

INTERNATIONAL **Glamping** BUSINESS

Issue 56 July 2026

Think Bigger

**BUILDING BRANDS,
NOT BEDS**

IN CONVERSATION WITH
CLOUD COLLECTIVE

**DON'T CREATE A
RESORT, CREATE A
REASON TO VISIT**

FROM EMPTY CAR PARK TO
GLOBAL PLATFORM

**TURNING
FESTIVALS INTO
PROFITS**

BY KERRY ROY

**THE DESTINATION
COMES FIRST**

LUXURY TRAVEL IN CHINA
IS EVOLVING

THE
**GLAMPING
SHOW**

SEMINAR PREVIEW

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GLAMPING SHOW

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Welcome to INTERNATIONAL Glamping BUSINESS



We're back from Chiang Mai after another fantastic Eco Resort Network gathering and although the jet lag has worn off, the conversations are very much continuing. This was the fifth edition of the event we've organised and hosted, and I must give props to our delegates who make this industry so enjoyable to be part of; they are people who are willing to share ideas openly, challenge thinking and genuinely want to see outdoor hospitality move forward together.

In this issue, we're pleased to feature articles from several of our speakers and delegates, expanding on the themes explored in Thailand and bringing those conversations to an even wider audience.

Our attention now turns to The Glamping Show, taking place from 10-12 September, for which we're once again curating the seminar programme. Inside this issue you'll find a preview of what's to come, with confirmed speakers and topics.

We speak with Koko Tang, Co-founder of Vinetree Tourism, to discuss China's evolving outdoor hospitality landscape. Gertjan Hoffer and Tau Van Ngo of Basecamp Eco-Resorts share their philosophy behind creating destinations they themselves would want to visit, while Bastian Sagild, Co-founder of Cloud Collective, explores how experience, branding, wellness and authenticity are just the tip of the hospitality iceberg.

'Glampreneur' Kerry Roy returns with another thought-provoking column, this time exploring why – and how – festivals can become a valuable revenue stream for glamping sites and rural businesses. Sonia Aucott, Co-Founder of the Rural Diversification Collective, shares practical design lessons from transforming a pig sty (literally) into a profitable stay. We also take a look at one of the industry's guest favourites with a focus on hot tubs.

And we're delighted to announce that The Glamping Show European Forum will return, with its second edition taking place in Amsterdam on 26 November.

Whether you're joining us in September, November, or following along from wherever you are in the world, I hope this issue offers plenty of inspiration for the months ahead.

Annie

Editor, International Glamping Business

Cover image: *Basecamp Amsterdam*

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International Glamping Business is published by: Upgrade Publishing. Registered address: 47 Oliver Close, London W4 3RL
Publisher: Upgrade Publishing. Steph Curtis-Raleigh. **e:** steph@upgradepublishing.com
Design: Dean Coulter. Design on Tap. www.designontap.co.uk
www.glampingbusiness.com **Instagram** @thisisglamping **Facebook** @thisisglamping
Other Events:
The Glamping Show **w:** www.glampingshow.com **e:** dan.w@swanevents.co.uk
Glamping Show Americas **w:** www.glampingshow.us **e:** david@glampingshow.us
Eco Resort Network **w:** www.ecoresort.network **e:** steph@ecoresort.network
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REMEMBERING **PAUL ZWAY**, A TRUE PIONEER

Everyone at International Glamping Business and Eco Resort Network was deeply saddened to learn of the death of Paul Zway, founder of Exclusive Tents and one of the true pioneers of the modern glamping and outdoor hospitality industry.

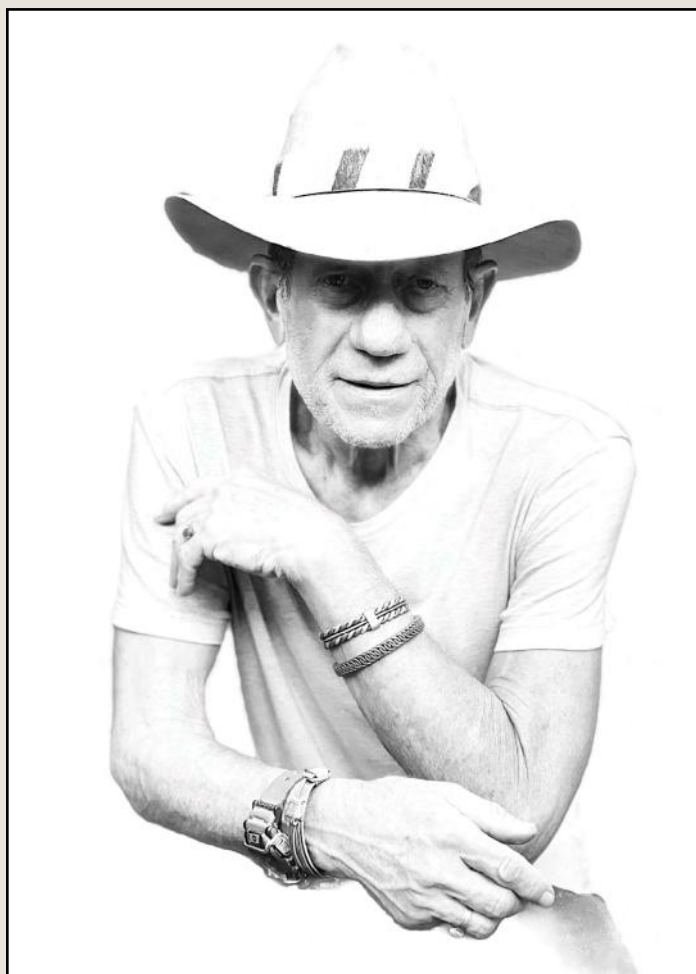
Paul's influence extended far beyond the luxury safari tents for which his company became renowned. A visionary with a lifelong connection to the natural world, he helped shape an industry dedicated to bringing people closer to nature in comfort and style.

Born and raised in South Africa, Paul's love of the wilderness began in childhood. Fascinated by wildlife, he spent much of his youth exploring the bush, camping and studying animals, developing a deep respect for nature that remained central throughout his life.

That passion led him to become one of the youngest professional Game Rangers in South Africa's Kruger National Park. Over the next 17 years, he dedicated himself to wildlife conservation, specialising in anti-poaching operations during a period of escalating rhino and elephant poaching. Living in remote ranger stations and spending weeks under canvas gave him first-hand experience that would later inspire his life's work.

After threats were made against his family by organised poaching syndicates, Paul made the difficult decision to leave South Africa and begin a new life in Arizona. Although it meant starting again, his entrepreneurial spirit and love of the outdoors remained undiminished.

In 2004, together with his eldest son, Zane, he founded Exclusive Tents with the vision of introducing beautifully



crafted luxury safari tents to the North American market. Drawing on decades of experience living and working in canvas structures, he set out to create accommodation that combined elegance, durability and a genuine connection with nature.

Those ambitions helped establish Exclusive Tents as one of the world's leading luxury tent manufacturers, supplying bespoke accommodation to prestigious hospitality destinations while remaining true to Paul's belief that tourism and conservation should go hand in hand.

Conservation, sustainability and respect for the natural environment remained at the heart of both his business philosophy and personal life. He believed luxury hospitality could exist in harmony with nature, allowing guests to experience extraordinary places while leaving the lightest possible footprint.

Many across the international glamping community will remember Paul not only for his expertise, but also for his warmth, generosity and willingness to share his knowledge. He remained passionate about innovation and the future of outdoor hospitality throughout his career.

Paul had been due to speak at this year's Eco Resort Network gathering in Thailand. Sadly, ill health prevented him from travelling, and many delegates missed the opportunity to hear his remarkable story in person.

Hospitality consultant Randy Hendrickson, who worked alongside Paul for many years, reflected on their friendship:

"Over the past many years I had the absolute privilege of working with Paul as a business partner, working on multiple projects together. His expertise and acumen were absolutely without equal, as was his

integrity in always doing what was right and best. But moreover, I came to know him as one of my closest personal friends. We spent many hours talking about everything apart from business, talking about family, life, and things that truly matter. As great as he was as 'Paul the industry icon', it was 'Paul the man' who I cherished most, and will miss most profoundly."

While Paul's professional achievements transformed the industry, it was his kindness, integrity and friendship that left the greatest impression on those who knew him.

Our heartfelt condolences go to his wife Angelika, his sons Zane, Anders and Brian, and everyone at Exclusive Tents. His legacy will continue to inspire the global outdoor hospitality community for many years to come.



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THE LONG RUN AND APOLA PARTNER TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE OUTDOOR LODGING

The Long Run (TLR), the global membership organisation focused on nature conservation and sustainable tourism, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Asia Pacific Outdoor Lodging Association (APOLA) to strengthen sustainable outdoor lodging across the region.

Signed on 8 June, the agreement establishes a collaborative partnership centred on events, knowledge sharing, communications and member engagement. Together, the organisations aim to help outdoor lodging operators improve sustainability practices while supporting the continued growth of the sector.

APOLA represents the rapidly expanding outdoor lodging market across Asia Pacific, where the sector is growing at an estimated 15% annually, compared with around 11% globally. The association works to promote operational standards and responsible development across the industry.

The Long Run supports a global network of nature-first lodges and travel businesses guided by its '4Cs' framework: conservation, community, culture and commerce.

"Outdoor lodging, when developed with genuine environmental consideration and local partnership, can be a powerful tool for rural economic development," said Robert Hecker, APOLA Executive Committee member and co-founder. "In that regard, The Long Run's best practice experience from sustainable lodges around the world will help our members in Asia Pacific develop responsibly and with confidence."

