



Image courtesy: The Park Hotels

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The Future of Stays

From the rise of smart value hotels to experience-led hospitality, experts tell us what hospitality can expect this year and how it will help take the industry to new heights...

By Bindu Gopal Rao

The New Year is here, bringing new trends for hotels and the hospitality sector that set the tone for the year ahead...

Flexibility & Modular Event Spaces

Flexibility and modularity will define successful event venues in 2026 as organisers increasingly look to host multiple formats, audiences, and experiences, often under one roof and within the same timeframe.

Rubin Cherian, General Manager, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & HICC, says, "At Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC), flexibility is built into the core design. Our 6,480 sqm pillarless main hall can host up to 6,000 delegates in plenary format and can be partitioned into six soundproof halls, enabling parallel sessions, exhibitions, workshops, and immersive brand experiences to run simultaneously. In addition, 37 breakout and specialised meeting rooms allow organisers to design layered, inclusive, and highly customised delegate journeys."

In 2026, event design is also becoming more intentional, less cluttered, more modular, and technology-led. Lightweight, plug-and-play furniture, collapsible partitions, induction-based culinary setups, and portable exhibition displays allow organisers to prioritise guest experience, branding, and spatial flow.

Curated Stays

In the past few years, since Covid, we have looked at certain trends changing. First and foremost, instead of annual holidays, people are now taking multiple breaks/ holidays in a year. Everyone is looking at moving out to unexplored places or curated experiences, seeking experiences that feel intentional, personal, and different; it could be small, intimate destinations or a leisure holiday.

"The mantra at ASPHL is driven by anything but ordinary experiences. That is how we have been able to curate experiences. This drives repetition in guest visitation and loyal engagement. We at Zone by The Park Hotels craft fun, nimble and agile spaces where guests can ease in and match their social avatars with the vibrant cities they choose to stay in. The guest can explore these avatars, ranging from Adventurer, Foodie, Shutterbug, Networker, and Party Animal. Our hotels are built to support these personas, allowing guests to connect with the destination in a way that feels authentic to them," says Vikas Ahluwalia, General Manager & National Head, Zone by The Park Hotels.

Intuitive Urban Sanctuary

In 2026, the traditional definition of a 'business hotel' is being redefined by a demand for restorative luxury.

"We are moving toward the era of the Intuitive Urban



Rubin Cherian, General Manager, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & HICC



Vikas Ahluwalia, General Manager & National Head, Zone by The Park Hotels



Nidhi Berry, Commercial Director, Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru



Sandeep Basu, Chief Executive Officer, OPO Hotels & Resorts

"We craft fun, nimble spaces where guests can ease in and match their social avatars—ranging from Adventurer, Foodie, Shutterbug, Networker, and Party Animal—with the vibrant cities they stay in." - Vikas Ahluwalia

Sanctuary, where the hotel acts as a space for physical and mental recovery. For the modern executive, productivity is now inextricably linked to well-being; therefore, a stay must provide more than just efficiency – it must offer rejuvenation. This trend will make a significant impact because it addresses the 'always-on' nature of global business. At Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru, we are leading this shift by treating the 'Science of Sleep' as a core luxury pillar. Through our signature beds and bespoke Pillow Customisation Menu, we ensure that rest is a tailored experience rather than a standard amenity," says Nidhi Berry, Commercial Director, Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru at Embassy ONE.

Crucially, 2026 marks the rise of anticipatory hospitality. Service is evolving to be so intuitive that a guest's needs, whether a specific herbal tea after a late flight or a quiet workspace by the gardens, are met before they are even voiced.

Rise of Smart Value Hotels

One of the most visible shifts in hospitality will be the rise of smart value hotels. Guests today are not chasing luxury in the traditional sense. What they want is comfort, reliability, good design, and a smooth experience, without paying for things they don't really use.

"Smart Value Hotels focus on doing the basics exceptionally well. Clean and comfortable rooms, good sleep quality, fast check-ins, dependable Wi-Fi, and friendly service matter more than large lobbies or excessive amenities. Technology plays a quiet but important role—digital check-in, smart energy usage, and efficient backend systems help hotels reduce costs while improving consistency," says Sandeep Basu, Chief Executive Officer, OPO Hotels & Resorts.

