

Managing a luxury hotel in Russia



THOMAS NOLL
General Manager, Barvikha Hotel & Spa

What does “luxury” actually mean in this day and age? The perception of luxury has changed and the word “luxury” has been used too much and too often for too many products and services that do not always qualify. Ask ten people today about what they understand by “luxury”, and you will probably get ten different answers.

That said, to be in the luxury bracket, one must provide the highest level of service, experiences and products. Our mission is to delight our customers

every time they step into our spaces, or better yet much earlier, from the moment they think about us and plan a booking or a visit.

In luxury there is no benchmark; one must continuously strive to improve, training and learning must be a culture not a task, one must work to consistently create a new “wow” moment every time our regular customers return, and one must harness the knowledge of the finest products and amenities available in the market for our hotels and ensure that we provide such to our customers.





Luxury has a lot to do with the senses. The smell of the open spaces, the sounds of the public areas, the potential for every part of the hotel to create a memorable photo opportunity for our visitors, the touch of luxury fabrics whether you sit on an armchair or slip into the finest linen on top of an orthopaedic mattress in the bedroom.

Luxury for me as a gastronome is also the simple matter of, for example, serving champagne and other beverages at their perfect temperature. It makes such a difference to the enjoyment. Serve hot food hot, straight from the grill onto the plate and then deliver it quickly the customer, so that the dish can be enjoyed as intended. The simple things should be done 100% right, 100% of the time. There is no excuse for serving warm champagne.

Luxury is training the employees to a level that they learn to read the customer and to anticipate their possible needs and wishes, and the ultimate luxury is when you can then see and

Luxury is training the employees to a level that they learn to read the customer and to anticipate their possible needs and wishes, and the ultimate luxury is when you can then see and feel happiness all around.

feel happiness all around. Employees that smile from their hearts and customers who smile because they feel safe, secure and pampered.

In my experience we are able to provide easier and better luxury experiences in Russia than in Europe, and this is due to several factors. One is the easy availability of a highly educated workforce that can be trained for specific tasks they are able to deliver. Due to lower payroll cost we can supply enough quality to be more than efficient for specific events. Then we have the vast choice of unique venues with historical significance which many people have never seen before, and it is easier to access such venues than in Europe. This in turn makes it easier to deliver amazing "wow" effects, especially to foreign visitors coming for incentives or corporate events. And thirdly we have a large number of historic hotels that are well maintained and managed by the best international brands and management teams. Having hosted numerous international delegations, I can confirm that most of them stated that their best ever events had been hosted in Russia. |