Anne-Kathrin Zschiegner, Executive Director of The Long Run, added: "Our new partnership with APOLA reflects a shared commitment to strengthening sustainable outdoor lodging across Asia Pacific through practical collaboration, events, knowledge exchange, membership engagement and communications."



Looking ahead, the organisations plan to collaborate on workshops, panel discussions and training initiatives while sharing best practice to help operators navigate sustainability, investment, planning, regulation, guest experience and marketing.

TRUDOMES ASSISTS WITH BUILDING INCLUSIVE OUTDOOR RETREATS IN CORNWALL

Nestled on Cornwall's Rame Peninsula, WilderMe is demonstrating how thoughtful accommodation design can make outdoor hospitality more inclusive. Established as a Community Interest Company (CIC), the retreat provides nature-based experiences for autistic adults, neurodivergent individuals and SEND families.

As demand for its autism-friendly retreats grew, the team sought accommodation that could combine accessibility, durability and comfort while remaining connected to the surrounding landscape. They partnered with British geodesic dome manufacturer TruDomes to introduce a collection of year-round dome structures.

"We chose TruDomes because they are British-made, aligning with our CIC ethos of keeping things as local as possible. After seeing them in person at the showroom and observing how beautiful and well-made they are, we knew they were the perfect choice for our glamping site," said the WilderMe team.

Located in an exposed coastal setting, the site required accommodation capable of withstanding Cornwall's unpredictable weather. Built with aircraft-grade aluminium frames, the domes were selected for their durability while maintaining an immersive connection to nature. The addition of wheelchair-accessible units has also enabled WilderMe to welcome a wider range of guests.

Guests have responded positively to the balance of comfort and outdoor immersion.

"Guests enjoy feeling protected, secure and sheltered while sleeping in the domes. They also love waking up to the view outside the amazing panoramic window. Sometimes the Cornish weather can be wild and unpredictable, but our guests don't mind that when they have a cosy safe space to relax in and watch the world go by."

For WilderMe, the investment is about more than upgrading accommodation.



"Getting these new geodomes has been a massive upgrade for our CIC. It not only makes our retreats more luxurious and attractive for prospective guests but also ensures we can continue our vital work for many more years due to the quality and sturdiness of the builds."

The project highlights the growing importance of accessibility and wellbeing within outdoor hospitality, showing how considered accommodation choices can help create welcoming experiences for a broader range of guests.

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GITA SUMMIT BRINGS THE GLAMPING COMMUNITY TOGETHER

The Glamping Industries Trade Association (GITA) held its first-ever Spring Summit on 12 May at Tractors & Cream Glamping in Somerset, UK, bringing together operators, suppliers and industry experts for a day focused on the opportunities and challenges shaping the outdoor hospitality sector.

Designed as a forum for knowledge sharing and connection, the one-day event combined presentations, workshops, an exhibition area and informal networking.

The event reflected a wider ambition within the sector: creating a stronger collective voice for a diverse and fast-growing industry. Derry Green, GITA Director and Founder of The Secret Garden Glamping, explained: “We realised we’re all this big, huge community and there’s no single voice. Everybody’s doing their own things independently and we needed some way to elevate standards in the glamping industry and speak to government on topics that affect the industry.”

A key theme throughout the day was how operators can strengthen their businesses through smarter decision-making. Vicki Jones from ResNexus delivered an in-depth session on strategic pricing and how a more targeted approach can help glampsite owners optimise revenue.

Accessibility was another important topic, with Lucy Bodnar-Smith introducing the award-winning Snowball Accessibility App. The platform allows users to assess venues and activities against accessibility criteria, while Snowball’s site assessments help businesses identify practical improvements that can make their offering more inclusive.

Paul Evans from Glampingstays also used the event to launch new research into emerging glamping trends, highlighting ten key developments that operators should be aware of as guest expectations and the wider market continue to evolve.

The afternoon workshops encouraged more interactive discussion. Sarah Riley from Inspired Courses explored the growing impact of artificial intelligence on the sector, highlighting the importance of understanding and adopting new technologies. Shaun Mallia from Tower Insurance focused on crisis management, encouraging operators to prepare plans and processes before challenges arise.

The “Ask the Experts” panel – featuring Mark Scott from Clear Sky, John Maddy and Richard Coulter from Long Valley Yurts and Ben Newton from Greenfinch Planning Consultants – provided

practical advice on a wide range of topics raised by attendees, from development challenges to operational issues.

A separate panel discussion explored the role of online travel agencies (OTAs), with Paul Evans, Tony Wilson from Anytime Bookings and Ed Maughan from GroupAccommodation.com debating how OTAs fit within the wider booking ecosystem and the opportunities and considerations they present for operators.

Alongside the programme, exhibitors showcased products and services supporting the glamping sector, covering areas including booking technology, insurance, accommodation, wellness, finance, firewood and guest experience.

The Summit was supported by a number of industry partners and sponsors, including ResNexus and Glampingstays as Platinum Partners, alongside Silver Partners tgfp accountants and Touch Stay, and event sponsors TruDomes, You Can Sauna, Davies & Co, Tower Insurance and The Secret Garden Glamping.

The association plans to make the Spring Summit an annual event, with the date for next year’s gathering to be announced soon.



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THE CASE FOR OUTDOOR LODGING

Why Nature-Based Hospitality Is the Investment of Our Generation

By Robert Hecker, co-founder of APOLA

There's a growing legion of travellers who are seeking restoration in preference to traditional sight-seeing. They want to feel the earth beneath their feet, wake to birdsong rather than traffic and return home reenergised. For those paying attention, we're looking at a structural market transformation with outdoor lodging at its core.

Glamping resorts, eco retreats and the like are not novelties. They are a maturing asset class responding directly to experiences for which travellers are increasingly willing to pay a premium. When executed well, they demonstrate how guests spend more per night, stay longer and return more frequently than comparable conventional hotel guests.

The reason is primarily emotional: outdoor lodging delivers an experience conventional hotels simply cannot. When a guest is immersed in, and interacts directly with the local environment, while watching the sun set over a remote forest canopy or beach from a private deck, they are experiencing an irreproducible moment. The emotional resonance of such translates directly into RevPAR premiums, strong direct booking rates and word-of-mouth marketing no advertising budget can replicate.

This is particularly pronounced across Southeast Asia, where extraordinary natural landscapes remain largely underserved by quality lodging infrastructure. From the highland forests of northern Thailand to the karst coastlines of the Philippines and the volcanic interiors of Indonesia, the raw material for world-class outdoor hospitality is abundant. The demand – from both international visitors and a rapidly growing regional middle class – is real and growing. The gap between supply and demand for

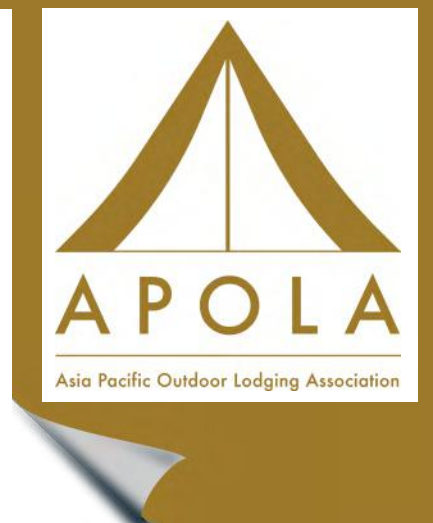
quality outdoor lodging experiences represents a compelling development opportunity.

Of course, developing outdoor lodging projects is not a simple or easy undertaking. The challenges are many, and developers who underestimate them do so at considerable risk and cost. Securing appropriate and quality sites with development rights is the first major hurdle to be overcome. The difficulty in sourcing such sites is the main limiting factor in the supply growth of outdoor lodging projects.

Once a workable site is identified, the investment in what are often remote locations can be substantial. Reliable power, water management, waste systems and access roads are often built from scratch. Permitting is rigorous, and navigating local regulatory frameworks requires patience, local expertise and an authentic commitment to environmental stewardship.

But these barriers are precisely what make the returns worth pursuing. The complexity of outdoor lodging development also naturally limits competition. Properties done well – thoughtfully designed, responsibly built and intelligently operated – achieve pricing power and occupancy resilience. Investors who commit the time and capital to execute properly are rewarded not just with attractive yields, but with assets that appreciate in value (albeit depending on the land tenure involved).

Perhaps more important is the relationship between these projects and the environments and communities in which they operate. Outdoor lodging can be a powerful tool for rural economic development. Local employment, supply chain integration with nearby farms and artisans, and the channelling of conservation fees back into habitat protection create a virtuous cycle in which the



project's commercial success and community wellbeing are genuinely aligned. Guests are perceptive – and they reward authenticity.

Great outdoor lodging operators achieve the balance between ecological preservation and guest comfort; Maintaining such balance is a daily discipline. Waste and water systems must be monitored and improved continuously. Wildlife corridors must be protected. The natural assets attracting guests must be actively maintained. Operators who treat sustainability as a marketing slogan eventually face the consequences: degraded landscapes, regulatory scrutiny and guests feeling deceived. Sustainability as an operational standard builds something that compounds in value.

Outdoor lodging projects may come with above average risks, but also above average returns on investment. For those who understand what travellers are genuinely hungry for, with the patience to navigate development complexity and the integrity to operate in genuine partnership with nature and community, the opportunity is as clear as it is significant.



GATHERING FOR CHANGE

Reflections on Eco Resort Network

The 2026 edition of Eco Resort Network delivered another unforgettable gathering for regenerative hospitality leaders in Chiang Mai, Thailand – what many delegates described as its most thought-provoking and connected gathering yet.

Hosted exclusively at the beautiful Aleenta Retreat in Chiang Mai, the event brought together around 60 leading voices from the worlds of eco resorts, outdoor hospitality, wellness, regenerative tourism, design and sustainable development for several days of open discussion, collaboration and debate.

