

Regenerative Tourism Gets a Hospitality Impetus

Hospitality is doing its bit for regenerative tourism by ensuring that it goes beyond sustainability to create a lasting impact on the planet.

By Bindu Gopal Rao



Regenerative tourism focuses on people and empowering local communities like at Storii Jaipur



Tejas Mathur, Founder, Project Karjat



Vikas Kumar, General Manager, Taj Madikeri Resort And Spa, Coorg



Amaan R Kidwai, Area Manager Luxury Hotels (North) & General Manager ITC Maurya



Sandipan Bose, General Manager, ITC Mughal Agra

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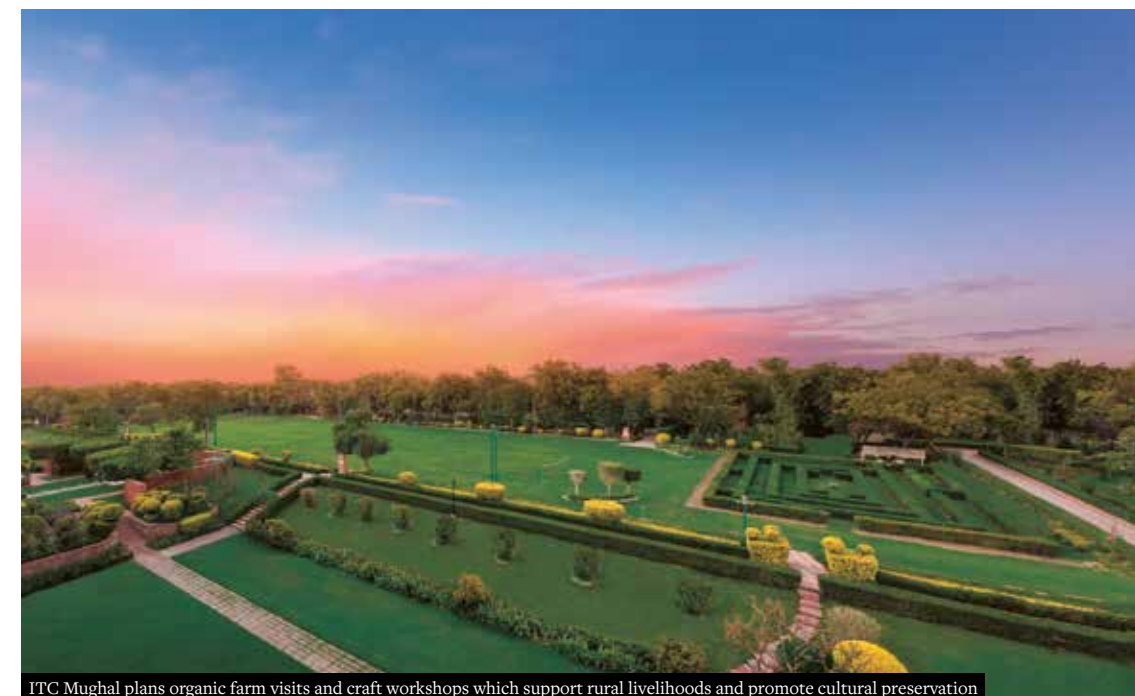
- Tejas Mathur

Regenerative tourism goes beyond ‘doing less harm’ to actively restoring places, and conscientious hotels are redefining hospitality through this lens.

Positive Impact

India’s landscapes and cultural traditions offer immense potential for regenerative tourism. As travellers increasingly seek meaningful and responsible experiences, the hospitality industry has an opportunity to rethink its role in the destinations it operates in.

“When we acquired the land at Project Karjat, it was largely barren with very few trees. The surrounding tribal village had limited access to electricity and clean drinking water, and the nearby forest was under pressure for daily resources such as firewood. From the beginning, we wanted our presence to contribute positively to both the land and the community. Instead of planting exotic species or using chemical fertilisers, we focused on restoring the soil through mulching and allowing the native forest ecology to regenerate naturally,” says Tejas Mathur, Founder, Project Karjat.



