

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

How Small Luxury Hotels of the World members are responding to traveler trends

January 21, 2020



Nobu Hotel Ibiza Bay, a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Image credit: Nobu Hotel Ibiza Bay

By STAFF REPORTS

Travelers want pared-back extravagance by interacting with local cultures, respecting nature and participating in something that feels bigger than themselves, according to a new report from the Small Luxury Hotels of the World organization.

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The annual report from **Small Luxury Hotels (SLH)** an entity representing the interests of more than 520 boutique properties has identified six overarching themes based on the idea of uncomplicated and honest luxury. So how are members of the group responding?

First is the idea of conscious luxury. The hotels claim bio-architecture, conservation projects, widespread plastic-free initiatives and striving for carbon neutrality. SLH will soon be launching a sustainability manifesto to guide the organization and its members.

Aleenta Resort and Spa Hua Hin in Thailand is for carbon-free cooking. **Harbour Village Beach Club** in Bonaire lets guests who dive to learn how to hang and maintain corals and become PADI certified in coral restoration.

Lefay Resorts in Lake Garda and the Dolomites have been offsetting carbon dioxide emissions since 2013. **Akaryn Hotel Group** will this year become a single-use plastic free hotel group.

Next is dispersed hotels, which is a new way to experience a hotel and a destination by spreading the areas out across buildings in one small town or village, naturally creating a unique micro-community for guests and locals, per SLH.

Enzo Ango Fuya II in Kyoto is Japan's first dispersed hotel, per SLH. Blending in with the rhythm of the city, each of the five buildings, dotted around one street, has its own particular style, features and functionality.

San Canzian Village & Hotel in Buje, Croatia, opened in June and has been created on the ruins of an ancient medieval village, offering an authentic experience of the lesser-known Istrian countryside.

Le Refuge de la Traye in Meribel, France opened last month with eco-luxury chalets creating a "hotel hamlet."

[Domaine des Etangs](#) may look like a typical chateau, but with rooms scattered around the entire estate in separate farmhouse buildings, guests can create their own bespoke experience, per SLH.

Third is up-skilling escapes that offer real and rare experiences, giving VIP specialist access to travelers to gain new skills or become experts themselves.

For example, guests at [Nobu Hotel Ibiza Bay](#) can learn about the island's precious Neptune grass with a National Geographic presenter.

Olympic skier Andrew Weibrecht is available as an exclusive ski guide to hotel guests down the slopes of Whiteface Mountain at [Mirror Lake Inn Resort & Spa](#) in the 1980 Winter Olympic resort of Lake Placid in upstate New York.

And [The 121 Hotel](#) in Nashville, opened last November, curates private songwriter sessions for guests to listen to songwriters talk about hit songs they penned for legendary country singers.

Wellness is the fourth trend. Indigenous spa practices and rituals such as hay baths, volcanic mud and Ayurvedic therapies are growing in popularity, even as the importance of sleep continues to be key for overall health and wellbeing.

For instance, [Casa Madrona Hotel & Spa](#) in California is the first hotel to introduce a sleep fitness program leveraging innovative technology.

[Le Grand Bellevue](#) in Gstaad, Switzerland, will host an overnight "Bamford B Silent Sleep Retreat" combining guided wellness techniques with targeted treatments, while Mind Therapy at [Rockliffe Hall](#) in the United Kingdom offers power naps using foundational Spa.Wave therapy.

Then there is the root back to real food trend. The emergence of unexpected herbivores, plant-based restaurants in surprising places and the ongoing benefits of going herbal are growing in popularity.

Also, white charcoal, or binchotan, is being introduced into food and drink across menus worldwide to absorb impurities and release vital minerals, per SLH.

[The Prince Akatoki London](#) and [Mykonos Riviera Hotel & Spa](#) both use Chikutan Sticks made from sustainably derived white charcoal for cocktails at their bars to purify and elevate the taste.

[Hotel de la Ville](#) in Monza, Italy, includes white charcoal in a variety of fusion dishes in the Derby Grill restaurant to aid digestion.

Finally, there are new destinations where SLH members are opening doors for the first time.

[Gangtey Lodge in Bhutan](#), one of the only carbon-negative countries in the world, attracts active travelers, while cultural enthusiasts appreciate its traditions unhindered by outside influences.

Nepal will host "Visit Nepal" in 2020 and in December the [Lost Horizon Resort & Spa Begnas](#) is scheduled to open near Pokhara.

Azerbaijan is a perfect combination of European, Asian and Middle Eastern influences that make The Land of Fire a fascinating place to explore from [Dinamo Hotel Baku](#), per SLH.

Tel Aviv, Israel has new flight routes from American Airlines, Virgin Atlantic and British Airways World Club Suite. [The Norman Tel Aviv](#) is the city's only luxury boutique hotel.

Despite the country's small size, Montenegro is full of hidden treasures and a new destination for SLH in 2020, with [Villa Geba](#) joining the brand, according to the organization.