With delegates arriving directly from the swimming pool, dawn wellness sessions taking place before breakfast and conversations continuing long into the evening, the unique atmosphere once again set Eco Resort Network apart from more traditional hospitality conferences.

The setting itself played a central role in shaping the tone of the event, with Aleenta's century-old teak buildings, lush gardens and deeply relaxed environment creating the perfect backdrop for honest conversations around the future of hospitality. A major highlight was the second evening

reception hosted at 137 Pillars House in association with APOLA. Delegates were welcomed into the historic property owned by the family of speaker Nida Wongphanlert for cocktails and networking in one of Chiang Mai's most iconic hospitality settings.

Across the conference programme, one message repeatedly emerged: sustainability is no longer enough. Regeneration is now the direction of travel.

The speaker agenda explored this theme from multiple angles, including the human impact of regenerative hospitality projects, community empowerment, wellness, design, operations and future development models.

Powerful discussions from Peter Richards, his wife Premruethai Tosemkit – owner of Chiang Mai eco resort Harmony@Huailan – and Andrew Jones from Sanctuary Resorts explored the role hospitality can play in improving lives and creating meaningful positive impact beyond the guest experience itself.

Another standout moment came through the deeply personal and moving conversation between David Leventhal and his daughter Ariela, which many delegates described as

one of the emotional highlights of the entire event on the subject of scaling without losing agency and the topic of legacy.

APOLA's Asia-focused panel session offered rare insight into what is currently happening across multiple emerging hospitality markets throughout the region, including China, Cambodia and wider Southeast Asia. Topics ranged from permitting and development challenges to land selection and changing guest expectations. Particular attention was given to the contribution of Koko Tang from Vinetree Resorts, who spoke about her philosophy of searching for locations untouched by visible human occupation to create true emotional disconnection and relaxation for guests. Other panellists included Robert Hecker, Managing Director (Asia Pacific) at Horwath HTL, Willem Niemeijer, Founder and CEO of VHG Hospitality Asia and Bastian Sagild, Co-Founder & CEO at Cloud Collective – providing an incredible overview of the talent and growth in the region.

Guy Heywood brought decades of luxury hospitality experience to the stage, delivering one of the event's most talked-about sessions around "the new luxury", challenging assumptions around what modern travellers





truly value and where brands are sometimes losing authenticity in the pursuit of trend-driven sustainability narratives.

Lydia Tiasiri from Fenn Designers delivered a hugely practical and engaging session exploring circular economy principles within hotel operations and the importance of understanding how sustainability systems succeed or fail operationally. Joined on stage by (Natty) Nida Wongphanlert of 137 Pillars Hotels & Resorts, the pair gave delegates a rare real-world insight into the challenges of implementing regenerative practices across active hospitality operations.

From the United States, Paula Oblen and Janice Wilson challenged delegates to rethink hospitality branding entirely, encouraging operators to create “a category of one” rather than competing in overcrowded markets. Their sessions explored AI-driven guest discovery, designing for niche audiences rather than mass appeal and having the confidence to stand apart from competitors.

One of the most anticipated sessions of the event once again proved to be the Titans of Tents panel, featuring Dave Court from Bushtec, Brendan O’Molony from Tenthouse Structures, Ueli Wick from Escape Nomade and Tom Butterfield from Eco Structures. The discussion tackled everything from global logistics and geopolitical instability to shifting customer expectations, booming and slowing regional markets and the importance of maintaining quality standards as outdoor hospitality expands globally. Panellists also warned of the risks posed by lower-quality

suppliers entering the market and stressed the need for responsible operators and manufacturers to help protect the sector’s long-term reputation.

Brendan O’Molony also hosted the return of the now-famous fireside chat, following the success of last year’s session. This year’s discussion, titled “Conversion versus Creation: The Next Frontier in Sustainable Hospitality”, sparked lively debate around adaptive reuse, new-build development and the future direction of regenerative hospitality projects worldwide.

Alongside the formal programme, the event remained intentionally intimate and relationship-led, with delegates sharing meals, excursions, wellness activities and late-night conversations that many attendees described as equally valuable as the sessions themselves.

Reflecting on the gathering afterwards, Tenthouse Structures commented: “What makes ERN so valuable is the healthy debate it encourages; challenging assumptions and pushing the industry forward.”

Meanwhile HoneyTrek described the event as “more of a rolling forum on using travel as a force for good.”

As Eco Resort Network now begins discussions around its 2027 destination, delegates left Chiang Mai energised by the growing sense that regenerative hospitality is evolving from niche conversation into a genuine movement shaping the future of global travel.

About Eco Resort Network



Eco Resort Network (ERN) was founded by International Glamping Business Publisher Steph Curtis-Raleigh to create a dedicated space for owners, developers, investors, designers and operators working across eco resorts, regenerative hospitality and experience-led tourism. The network first launched in 2019 through a series of online summits, before evolving into the in-person event format it is known for today, with the first in-person gathering taking place in 2022. Designed as a highly curated alternative to traditional conferences, it brings together industry leaders from around the world to share ideas, challenge assumptions and explore how hospitality can create positive environmental, social and economic impact. Now, it has developed a reputation for combining high-level discussion with meaningful relationship-building in some of the world’s most inspiring hospitality settings.



THE DESTINATION COMES FIRST

A conversation on the evolution of luxury travel in China

As Co-Founder of Vinetree Resorts, Koko Tang has helped pioneer a distinctive approach to luxury outdoor hospitality in China, developing nature-led destinations that place landscape, culture and community at the heart of the guest experience. Following her seminar at Eco Resort Network 2026 in Chiang Mai, she spoke to International Glamping Business about site selection, sustainability, changing traveller expectations and the future of nature-based hospitality in China.

Vinetree Resorts has developed a distinctive identity within China's luxury outdoor hospitality sector. What inspired its creation?

Vinetree did not begin with the ambition to build hotels. It began with a question: how might we rediscover the mountains, forests, gorges and villages of Yunnan in a way that feels respectful, intimate and alive?

The original thinking came from our founder, Mr Zhou Yun. With a background

in geology, he spent years travelling across western China, developing a deep understanding of landscapes and the cultural systems that grow from them. This led him to question whether tourism could become a more thoughtful way for people to reconnect with nature, rather than simply consume scenic attractions.

As natives of Yunnan, we both feel a strong connection to this region. Its diversity – from snow mountains and forests to ethnic minority villages – is extraordinary. Our intention was always to share this richness while reducing the impact tourism can have on fragile environments and communities.

At the time Vinetree was founded, China had very few luxury tented resorts. Development was still largely centred on conventional hotels. We wanted to explore a different approach: not recreating urban hospitality in nature, but using lighter forms such as tents and boardwalks to allow guests to experience place more directly.

For us, the tent is only a gateway. The real value lies in whether a journey helps people step away from daily life and reconnect with nature, quietness and a sense of freedom. The name “Vinetree” reflects this idea of coexistence and resilience.

At the Eco Resort Network event, you spoke about seeking landscapes with minimal human impact. Why is this important?

We are not referring to untouched wilderness, but to places where nature remains the dominant presence and human intervention is carefully limited.

Different Vinetree projects have different themes. Some are rooted in village life and culture, others in mountains, forests or wetlands. For nature-led camps, the quality of the landscape is the starting point. We assess whether natural character remains strong, whether development can be carefully controlled, and whether guests can experience the environment without disruption.



Koko Tang

The stronger the landscape, the more restrained the intervention should be.

What does your site selection process look like?

Site selection is one of the most time-intensive parts of our work and can take years from discovery to development.

We never begin by asking what can be built. We ask whether the place already has the qualities of a destination. Why would guests come here? What can they experience that cannot be found elsewhere? The answer might lie in a forest, mountain, village, local food culture or a particular relationship between people and land.

We also consider whether these elements can be translated into a meaningful guest experience without excessive intervention. If a site requires heavy engineering or artificial enhancement, we are cautious.

Equally important are environmental integrity, cultural authenticity and whether

local communities can be meaningfully involved and benefit from tourism.

How would you describe Vinetree's philosophy?

If I were to summarise Vinetree's philosophy in one sentence, I would say we do not place hotels in nature. We use hospitality as a medium through which people can reconnect with nature and place.

The landscape, local culture and communities are always the protagonists. Hospitality should not separate guests from their surroundings, but help them engage more deeply with them.

For us, luxury is no longer defined by facilities or scale, but by increasingly rare experiences: quiet, space, time and a strong sense of place. These moments do not need to be over-designed – their power lies in their simplicity.

How have guest expectations in China changed since Vinetree launched?

In the early years, guests came because staying in a tented camp felt novel. Today, travellers are far more experienced and intentional.

They are less focused on what a room looks like and more interested in why they should visit a destination, what they will experience there, and what they will take away from it.

Travel is also slowing down. Guests are staying longer in fewer places, seeking deeper engagement with nature, culture and local life. At the same time, the definition of luxury has shifted. Material scale has become less important than emotional value and rarity. A quiet landscape, natural soundscapes, local food traditions or a meaningful walk can now hold more value than conventional luxury amenities.

Authenticity is also critical. Guests are increasingly able to distinguish between experiences rooted in place and those designed purely for tourism. The challenge is not to add more, but to identify what is already meaningful.

Sustainability is also becoming a clearer expectation, although comfort and service

standards remain high – the key is balancing immersion with quality.

How would you describe China's outdoor hospitality sector today?

The sector has evolved significantly over the past decade. What began as a niche trend has become a diverse market including luxury tented resorts, boutique nature hotels, wellness retreats and experience-led destinations.

Its maturity is reflected not just in scale, but in how both operators and travellers now understand that outdoor hospitality is about place, not just accommodation. China offers exceptional conditions for this development due to its natural diversity and cultural depth.

