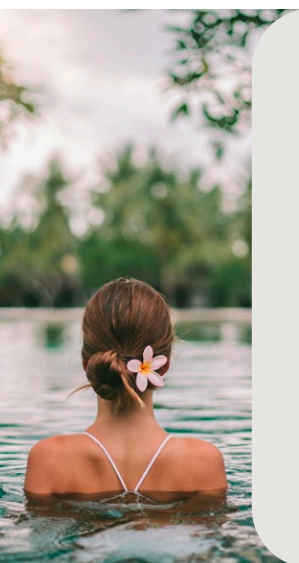
LUXURY HOSPITALITY ROOTED IN STRONG CULTURAL CONTEXT

Hotels and resorts located in regions with distinct heritage, traditions, craftsmanship, and local identity that can be meaningfully integrated into the guest journey



NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND REPOSITIONING PROJECTS

Greenfield projects or existing properties undergoing brand or concept transformation, where operating models can be redesigned from the ground UP



WELL-BEING AND WELLNESS-FOCUSED CONCEPTS

Brands and properties where physical, mental, and emotional well-being are central to the value proposition, not just an add-on service

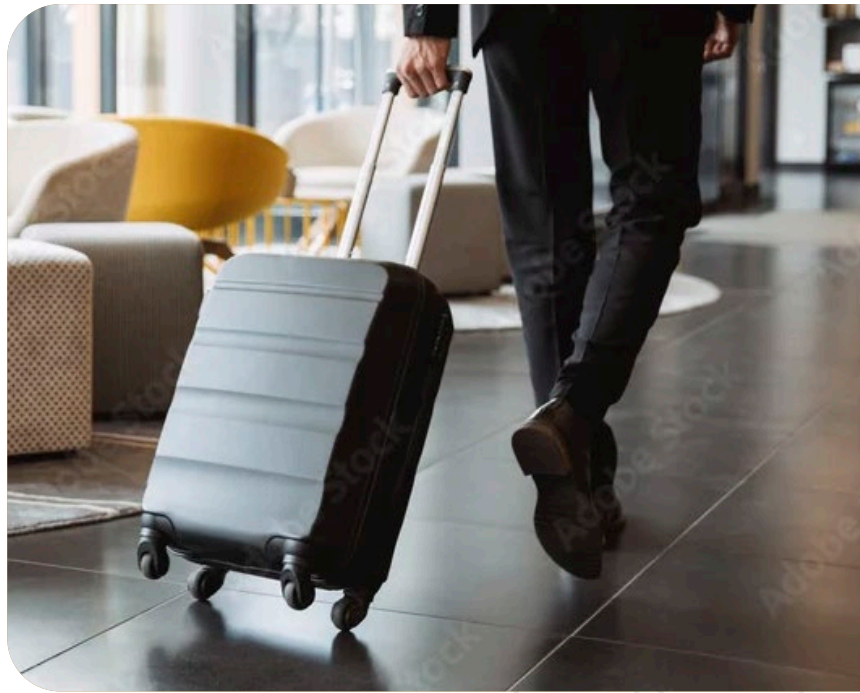


PROPERTIES WITH ACCESS TO STRONG LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Locations where collaboration with local communities, producers, NGOs, and institutions is feasible and can be embedded into the business model

Where it is less applicable

- Urban business hotels with limited connection to local ecosystems
- High-density, standardized luxury formats focused on operational scale
- Properties where guest expectations are primarily driven by privacy, speed, and convenience rather than immersion



CASE SNAPSHOT

Six Senses

What they are doing

Embedding conservation and community engagement into the core guest experience, including on-site habitat protection programs, marine conservation (e.g., turtle hatchling initiatives), and close collaboration with local communities. Sustainability and regeneration are integrated into design, operations, and guest programming rather than treated as separate initiatives.