This trend will make a strong impact in 2026 because it works for both guests and hotel owners. Travellers get honest value



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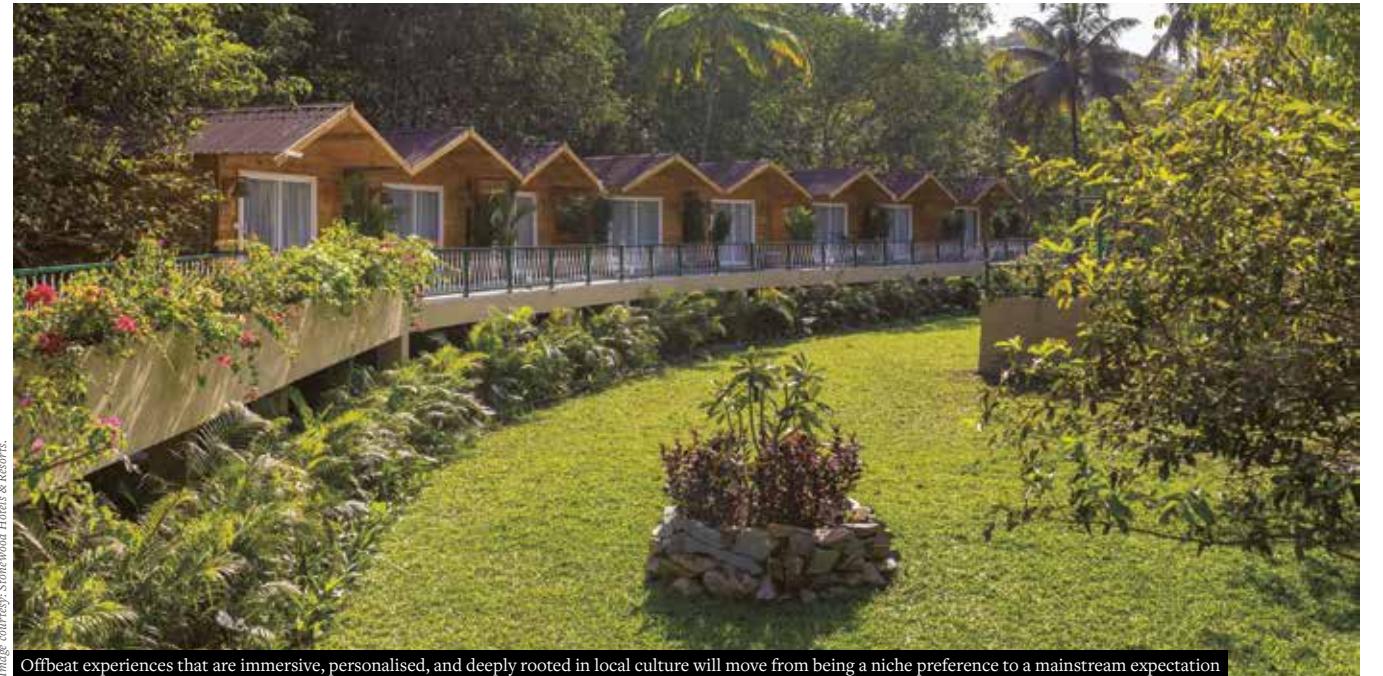


Image courtesy: Stonewood Hotels & Resorts.

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- Nidhi Berry

for money, while owners benefit from lean operations and better returns.

Mixed-use Hospitality

Self-sufficient and mixed-use infrastructure hotels provide a complete experience to customers. They are not just mere lodging and boarding providers, but such hotels become experienced curators and community anchors.

“Hence, it is extremely important for hotels to redefine their role and become resilient to market fluctuations, catering to different market segments. The consumers of today are evolving so rapidly in their thought process and approach towards travel that this trend provides an opportunity for hotels to target mixed-use developments and age better than their standalone counterparts,” says Neha Chowdhury, Director of Sales and Marketing, Courtyard by Marriott Mumbai International Airport.

Long-stay business and strong recall become the USP for such establishments, driving profitable business and strong customer loyalty through targeted service standards and curated experiences for a wide variety of consumer demographics.

Offbeat, Experience-led Hospitality

Travellers are no longer just looking for places to stay; they are looking for places that make them feel something. This realisation has come from hotels’ own journeys of building

successful properties in offbeat destinations, which have seen strong occupancy and encouraging revenues even in the mid-segment market.

Abhijit Dey, Vice President, Stonewood Hotels & Resorts, says, “As we look ahead to 2026, offbeat experiences that are immersive, personalised, and deeply rooted in local culture will move from being a niche preference to a mainstream expectation. In a world dominated by screens and constant digital noise, travellers are craving real connections, real stories, and real memories. They want to slow down, explore differently, and come back with something more than just photographs.”