However, challenges remain. Some projects still prioritise visual impact and short-term attention over long-term value. Without strong destination content and operations, these models are unlikely to last.

How important are tranquility, privacy and reconnection?

Guests are not coming to complete itineraries, but to step away from daily pressure and regain time for themselves.

Privacy is not only physical but psychological. It is the absence of pressure – no need to follow a schedule, perform activity, or remain constantly engaged.

We do not position Vinetree as a structured wellness provider. Instead, we design environments that allow guests to gradually return to their own rhythm through space, pace and nature.





Are you seeing growing international interest in Vinetree?

Yes, but I see this as part of a wider shift in how China is being perceived, rather than interest in one brand.

For a long time, international visitors associated China mainly with cities and well-known landmarks. But the country's natural and cultural diversity is vast and still relatively undiscovered.

Our focus is not on presenting these places as exotic, but on helping guests understand their deeper value through landscape, heritage and community.

While Vinetree is rooted in China's landscapes and cultures, the values behind what we do resonate across borders.

How important are storytelling and branding?

Extremely important. The value of a destination is not always immediately visible, so storytelling helps people understand a place before arrival.

However, storytelling must remain grounded in reality. Each project should retain its own identity rather than conforming to a single aesthetic. For example, Vinetree Honghe Valley Tented Camp draws heavily on local traditions, while our project at Renzi Bridge is connected to railway heritage and the history of the region.

Branding is ultimately translation: turning the meaning of a place into something guests can understand and feel. The strongest brands aren't built by marketing campaigns, but through destinations that remain memorable.

How does sustainability influence your work?

Sustainability is not an addition but a guiding principle across site selection, design and operations.

It begins with restraint – deciding what should and should not be built. At our Southern Silk Road Tented Resort, for example, elevated boardwalks reduce environmental impact by following natural terrain and avoiding unnecessary disturbance.

Operationally, sustainability is embedded in daily practice: resource use, waste reduction

and community employment. Most of our employees come from nearby villages, ensuring local participation in tourism. We also draw on frameworks such as the GSTC Hotel Standard to ensure a structured approach.

When it comes to regeneration, I believe the term should be used carefully and should not become another marketing label. The real question is: can a project create positive, lasting value for a destination?

What are your long-term ambitions for Vinetree?

Our ambition is not scale, but depth. Each project should reflect the unique character of its landscape, culture and community.

China still contains many extraordinary places that remain underexplored. These require careful, responsible development rather than replication of a fixed model.

We are selective in our approach, focusing only on destinations with genuine depth and meaning.

What were your key takeaways from Eco Resort Network?

One of my strongest impressions was that while outdoor hospitality looks very different around the world, many of the industry's core challenges are shared.

Operators everywhere are grappling with similar questions: how to deliver exceptional guest experiences while protecting nature, how to build meaningful community relationships and how to balance environmental responsibility with commercial sustainability.

What I particularly valued was the event's intimate format. Compared with larger conferences, it encouraged more open and meaningful conversations. For me, the greatest value of Eco Resort Network is that participants were willing to discuss not only successes, but also operational challenges and lessons learned. That kind of exchange is incredibly valuable because many of the solutions our industry needs will come from experience rather than theory.

It also aligns with our founding role within APOLA (Asia Pacific Outdoor Lodging Association), where we see collaboration and knowledge-sharing as essential to the future of outdoor hospitality in the region.

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DON'T CREATE A RESORT, CREATE A REASON TO VISIT

When an empty car park and a vision starts a global outdoor hospitality platform

When Gertjan Hoffer, co-founder of Basecamp Eco-resorts, and Tau van Ngo, Director of Basecamp

Asia and developer of Basecamp Bali, talk about the future of outdoor hospitality, the conversation usually starts with one simple question: “Would we actually want to spend our own time here?”

That question has shaped every Basecamp project since 2019. When we started Basecamp in IJmuiden (Amsterdam Beach), there wasn't much to see. The site was little more than an empty asphalt parking lot, just 100 metres from the dunes, the North Sea and one of the Netherlands' most beautiful nature reserves. Most people saw an abandoned piece of land, but we saw a living laboratory.

The asphalt disappeared. The soil was restored. Greenery slowly returned and we started experimenting with tiny houses, renewable energy, local food production, art and architecture. There was never a detailed masterplan. We simply wanted to build the kind of place where we ourselves would love to live, work and spend time.

Not every experiment worked. Hundreds of fruit trees struggled with the salty sea air. Others exceeded every expectation. But now, nature has gradually reclaimed the site. Biodiversity has increased and what was once a parking lot now feels as if it has always belonged to the surrounding landscape. Our cameras regularly capture deer wandering through the resort at night, happily treating Basecamp as their own late-night supermarket.

Looking back, that transformation perfectly captures what Basecamp has become. Our ambition has never been to build resorts. It's to create places where nature, local communities and guests all become stronger over time. Today, Basecamp develops and operates destinations across Europe, Africa and Asia, welcoming more than 100,000 guests every year. Yet every new project still starts exactly the same way: with curiosity.

We realised we weren't building resorts anymore

For the first few years, we believed we were creating beautiful places to stay. Then something unexpected happened. Companies started organising strategy sessions outdoors

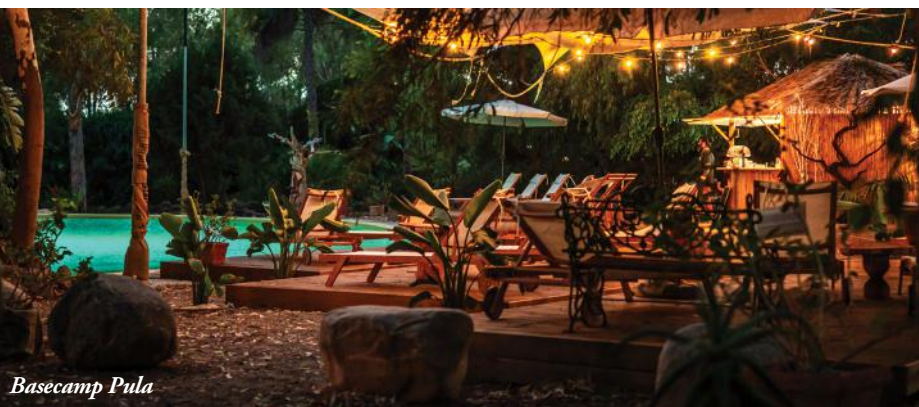
instead of inside anonymous meeting rooms. Families returned year after year. Artists asked if they could exhibit their work. Chefs wanted to organise al fresco dinners. People came to celebrate birthdays, weddings and milestones. Others simply wanted a quiet place to work for a few days. None of that had been part of the original business plan, it simply happened. That's when we realised people weren't returning because of the accommodation – they were returning because they enjoyed spending time there. That changed the way we think about outdoor hospitality.

We often say: “The future of hospitality isn't about selling rooms. It's about creating reasons to come.” Accommodation still matters. Beautiful cabins matter. Great tents matter. Glamping has an incredibly bright future, but accommodation is only the beginning; the real challenge is creating places with an atmosphere people genuinely don't want to leave.

Build places you would love yourself

People ask us how we decide what to build. The honest answer is that we build places where we would genuinely love spending time ourselves. An example is Sardinia. When we acquired our campsite there, we had more than enough space to add more accommodation. Financially, adding another twenty glamping units would probably have been the logical decision.

Instead, we built a beach bar. Not because market research told us to, or a consultant recommended it. We built it because every evening we found ourselves looking over the Mediterranean thinking exactly the same thing: “This is where we'd want to sit with a glass of wine while watching the sun disappear into the sea.”



Basecamp Pula

So we created that place. A simple wooden beach bar, fully built by our own craftsmen, using natural materials and a repurposed shipping container as the bar. It has since become one of the favourite places on the resort. Even after the bar has closed, people still sit there, watching the sunset, talking, reading or simply enjoying being. Looking back on it, we didn't really build a beach bar; we created another reason for people to return. We don't build places because we think guests will like them, we build places where we would genuinely love spending time ourselves. That is how many Basecamp ideas begin. Not with spreadsheets, but with instinct and creativity.

Start with the vision, not the accommodation

When we started developing Basecamp Bali, we didn't begin with a masterplan. We began with a simple question: "How can we regenerate this place?" From the very beginning, we shared our long-term vision with the local King, whose family is responsible for the surrounding villages.

While many international hotel brands were interested in developing the land, the local King was looking for something different. We weren't selected because we offered the highest price, but because we shared the same long-term vision for the destination and the surrounding communities – a vision that went far beyond building a resort.

Together, we looked at how tourism could strengthen the local communities instead of replacing them. We established a farmers' cooperative, explored more diverse and sustainable food production and worked on improving agricultural yields while preserving the landscape. The resort itself became part of that wider ecosystem, rather than standing apart from it.

For us, that's what regeneration really means. It's not just about restoring nature, but creating places where landscapes, local communities and visitors all become stronger together.

Every destination teaches the next

One of the advantages of being an owner, developer, operator and brand at the same time is that every project teaches us something and every lesson strengthens the next destination.



*Gerjan Hoffer
(foreground) and
Tau Van Ngo
(background)*

Tanzania is a good example. When we reopened a resort that had been closed for years, we relied heavily on tour operators to sell our diving holidays. At the same time, we noticed that many potential guests were already finding us through our own website. That insight changed our thinking. Instead of treating our website as a brochure, we transformed it into a webshop where guests can book complete stays and experiences directly.

What started as a local solution in Tanzania has since become our digital strategy across the entire Basecamp platform. Every destination benefits from lessons learned somewhere else, which is a huge advantage of building and operating our own resorts; we're building a platform that keeps learning.