What this illustrates

- Biodiversity protection
- Guest participation in regeneration
- Integration of sustainability into the full operating model

CASE SNAPSHOT

Rosewood Miyakojima / Rosewood Mandarinina

What they are doing

Designing experiences deeply rooted in place by partnering with marine ecologists, local fishermen, artisans, and cultural practitioners. Wellness, culinary, and guest experiences are built around local ecosystems, traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems.

What this illustrates

- Local culture and heritage integration
- Destination-led experience design
- Strengthening local supplier and knowledge ecosystems



CASE SNAPSHOT

Belmond / Maroma, A Belmond Hotel

What they are doing

Partnering with Parley for the Oceans to integrate ocean conservation, biodiversity protection, and environmental education into the guest journey, while positioning the property as an active steward of its surrounding ecosystem.

What this illustrates

- Ecosystem stewardship and conservation partnerships
- Guest education and awareness-building
- Community-linked environmental impact



**How to
HOW TO IMPLEMENT
implement**

ONE

Design Experiences Around Place, Not Property

Moving from **“we provide services”** to **“we connect guests to places and people”**

- Redesign guest journey around destination connection
- Partner with local artisans, guides, and farmers to co-create guest experiences and embed into core product
- Offer storytelling moments (e.g., origin of ingredients, the places, cultural rituals, etc.)
- Focus on fewer and more meaningful experiences rather than too many superficial options

Luxury is no longer defined only by what happens inside the hotel, but by how guests connect with the destination.

TWO

Make Well-Being a Strategic Priority

Moving from **“wellness as an add-on”** to **“well-being as a strategy”**

- Integrate biophilic design (light, nature, materials)
- Rethink menus toward nourishment, seasonality, and transparency (Check [EHL Food & Well-being Report](#) for more tips)
- Create micro-moments of well-being (e.g., quiet spaces, digital detox)
- Invest in employee well-being programs (e.g., scheduling, breathwork, purpose)
- Hire a well-being officer

Well-being is a strategy and not a department.

THREE

Move from Sustainability to Regeneration

Moving from **“net zero impact”** to **“net positive impact”**

- Support local ecosystems (e.g., biodiversity, reforestation projects)
- Build long-term partnerships with local suppliers and producers
- Engage guests in regenerative activities (e.g., planting, conservation activities)
- Define 3 to 5 impact metrics beyond carbon reduction to ensure measurement

Reducing harm is no longer enough as we need to think about what we are giving back.

FOUR

Rethink the Meaning of Luxury

Moving from **“impressive and indulgent”** to **“impactful and meaningful”**

- Instead of doing **“more”**, try to do **“better”** (provide fewer, higher-quality, and more purposeful offerings)
- Design spaces for well-being, reflection and connection
- Start tracking positive impact, not just performance

Luxury has traditionally been measured in size, opulence, and indulgence, but this is changing today.

FIVE

Empower Employees as Experience Creators

Moving from **“service delivery”** to **“purpose”**

- **Involve staff in designing guest experiences**
- **Provide training on storytelling, sustainability, and local destination and culture**
- **Align employee incentives with purpose and not only financial KPIs**
- **Create a culture where employees feel meaning in their work**
- **Provide employee well-being programs**

Regenerative hospitality cannot exist without teams that feel well and engaged.

SIX

Collaborate Beyond the Hotel

Moving from **“property-level optimization”** to **“ecosystem stewardship”**

- **Collaborate with local governments, NGOs, and other businesses**
- **Co-develop destination strategies (visitor flow, resource use, cultural protection)**
- **Share best practices across the ecosystem**
- **Build destination-level partnerships where property context allows it**

No single hotel can be regenerative alone as this requires destination-level thinking.

Do not confuse this approach with:

- Simply removing plastic in your hotel/restaurant
- Merely adding a spa service to your offers
- just infusing sustainability messages into your brand identity
- Philanthropy attached to a luxury stay

Practical Checklist:

- We design experiences that connect guests to people and to the place
- We treat well-being as a core business strategy
- We move beyond sustainability toward measurable positive impact
- We redefine luxury through meaning, not excess
- We empower employees as purpose-driven contributors
- We actively collaborate within our destination ecosystem

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