What makes this shift even more exciting is how thoughtfully curated experiences will evolve.

New Age Business Travel

In the last few years, the hospitality landscape has undergone a meaningful shift that has now firmly taken shape. Business travellers are no longer looking at hotels as mere halt points to attend meetings and check out. After long days filled with back-to-back calls and discussions, there is a genuine need to unwind and relax. This is where hotels are increasingly being seen as destinations for unwinding.

“A comfortable room, a thoughtfully laid-out buffet, or a speciality restaurant that makes the evening feel special are details that matter now. These are experiences one can easily find at properties like Novotel Vijayawada Varun. We



Neha Chowdhury, Director of Sales and Marketing, Courtyard by Marriott Mumbai International Airport

Abhijit Dey, Stonewood Hotels & Resorts

Manish Pathak, Hotel Manager, Novotel Vijayawada Varun

Rayan Aranha, Vice President, Brigade Hotel Ventures Limited

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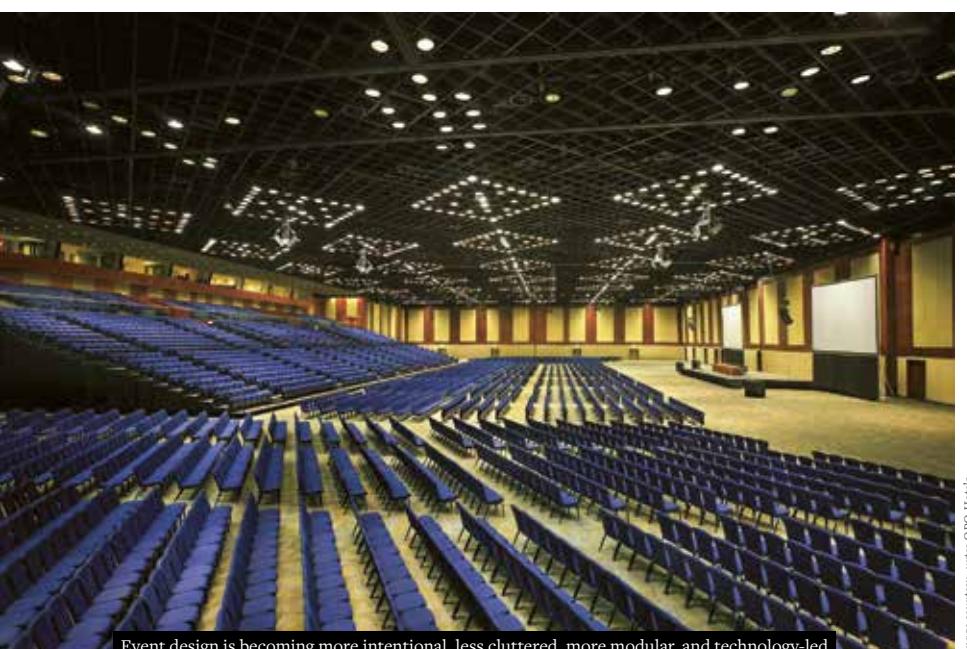
- Abhijit Dey

understand that travel to the city may be work-led, given its growing infrastructure, but the expectation is no longer work-only. This thought process has given us the opportunity to offer travellers the ability to begin the day with a morning work call with a view and later unwind through a distinctive dining experience,” says Manish Pathak, Hotel Manager, Novotel Vijayawada Varun.

Regenerative Hospitality

This goes beyond sustainability. It is about moving from ‘do less harm’ to ‘leave things better’. It’s practical and local. Design that respects place, supply chains that back regional producers, and operations that restore ecosystems and strengthen community livelihoods. Travellers, especially younger guests and corporate clients, are asking for proof, not promises. They want hotels that are transparent and measured on real outcomes. Water restored, waste reduced, jobs created, culture protected.

“In India, where tourism is expanding fast, hotels must act as custodians of their neighbourhoods, not just tenants. Public markets reward clarity, long term value, and discipline. Regeneration brings all three. It reduces risk, builds trust, and differentiates in crowded urban and leisure travel segments. We’re already seeing it in simple, high impact moves. Locally sourced menus tied to seasonal agriculture, landscape projects that improve (not just maintain) biodiversity, and partnerships where guest spending directly funds community initiatives. All tracked and reported, not just announced,” says Rayan Aranha, Vice President, Brigade Hotel Ventures Limited.



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Image courtesy: Ures OPO Hotels