Building a platform means carrying every responsibility

Building Basecamp has taught us that this model is incredibly capital-intensive. Unlike many companies in our industry, we don't develop destinations, operate them or build a brand – we do all three, together. That means we carry almost every responsibility ourselves. It's not the easiest road, but it gives us something you can't buy: every project teaches the next one.

The lessons we learned in Tanzania transformed the way we sell online across the entire company. The experiments we started in IJmuiden continue to influence Bali. Ideas tested in Sardinia inspire our latest project in Rome.

Looking ahead

Looking ahead, we don't think the future of outdoor hospitality will be defined by who builds the most resorts. It will be defined by who creates the most meaningful places. Around the world we've met passionate founders creating extraordinary outdoor destinations, all facing the same challenge: they know how to build remarkable places, but raising long-term capital, building a brand and scaling operations require completely different skills.

That's one of the biggest opportunities for our industry over the coming decade.

Not creating one company that owns everything, but creating a platform where unique destinations can remain authentic while benefiting from shared knowledge, technology, branding, distribution and long-term investment.

Because capital matters. Compared to traditional hotels, outdoor hospitality can be remarkably asset light. High-quality glamping accommodation is often faster and more affordable to develop, while guests increasingly expect, and are willing to pay, hotel-level ADRs.

Building exceptional outdoor destinations, however, remains capital intensive. You still need to invest in the land, develop the infrastructure and continue investing in the destination for years to come. But nature itself is becoming an asset. The healthier and more beautiful a destination becomes, the more valuable it becomes, for guests, local communities and investors alike.

We think the best outdoor destinations won't become bigger. They'll become better. More beautiful. More inspiring. More connected to their surroundings. And perhaps that's exactly what we've been doing since 2019.

We're still experimenting and learning. Just on a slightly larger scale than an empty parking lot in IJmuiden. The future of hospitality isn't about selling rooms, it's about creating reasons to come.



*Basecamp
IJmuiden*

FIELDS OF OPPORTUNITY



By Kerry Roy, Founder of Cerchio del Desiderio

Turning Festivals into Profits

Imagine your favourite band playing in your own backyard. With food and drinks to indulge in. A huge party to celebrate together with family and friends while you groove your hips on the dance floor, enjoy plenty of free activities, learn new skills at creative workshops, or just some downtime to join a free yoga and meditation class.

All of this while making money. Potentially as much as (if not more than) some glamping sites turn over in an entire season – in just one weekend! Isn't that the kind of party most would dream of? For glamping site owners with land, that dream can easily come true.

Festivals are one of the most popular gatherings people desire to join, even more so since the decline of traditional pub and bar culture. It's a place suitable for everyone, including dogs and children; I've even witnessed someone bring along their pot-bellied pig!

A festival is not just a celebration but also a place of fantasy and escapism, where you leave the egotistical, chaotic side of life behind the ticket gate and enter a world of dance, play, art, theatre, skills workshops and creativity that inspires alongside friendly strangers. It is a place of all-weather possibilities; no matter the weather, people's

spirits feel lifted, free and inspired. These are the types of events that become addictive because they set your soul alive, triggering longer-lasting, natural dopamine.

Festivals take shape in a variety of settings with diverse activity programs, entertainment and food and beverages, ranging from smaller 500-person events to large-scale gatherings of 200,000 people. Many festivals that maintain a loyal, avid crowd are those catering to hobbyists, where people congregate to celebrate a singular passion. Whether it is a specialised craft, a subculture, or an unconventional sport. Even art, culture, religion, seasonal harvest fetes, food and drink events, specific music genres, motorcycle shows, or car enthusiast events. My very own was a successful VW campervan festival called 'Dubs Int Dales' which hosts up to 5,000 attendees and is now in its 13th year.

Look at just how globally famous the likes of a simple tomato-throwing festival is in Spain ('La Tomatina') or Gloucestershire's famous 'Cooper's Hill Cheese-Rolling' festival. It can be absolutely anything. The more absurd, the greater the event, as more and more people search for new, off-the-wall experiences and adventures. Humans have an incredible knack for inventing bizarre reasons to gather and celebrate.

"The sky's the limit, but the mind sets the altitude." While there are endless creatively exciting options to incorporate such wonderful events into your own greenfields, there are also the logistics, legalities and planning to consider, which can take months or even years depending on the nature and scale of the event.

Licensing

It's simple to apply for a Temporary Event Notice (TEN) from your local council, which costs very little for one-off events and festivals. However, if your goal is to host several events or you already incorporate weddings into your portfolio, similar licensing concepts apply, but you may need to increase potential attendee numbers – festivals require a larger crowd than a wedding to be profitable. Music is one issue that can come into play if you have disgruntled neighbours. However, offering your local communities and their families free or VIP tickets, or inviting them to be involved in the development, can help sweeten any negotiations.

Alcohol

Festivals can increase their profits substantially with bars and branded merchandise, with some events averaging around £60 per day, per attendee. Multiply that by a few thousand people and your profit margins gain a significant boost.

If managing bars in-house, purchasing stock, finding and managing a good bar team feels like too much additional work, or makes you want to hit the bottle just thinking about it, you can simply bring in a third party. You can agree on either a percentage of profit share or charge them a set fee to trade. Either option requires an alcohol licence, which can be temporary or a longer-term licence if you plan to sell to regular guests throughout the season.

Catering

Worried you might have to cook up a Sunday roast for 5,000 people? Absolutely not. There are endless catering traders eagerly awaiting to secure a pitch at a new festival. Loyal traders will often stay with you throughout the legacy of your festival's lifespan. What they appreciate most is loyalty in return, which means not booking too many of the same type of traders; excessive competition makes it harder for them to turn a decent profit. Food traders who offer good service and high-quality food are worth keeping in your circle. Often, they will want the same pitch year on year, which enables loyal customers to find their favourite foodies easily.

Trader Revenue Streams

There are two common ways for traders to pay you.

1. Percentage share of takings: Until recent years and the introduction of advanced payment technology, this was based entirely on trust. Nowadays, festival organisers can know exactly how much money traders have taken by utilising a shared payment system. Both the trader and the event organiser can see the total sales made during the event, making it easy to split the agreed percentage owed to the festival as a form of pitch rental.

2. Direct fee payment: This is the cleanest, easiest way to manage cash flow. Both you and your traders know exactly where you stand, which is why it is often preferred. It's important to tier your pricing depending on the size of the traders' vehicles and whether they require additional staff passes. Often, trade pitches within the main arena areas are more crowded and command a higher value, while those further from the action are set at a lower rate. Mapping out the traders is crucial, and you will be required to submit this site map to the "blue light brigade" for fire, safety, and police regulations.

Note: All traders, performers, and suppliers must provide the event organisers with copies of their

own public liability insurance, plus catering hygiene certification prior to the event. Crucially, don't forget your own...

Logistics

The vital part of a well-designed festival is the logistics. This is the core of the event. Once laid out to perfection (which can take a few years of minor amendments to master), it becomes the "rinse and repeat" blueprint of the show. This part is the bones of the event, while the entertainment and activities are the skin that keeps it breathing new life.

A massive amount of planning and setup goes into logistics, and it is where the majority of your time on the ground is spent during the buildup. A two- to three-day medium-sized event will need a full week or two on-site just to build out the infrastructure, while larger-scale events can take a month or more.

Key logistical elements for events include:

- Electrics, lighting, and generators
- Plumbing and water supply
- WCs with regular, contracted cleaning (cleaner loos always guarantee higher star reviews!)
- Waste control and management
- Track matting, backup support vehicles, and machinery
- Ticketing stations, staffing, and systems
- Directional signage
- Local temporary road blocks/closures for event traffic
- Traffic management and parking
- Security and stewarding
- Covered infrastructure (marquees, tents, etc.)
- Stage and stage management
- Control room and management office
- Risk assessments
- Fire management (Top tip: fire, medics, and police teams can often double up as fantastic kids' entertainment!)
- Emergency response plans

Festival Organisers Pros & Cons

Pros

- **Scalable Margins:** Long-term planning paired with a short-term event window offers a remarkably high potential revenue stream.
- **Up-Front Cash Flow:** Festivals allow you to capture capital months, sometimes a year in advance through tiered early-bird pricing and layaway instalment plans. This provides the liquidity needed to fund operations before the gates even open.

■ **Brand Valuation:** A successful festival brand possesses immense cultural leverage. Once established, corporations will pay significant sponsorship fees to activate experiences at your event. A popular festival can also multiply your overall business and asset value should you wish to execute an exit strategy in the future.

■ It's FUN!

Cons

■ **Land Damage:** If you don't invest in the right infrastructure, your land can be left damaged and unusable for months.

■ **Weather Uncertainty:** One of the greatest unpredictabilities is the weather. You can copy your operational plan perfectly, but you cannot copy the weather. A site plan that worked flawlessly during a dry summer can become an absolute catastrophe the next year if a heavy rainstorm hits. A single mud crisis requires thousands of pounds in emergency trackway, wood chips, tractor towing services, and structural reinforcement that can completely wipe out an unadjusted budget.

■ **Higher Upfront Costs:** Festivals require massive logistical planning and upfront costs compared to regular glamping stays. Sound systems, staging, security infrastructure and medical teams cost exactly the same whether 1,000 or 5,000 people show up. If your ticket sales hit only 70% of your target, you don't just lose 30% of your profit, you usually lose 100% of it and risk going into debt.

The Blueprint for Success

Keeping it fresh with new or additional entertainment each year helps retain loyal crowds. The beauty of running a festival is that once you have a working model, the logistics, trade suppliers, and collaborative teams become a lot easier to organise. A large percentage of the physical blueprint is simply rinsed and repeated because it is safe, compliant and cost-effective.