ITC Mughal plans organic farm visits and craft workshops which support rural livelihoods and promote cultural preservation



Guests at ITC Mughal are encouraged to engage with the hotel's environmental and cultural initiatives through immersive experiences

This work has been deeply collaborative with the local community as they explored ways to reduce pressure on the forest, such as encouraging the use of fallen wood rather than cutting living trees. “We also shared access to our transformer so the village could connect to electricity and worked with local authorities to advocate for a reliable source of clean drinking water. Over time, these efforts have helped regenerate an indigenous forest ecosystem that now supports a wide range of insects, birds, reptiles, and plant life,” adds Mathur.

Beyond Sustainability

Many hotels today believe that sustainability alone is not enough. Regeneration is about actively restoring and strengthening the ecosystems and communities that hospitality depends on.

Keyur Joshi, Founder, Tipai by Wildlife Luxuries, explains, “At Tipai, we see hospitality not just as a service industry but as a custodian of the land it operates on. Regenerative tourism, for us, is about leaving a place better than we found it - ecologically, socially, and culturally. This means moving beyond minimising impact to actively restoring ecosystems and strengthening local communities. Our approach is rooted in localisation, personalisation, and sustainability but extends further into regeneration by embedding restoration into the core of the guest experience.”

The idea is to create a model where hospitality contributes positively to biodiversity, revives traditional knowledge systems, and deepens the relationship between the guest and the destination. “The shift was a natural evolution rather than a strategic pivot. While sustainability focuses on reducing

negative impact, we realised that in fragile ecosystems, especially in regions facing water stress or biodiversity loss, neutrality is simply not enough. Hospitality, in our view, must go a step further and actively contribute to reversing ecological degradation. This is where the idea of rewilding became central to our thinking, allowing the land to return to its natural state, restoring native vegetation, and creating conditions for biodiversity to regenerate organically,” maintains Joshi.

Being the Change

Hotels are doing their bit by restoring local ecosystems through reforestation, water revival, biodiversity protection, and soil regeneration. At Taj Madikeri Resort & Spa, Coorg, hospitality is envisioned as a profound symbiosis with the rainforest. Spread across 180 acres, the resort was meticulously built over seven years without cutting a single tree, ensuring the natural ecosystem remained pristine. Excavated soil was transformed into a freshwater lake that today sustains aquatic life, attracts migratory birds, and aids rainwater harvesting. Pathways were created by broadening existing cattle trails rather than altering terrain.

Vikas Kumar, General Manager, Taj Madikeri Resort And Spa, Coorg, says, “Even the exteriors of our villas are coloured using natural laterite soil rather than synthetic paints, ensuring harmony with the landscape and fauna. IHCL's Paathya ESG+ framework laid the foundation, but the inspiration came from the extraordinary richness of Coorg's ecology. As custodians of one of only eight eco hotspots in the world, we recognised that sustainability alone was insufficient. The rainforest demanded a philosophy that transcended preservation and



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embraced renewal. This realisation shaped our approach—where architectural design, operational practices, and guest experiences are curated to regenerate the environment while strengthening the cultural fabric of the region. Our partnership with Alluvium India to implement Science Based Targets (SBTi) further underscores our commitment to aligning with global frameworks for climate responsibility.”

Rooted in Nature

Guided by the belief that ‘God lies in the details, waiting to be discovered’, CGH Earth has, from the very beginning, been shaped by three core values: environmental sensitivity, community well-being, and a deep commitment to local ethos. Every CGH Earth experience is rooted in a set of non-negotiable

principles: touching nature with care, nurturing the ecosystems they inhabit, engaging meaningfully with local communities beyond employment, and drawing inspiration from the cultural wisdom of the region.