Setting dates for the next year during your current event enables you to lock in contractor contracts at current prices. It also allows you to market the next event to an active crowd who are already in happy festival vibes and willing to book immediately. This gives you instant, healthy cash flow toward your future events.

Festivals are vibrant gatherings that create the deep sense of shared energy so many people in this changing world crave. They are the ultimate proof that you can take an empty, green field and through sheer collective imagination, turn it into a living, breathing community for a weekend.

The art of relaxation begins in the wild!



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BUILDING BRANDS, NOT BEDS

What happens
when beautiful
stays are
no longer
a scarce
resource?

ROAM, Bali

From concept and design to operations, Cloud Collective develops destinations built around, and from, experience. Co-founder Bastian Sagild discusses changing guest expectations, wellness, branding and why the future of hospitality belongs to places with a genuine sense of purpose.

Can you introduce Cloud Collective and explain how the business has evolved since its inception?

Cloud Collective is a hospitality design, development and operations company. We conceive, build and operate our own portfolio of experiential brands, staying with them long after opening day. We have a hand in every destination we create, from the first sketch to the guest walking through the door.

We started at a moment when two things were true at once: modern travellers had already moved towards experience and purpose, while the supply side of hospitality hadn't caught up. Conventional hotel groups were still building the same boxes, at the same cost, on the same multi-year timelines, for a guest who no longer wanted what they were selling.

Cloud Collective was our answer: an integrated collective spanning concept, design, engineering, fabrication, supply, brand and operations that could move fast enough and think originally enough to build for the guest who'd already changed, not the one hospitality assumed still existed.

What's evolved since is the confidence of that model. We've gone from proving the development thesis to building and operating a growing collective of brands, each with its own identity.

How has your philosophy around destination creation changed over the years?

Early on, our philosophy was proven largely through development. We could deliver a considered, design-forward property in roughly a fifth of the time and at a fraction of the cost of a conventional build. That's still true, but the philosophy underneath it has sharpened.

The shift is towards restraint and intention on one side, and brand and belonging on the other. We design only what earns its place. Nothing built because it's expected, nothing added because a category demands it. On the guest side, we've moved from thinking about hospitality as a stay to thinking about it as a relationship: a brand guests choose to return to, feel part of and trust to keep evolving.

How do you approach creating destinations?

We start with the site and the story it already has. Our scouting and qualification process exists to protect that. If a location doesn't offer something genuinely distinctive, we don't take it on.



Bastian Sagild

That doesn't mean remote for its own sake. Some of our best work sits within easy reach of a city. What matters is depth: a brand built around what that specific place already means to the people who live there and the guests we're inviting in.

What trends are you seeing in this sector that shape your work today?

The macro data backs up what we see on the ground. Seventy-six percent of luxury travellers are actively seeking experiences over standard accommodation and want to travel more responsibly. Glamping is projected to grow at roughly 12% CAGR through 2033, towards an estimated USD 11.6 billion market.

But the clearest signal is happening outside hospitality. L Catterton, a private equity firm,



Ubud

has been in exclusive talks to take a stake in Hyrox, the mass-participation fitness race, at a reported valuation of €700 million to €1 billion. The same capital that helped build the modern luxury industry is now moving into physical achievement as premium categories.

A generation raised on screens is finding its way back outside, while millennials increasingly measure a good life in memories rather than possessions.

Why do you believe guests are seeking a sense of purpose from their stays?

Because accommodation stopped being the scarce resource. There's no shortage of beautiful rooms. What's scarce is a destination that gives you a reason to go; a sense that your presence contributed something, rather than consumed something.

Purpose has become a form of luxury. A brand that delivers it honestly, rather than performs it, earns something no amount of thread count can buy: guests who return and encourage others to do the same.

What opportunities do you see in the intersection of outdoor hospitality, wellness and active travel?

The wellness most hotels sell today is already old news. Ice baths, cold plunges and sauna circuits have become table stakes rather than true differentiators. The next wave is movement and performance: recovery built around what your body has actually done that day. You can already see investment following that shift, with capital flowing into performance and community brands because that's where today's luxury customer is investing their identity.

For us, wellness, adventure, creativity and community are the product. We build every project with a hand-picked collective of specialists rather than a one-size-fits-all team, and that philosophy shapes the guest experience through shared spaces designed to encourage connection.

As more of life becomes automated, the truly valuable experiences are the ones technology can't replicate: real conversations, handcrafted details and places shaped by years of human attention. Analog is becoming the new luxury.

You are currently developing a new active adventure and wellness brand. What inspired this concept?

ROAM is built for a guest we don't think any existing brand truly serves: someone who wants real adventure and real wellness in the same stay. Today, the market sits at two extremes: deeply restorative wellness brands with no edge, or rugged adventure operators with little emphasis on design or comfort. The few that combine both tend to sit at the ultra-luxury end.

We saw a wide-open middle ground for high adventure, performance-led wellness and thoughtful design at an accessible premium, rather than an exclusionary one.

In your view, what defines a successful experience-led destination that aligns with location, audience and brand?

Integration rather than decoration. An afterthought experience is a laminated card of add-on activities sitting beside reception. A successful one is built into the site plan, staffing model and brand story from day one.

The farm feeds the restaurant. The wellness programme is shaped by what that landscape does to a person.

If you can remove the "experience" and the property still functions exactly the same, it was never integrated and the brand never truly meant it.

Start with what the land already makes possible. A jungle and a desert shouldn't offer the same journey. The answer to "What can only happen here?" is usually the best product. Then ask whether it deepens the reason the guest came or just adds another line to the amenities list.

Can you tell us about your collaboration with Khao Yai Art Forest?

The vision for Khao Yai Art Forest belongs to Marisa Chearavanont, its patron and founder. It began during the pandemic, when walking in the forest near her family's home was, in her words, one of the only things that kept her grounded.

That experience became the seed of an idea: a place where art doesn't sit inside a white room but lives within a landscape, restoring land that had previously been cleared for monoculture farming back into something alive.

Our role is the hospitality layer, creating the retreat that allows guests to live inside that world. What made the collaboration compelling for us is the same principle that runs through everything we build: reciprocity. The forest gives back to the land it replaced, the art gives as much as it asks of you and the guest isn't a passive consumer.

How does the project blend art, landscape, nature and hospitality to create a distinctive visitor experience?

The forest's founding director, Stefano Rabolli Pansera, has described the project as "land art 2.0", a deliberate departure from the traditional sculpture park.

The retreat extends that instinct across the full twenty-four hours. Dawn reveals the art differently from dusk. Rain changes the acoustics. A guest who stays one night experiences only one version of a place designed to unfold over seasons and repeat visits.

The hospitality follows the same philosophy: food rooted in real ingredient lineages and indigenous knowledge, craft traditions kept alive by the people who still practise them, and service that behaves like a thoughtful host. The goal is for guests to leave feeling they entered a dialogue rather than simply visited an attraction.

How do you see guest expectations evolving over the next five years?

Everyone talks about sustainability and purpose, so I'll offer the less obvious prediction: guests will expect the brands they stay with to behave like communities they belong to, rather than places they transact with once.

Membership models, seasonal programming and genuine reasons to return are already



shaping the most interesting hospitality and lifestyle brands. Soon they'll become the baseline rather than a premium feature. A stay that ends at checkout will feel increasingly old-fashioned.

What mistakes do you commonly see when operators attempt to diversify?

Treating diversification as marketing instead of something with real substance. Operators add a yoga deck or a farm-to-table menu as a story to tell without changing staffing, sourcing or design to support it. It reads exactly as it is: a layer of paint. Guests can tell the difference between a working farm that feeds the kitchen and one that's there for the photograph.

The other common mistake is chasing every trend instead of committing properly to the few that genuinely fit the brand and the site.

What do you believe will define the most successful outdoor hospitality businesses of the future?

Brand, honestly, is the heart of it. Everything else – design, sustainability and programming – is simply an expression of a brand with a genuine point of view. The businesses that succeed will be those where design, culture and operations all serve the same clear idea of what the brand exists to do.

When that idea is authentic enough for guests to feel the difference between a place that truly means it and one that's simply performing it, you've created something lasting.

Speed to market and cost efficiency get you into the game. A brand people genuinely believe in is what keeps you there.





EXPLORING NEW REVENUE STREAMS

Rural Diversification Takes Centre Stage at The Glamping Show

A new conference stream curated by International Glamping Business will bring together operators, advisors and finance specialists to explore the growing opportunities for farms, estates and rural businesses.

This year's Glamping Show UK will see the introduction of a brand-new conference stream focused on one of the most significant conversations taking place across the rural economy: diversification.

International Glamping Business and The Glamping Show have partnered with Sonia Aucott of the Rural Diversification Collective to launch a dedicated Rural Diversification Day, taking place on Thursday 10 September.

Designed for farms, vineyards, landed estates and equestrian venues, the programme will explore how rural businesses can unlock new and recurring revenue streams through hospitality, glamping and a range of wider diversification projects.

Sonia Aucott, founder of Aucott Interior Design and co-founder of the Rural Diversification Collective, has become well known for helping rural landowners develop commercially viable hospitality concepts that balance financial sustainability with thoughtful design and strong guest appeal.

The Rural Diversification Day will bring together operators, advisors and finance specialists to discuss the practical realities of diversification, from investment and planning through to design, funding and operational delivery. It reflects the increasing overlap between outdoor hospitality and broader land-use strategies, providing visitors with fresh ideas, practical insights and direct access to the experts helping shape the next generation of rural businesses.

Among the confirmed speakers are Dawn Woollam of Dudley Peverill Associates, Mike Clarke of Arkle Leisure Finance, Richard Sigsworth of Omar Group and Neil Baxendale of GTF Event Equipment Finance.

The programme will also feature real-world case studies from businesses that have successfully diversified their operations, including Bill and Cheryl Sperry of Dragon's Gate in Herefordshire and Gemma Chance, CMO of the innovative Ohana Mua development in Cornwall.

The new conference stream has been developed as part of the wider seminar programme curated by International Glamping Business for The Glamping Show UK, reflecting growing interest from rural landowners looking beyond traditional agricultural income.

Steph Curtis-Raleigh, Publisher of International Glamping Business magazine

and Conference Director of The Glamping Show, said:

"Working with Sonia is an absolute pleasure. We are very aligned on the importance of land diversification, which certainly includes glamping, but these days incorporates so much more in terms of exciting opportunities for rural businesses and landowners.

"We hope visitors to The Glamping Show will really enjoy this new strand of content within the seminar programme and leave inspired by the wide range of innovative projects now emerging across the sector."

Aucott added:

"This is a fantastic opportunity for the Rural Diversification Collective, which is still newly launched, and we are hugely excited to meet visitors to The Glamping Show this September.

"There is enormous interest right now from farms, estates and rural businesses looking to create more resilient and diversified income streams, and we hope these sessions will provide practical inspiration, expert guidance and real-world examples of what is possible."

The Glamping Show UK takes place from 10-12 September 2026 and brings together operators, suppliers, manufacturers and hospitality professionals from across the glamping and outdoor hospitality sectors.

For the full line-up and speaker information, visit glampingbusiness.com/seminars.

Thursday 10th September - Rural Diversification Day

10:30am From Concept to Guest Experience: The Details That Matter

Sonia Aucott

The Rural Diversification Collective

11:15am Before the Build: Feasibility Before Fantasy in Rural Diversification and Glamping Development

Dawn Woollam

Dudley Peverill

12.00pm How To Create Your Dream Diversification Project on a Strong Financial Foundation

Mike Clarke (Arkle Finance), **Richard Sigsworth** (Omar Group), **Neil Baxendale** (GTF Event Equipment Finance) & **Gemma Chance** (Ohana Mua)

2.00pm TITLE TBC

Cheryl Sparey

The Dragon's Gate

3.00pm Reinventing the "Lodge Staycation" with Purpose, Possibility and Planet in Mind

Gemma Chance

Ohana Mua

Friday 11th September

11.00am Beyond the Booking: Building Experience-Led Hospitality Brands

Derry Green

The Secret Garden Glamping

12.00pm The Visibility Shift: How Future Guests Will Discover Your Glamping Business

Sarah Riley

Inspired Courses

1.00pm Essentials For Establishing a Glamping Site

John Greenshields

The CLA

2.00pm The Future of the UK Glamping Market

Joby Mussell

Glampingstays

3.00pm Planning Permission VS Exemption License: Which Route Should You Take and Why?

Helen Davies

Canopy & Stars

Saturday 12th September

11.00am GITA Panel Discussion

John White

GITA UK

12.00pm What Guests Really Want From Glamping: Features That Drive Conversion

Rachel Brennan

Sykes Holiday Cottages

1.00pm Showing Up Where It Matters: Search Strategies for Glamping Businesses

Vicki Jones

ResNexus



FROM PIG STY TO PROFITABLE STAY

Design Lessons from a Rural Conversion Project

Seeing potential in forgotten spaces

I'm an interior designer with more than 20 years' experience designing homes for private residential clients, hotels, heritage properties and hospitality schemes. I established Aucott Interior Design in 2011, and in autumn 2024 I pivoted the business to focus more on rural diversification, supporting farmers, landowners, vineyards and equestrian businesses looking to develop hospitality venues.

The opportunity to transform forgotten rural buildings into successful guest accommodation is incredibly exciting. These spaces often already have the character, history and sense of place that today's guests are looking for; they just need someone to recognise their potential.

One such project is The Pig Sty, a rural conversion project that began when a former client approached me. They run a successful wedding venue and, having previously redesigned seven bedrooms and bathrooms in their Manor house, they already understood the value of creating memorable guest experiences.

They also had a large shepherd's hut used by brides and bridesmaids before weddings, but were increasingly being asked whether accommodation could also be provided for the groom and his party.

Looking around the estate, they realised they had an underused building that could offer the perfect solution. It had originally been a pig sty before being converted into



By Sonia Aucott, Co-Founder of The Rural Diversification Collective

office space around 20 years ago. It still had fluorescent strip lighting, cable trunking, office desks sitting within the old pig bays, and tired kitchen and cloakroom facilities.

With the right vision, however, it had all the ingredients needed to become something much more valuable.

Retaining character while creating a guest experience

What immediately attracted us to the building was the incredible run of exposed beams stretching the length of the space. Because the building was not Listed, we had more flexibility to make structural changes that would improve the layout.

We were able to remove a purlin beam and the vertical struts attached to the brick walls that divided the original pens. We also reduced the depth of alternate brick walls back to 500mm nibs, which opened up the space and allowed us to create clearly defined areas for sleeping, living and dining.

The challenge with any rural conversion is finding the balance between preserving character and creating somewhere that works commercially. Guests want authenticity, but they also expect comfort, practicality and a high-quality experience.

For The Pig Sty, we wanted the design to feel masculine, calming and connected to its surroundings, while still being robust enough to withstand regular hospitality use.

Designing for durability as well as beauty

A successful hospitality interior needs to look beautiful, but it also needs to perform. When selecting furniture, fixtures and equipment (FF&E), we considered everything from contract suitability to durability, including Martindale rub test ratings for upholstery fabrics and flame retardancy certification.

These practical details are easy to overlook, but they are essential. Materials need to withstand repeated use, cleaning and maintenance, while also meeting the necessary compliance requirements.

The inspiration for the design came from the surrounding estate. We looked at the colours, textures and materials found in nearby farm buildings and used these to create the palette. There is also a large lake near the entrance to the estate, home to swans, geese and ducks, so we brought elements of this into the interior through artwork and a bespoke goose decal positioned above the bathroom door.

These small details are what help create a sense of place. Guests want to understand where they are and feel connected to the story of the location.

Planning the experience from the start

A key part of any successful design project is getting the fundamentals right before focusing on the decorative elements. We began with a detailed measured survey of the property and created a scale drawing to plan the furniture layout, lighting, electrical positions, sockets and switches. This ensured that every element would work together and that the furniture selected would fit perfectly once installed.

Good space planning creates a feeling of balance. It ensures guests have everything they need while making the accommodation feel comfortable, spacious and well considered.



The reality of rural diversification

One thing operators often underestimate is just how many layers are involved in a diversification project. Beautiful design is only one part of the process. Planning approvals, architecture, construction, operations and guest experience all need to be considered together.

Before starting a project, owners should think carefully about how the business will operate day to day. Who will manage changeovers? Who will handle laundry, cleaning, maintenance and guest communication? Will these responsibilities sit within the existing business, or will they be outsourced?

If you are already running a busy farm or estate, it is important to be realistic about capacity. Owner wellbeing should form part of the business plan if the hospitality venture is going to be sustainable in the long term.

Creating a unique sense of place

Every farm, estate or rural business has a story. This history is one of the greatest assets available to operators and should be embraced. References to heritage, local landscape and the connection to the land can be incorporated through branding, wayfinding, materials and decorative details. These elements create a sense of place that cannot be replicated elsewhere and become your unique selling point.

Design plays a huge role in driving guest satisfaction, repeat bookings and profitability. Comfort, quality of finish and thoughtful details all contribute to the overall experience.

Guests will judge a venue before they ever arrive, based on photographs online. Creating that initial “wow” factor, followed by thoughtful touches throughout their stay, helps demonstrate that the experience has been carefully considered.

“Good enough” is no longer good enough. There are already operators delivering exceptional experiences, and that is the benchmark.

Looking beyond accommodation

Through my work with the Rural Diversification Collective, I’m seeing increasing interest from landowners looking beyond traditional accommodation models.



Events spaces are particularly popular because they can be adapted for community gatherings, private functions, corporate hospitality and wellness retreats. Other opportunities include farm shops, cafés, restaurants, co-working spaces, artisan studios, farm-to-fork dining experiences and wellness facilities.

However, diversification should be approached carefully. A thorough feasibility study with experienced planning consultants is essential to understand what is right for your business and what is achievable within local planning constraints.

My advice is always to start with one thing and do it well. Build momentum, learn from the experience, reinvest and then consider expanding your offering.

The importance of collaboration

The Pig Sty project demonstrates what can be achieved when an overlooked building is approached with creativity and purpose.

For anyone considering a rural conversion project, I would recommend bringing your design team on board as early as possible. Your planning consultant, architect and interior designer will each bring different expertise, ideas and solutions. Working collaboratively from the beginning saves time, avoids costly mistakes and ultimately creates a better guest experience.

I’ll be sharing more about this process in my seminar at The Glamping Show in September, including design, procurement, installation, staging, photography and the operational considerations required to run a successful hospitality business.

The Rural Diversification Collective is delighted to be collaborating with The Glamping Show and co-hosting Rural Diversification Day on Thursday 10th September. It reflects the growing opportunities available to landowners beyond traditional glamping, bringing together expertise across planning, architecture, design, operations, funding, insurance and legal considerations.

I’m looking forward to meeting visitors, hearing about their ambitions and exploring how thoughtful design can help turn rural spaces into successful destinations.



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THE GLAMPING SHOW EUROPEAN FORUM RETURNS

for Second Edition in Amsterdam

Following the success of its inaugural one-day event in Lisbon, The Glamping Show European Forum (TGSEF) will return for its second edition on 26 November 2026, bringing the wider outdoor hospitality community together at Basecamp Amsterdam.