Michael Dominic, CEO & MD, CGH Earth Experience Hotels, avers, “In this sense, the philosophy of regeneration has always been intrinsic to how we approach hospitality, long before the term entered the industry vocabulary. Rather than simply minimising environmental impact, we strive to restore and strengthen the ecosystems and communities around us, creating living environments where nature, community, and guests coexist.”

Several CGH Earth destinations maintain organic farms where indigenous crops and traditional agricultural practices



Guests are encouraged to engage with the hotel's environmental and cultural initiatives through immersive experiences at ITC

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Tipai by Wildlife Luxuries has an approach rooted in localisation, personalisation, and sustainability

are revived. These farms not only supply fresh produce to the kitchens but also help regenerate soil health and preserve regional crop varieties. Water stewardship is another important focus, with many properties incorporating rainwater harvesting, wetland protection, and natural water management systems designed to revive local hydrological cycles.

“We also work closely with farmers, artisans, and local producers. Many of the ingredients used in our kitchens are sourced from nearby farms, while traditional crafts, from pottery and weaving to local art forms, are integrated into guest experiences and décor. Equally important is the preservation of knowledge systems. Local culinary traditions, agricultural practices, storytelling, and village heritage are shared with travellers through immersive experiences such as farm visits, heritage walks, craft workshops, and traditional cooking demonstrations,” adds Dominic.

People Connect

Regenerative tourism also focuses on people and empowering local communities—through livelihoods, culture, or knowledge systems. Regeneration cannot happen without the well-being of the people who live in the region, and hotels understand this.

Amaan R Kidwai, Area Manager Luxury Hotels (North) & General Manager ITC Maurya, says, “Storii by ITC Hotels Castle Kanota Jaipur exemplifies this spirit through its lived history, continuity of family stewardship, and deep-rooted connection to its cultural legacy. Coinciding with 150 years of the historic estate, the collaboration with the Kanota family brings together shared values of heritage pride and responsible hospitality. It enhances the guest experience while thoughtfully safeguarding the estate’s architectural character and historic collections. The hotel’s heritage wing has been meticulously restored using traditional methods and materials, with great emphasis on preserving original and local craftsmanship. The continued use of lime plaster, Araish work, and period-appropriate finishes reflects this commitment to local artisans, often from the same families who have worked on the estate for generations, playing a key role in its ongoing restoration and maintenance. Artisans-in-residence programmes, direct farmer sourcing, culinary heritage preservation, and conservation partnerships ensure regeneration is as much social as it is ecological at ITC Mughal Agra. The hotel contributes to maintaining green spaces around the Taj Mahal buffer zone, working with civic bodies and NGOs to plant native trees and improve air quality.”



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Guest Involvement

Hotels are now encouraging guests to engage with the regenerative work happening here by sharing the story of the land and explaining the importance of biodiversity and forest ecosystems.

At ITC Mughal, guests are invited to participate in community-based experiences such as organic farm visits and craft workshops which support rural livelihoods and promote cultural preservation. “At ITC Mughal Agra, conscious luxury extends beyond observation to participation. Guests are encouraged to engage with the hotel’s environmental and cultural initiatives through immersive experiences. These include tree planting, compost-to-table journeys, traditional craft learning and participation in biodiversity awareness activities, allowing each stay to contribute meaningfully to the ecosystem,” says Sandipan Bose, General Manager, ITC Mughal Agra.

Future Perfect

The most meaningful indicators of regenerative work are ecological recovery and community well-being. Rather than viewing tourism purely as infrastructure and service delivery, hotels can become stewards of the ecosystems and cultures around them. Mass tourism that ignores ecological realities can be highly destructive. However, a new generation of travellers is increasingly aware of the environmental and social impact of where they stay. Regenerative tourism will become an important differentiator in hospitality. Properties that actively contribute to ecological restoration and community well-being will be better positioned to earn trust and long-term relevance. As more travellers seek experiences that support rather than harm ecosystems, regenerative tourism is likely to become an important direction for hospitality in India. ■