Designed as a focused one-day conference for glamping operators, suppliers, investors and industry professionals, TGSEF was created to address the practical challenges facing a rapidly evolving sector. As the European glamping market continues to mature, businesses are navigating rising costs, changing guest expectations, increased competition and the need to make smarter long-term decisions.

The Forum provides a space for the industry to share knowledge, explore emerging trends and discuss the real-world decisions shaping successful outdoor hospitality businesses – from investment and development through to marketing, operations and guest experience.

The first European Forum in Lisbon brought together a diverse group of industry professionals for a day of presentations, conversations and networking. Attendees highlighted the value of having a dedicated event focused specifically on the commercial realities of running and developing glamping businesses.

“A truly well-organised professional event with many good speakers and presentations! I appreciate the opportunity to get so much useful information in one day and on one site.” said attendee Svetlana P.

Mark Scott from Clear Sky reflected on the importance of bringing the sector together: “It was a valuable day and a strong reflection of how quickly the sector is evolving, with several themes coming through clearly that closely resonated with our own thinking.”

For wecamp, the event represented the importance of collaboration across the industry: “It provided a space where

professionals, brands and projects came together around a shared vision: building stronger, more sustainable and purpose-driven businesses. The insights shared throughout the day were truly inspiring.”

TGSEF II will continue this approach in Amsterdam, with a programme currently being developed featuring expert speakers, practical sessions and discussions focused on the opportunities and challenges facing European outdoor hospitality.

The event will take place at Basecamp Amsterdam, located in Amsterdam West, providing a dedicated environment for learning, discussion and networking. Speaker announcements and the full agenda will be released in the coming weeks.

Registration is now open, with an automatic early bird discount on tickets available until 11 September. Secure your place at theglampingshow.com/the-glamping-show-european-forum.



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With glampsite owners wanting to improve their wellness offerings, there is a greater need to offer something that isn't just about aesthetics or a plethora of outdoor experiences. It's about how guest journeys can be enriched by wellness and holistic therapies.

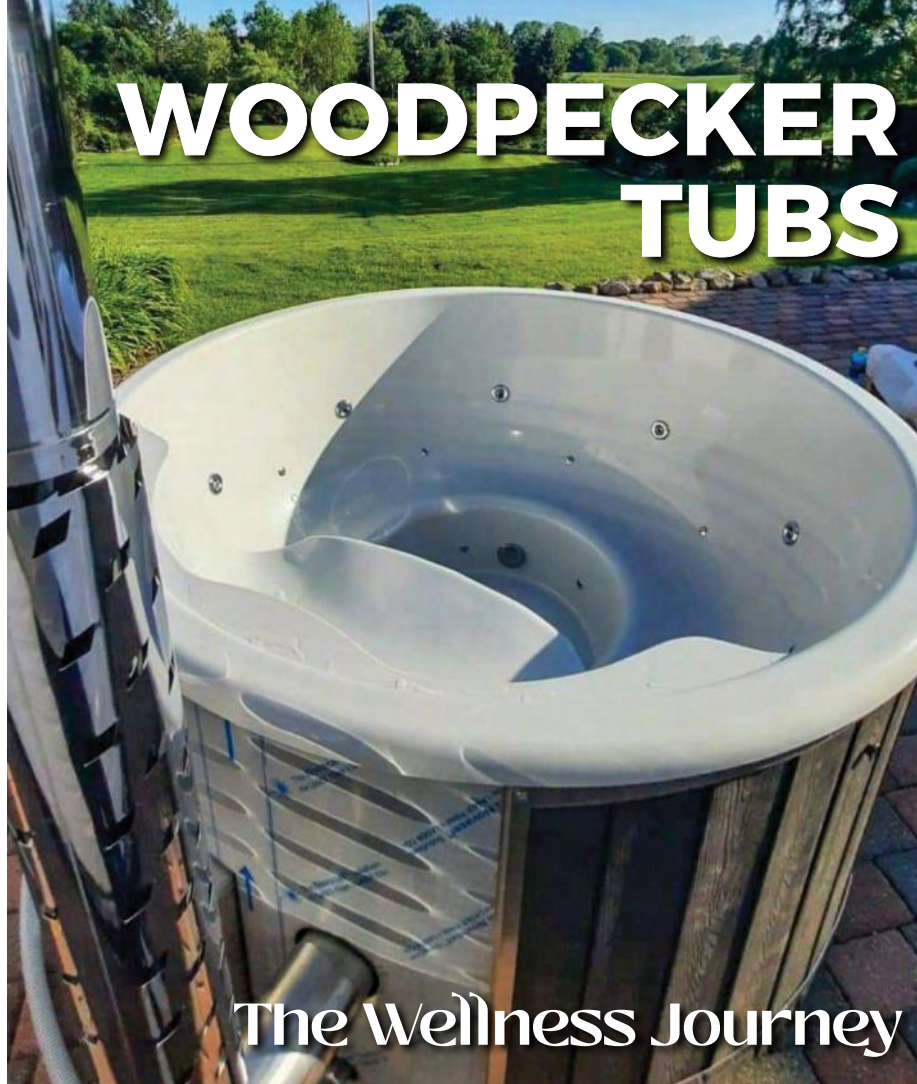
Over the last 15 years or more, we've seen guests become dialled in with their bodies and lifestyle choices, allowing them to become more health conscious and seek ways in which to enrich their daily lives including reduction in stress, anxiety and heart health.

As a manufacturer of hot tubs and saunas, we are well aware of what benefits these can provide for guests. However in order to maximise a return for glampsite owners, it all begins with the choices made when making the initial investment.

We see and hear the stories about a hot tub flooding a site due to it being damaged by guests; it not being fit for purpose because the pipework used wasn't able to circulate the water correctly, or even extreme cases where the stoves of hot tubs and saunas were not safe, causing catastrophic damage to sites, like setting adjoining buildings on fire, leaving site owners with subsequent repair bills for the damage.

Therefore, our top tips for site owners when looking to make their initial investment in wellness offerings would be to always do your research. Don't just buy the first thing that you see and make sure you look at a range of companies.

Take your time to look at how these hot tubs are made. Do they have everything on your wish lists that you want? Do they fit into your site? How long do they take to be delivered?



Are you able to physically view them, e.g. are you able to go and visit the showrooms or even to an industry event like The Glamping Show in Stoneleigh? Being aware of these when making your decisions will make the whole buying experience run smoothly.

It's also important to consider the latest trends within the industry, and whether this involves the use of smartphone apps so that you can turn your electric hot tubs on to be heated before guests arrive.

Design and sustainability must also be considered. There is a need to evolve into quirkier sites, which include things like waterproofing the outside of tubs so they can be sunk into the ground.

The need to be more sustainable and appealing is at the forefront of every guest experience and should be fully embraced by the site owners, with an added level of importance being placed around whether you go electric or wood-fired, as the costing comparisons are directly related to your operational costs overall. You can strike a balance between the wellness experiences you want to offer to your guests and the operational costs of putting your site ahead of many others. But this balance can only be struck if you provide focal points

for the guests to feel that you are listening to them as a customer – and not being a site owner who knows best. Therefore everything you do is right at the heart of why customers need and want their wellness and lifestyle choices to be enhanced!

Providing something unique for each site owner is how we as manufacturers evolve, leading to advancements in how we deliver on our own promises relating to sustainability and design improvements. Like site owners have a greater understanding of how our tubs and saunas can help guests improve their quality of lives, making lifestyles choice easier and allowing escapism from their daily lives better together.





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The next era of outdoor wellness belongs to operators who think differently. Guest expectations have shifted, and not gently.

A hot tub used to be a novelty upgrade. Today it's often the reason the booking happens at all. A hot tub is no longer an amenity. It's core product.

Reviews are the revenue engine

Nothing moves your nightly rate like a wall of 4- and 5-star reviews. They let you command higher prices and keep the calendar full. And when a guest books accommodation with a hot tub, the expectation is simple: hot and clean on arrival. They don't want to wait hours for it to warm up, and they don't want it cooling off after 30 minutes of use. A hot tub should be exactly that: hot, when the guest wants it, for as long as they want it. Fall short on that one promise and the review reflects it.

The five-hour turnaround is where tubs are won or lost

Between checkout and check-in, everything has to happen — cleaning, linen, inspection

and the tub. If it's slow to drain, awkward to clean or takes hours to heat, it dominates the changeover. Knowing the water won't be hot until long after guests arrive means starting the stay with a disappointment you can't undo. That's how complaints happen, how review scores slide and how operators end up handing out on-the-day discounts to soften the letdown — a hit to revenue today and bookings tomorrow. The right tub drains fast, cleans easily and heats rapidly. Changeover becomes routine, not a stress point.

Presentation matters

The tub is the hero shot in your listing and the first thing guests walk out to see. It should look in great shape and feel welcoming. They paid for this experience — a tired, half-ready tub tells them they've been let down before they've even got in.

Put the heating bill under control

The largest running cost is heat, and the industry's answer is to pay it 24/7 whether anyone is in the water or not. There's a

better way: let the guest control when it's on or off, enable a timer and build in smart controls so the tub can't run at hours that disturb other guests. Do that and the right hot tub becomes a value and revenue driver. Buy on sticker price alone and the saving is quickly eaten up — energy, management time and hand-outs — leading to diminishing financial rewards season after season.

Why we built Heat on Demand

SUPA Spas and the SUPA Heater run on LPG. Ours is the world's first Heat on Demand hot tub: it heats fast enough to remove the inconvenience factor and you only pay to heat water when a guest is using it. Premium and efficient aren't opposites — they're the same purchasing decision made well.

The operators who win won't be the ones who spent the most or purchased at the cheapest price — they'll be the ones who thought hardest about what earns the five-star review. That's the standard we build to.

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