

Business Traveler



SPORT

High hopes and high finance on the Road to the Kentucky Derby



TRAVEL

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TRANSPORTATION

The new green deal between planes and trains



AVIATION

The year's most anticipated business class cabins

Chairman of the Board

Surfing superstar Kelly Slater makes a splash with his sustainable clothing line and innovative wave parks



Green Machine

How the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group is making sustainability a priority



By Torsten van Dullemen •
As told to Sahar Khan •
Illustration by Joel Kimmel

SUSTAINABILITY IS NO longer a choice for the discerning traveler. More travelers are aware of where their money is going and make choices based on that. They want to ensure that the decisions they make have a positive impact on the planet. Travel agents, booking platforms and the consortia we work with are curious about the sustainability ethos of our business and tell us that their clients—our guests—in part make their decisions based on that.

As an advocate of sustainability, my role is to ensure that it remains an integral part of everything we do within Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group. The future of hospitality lies in offering enriching experiences that benefit our colleagues and their families, as well as the environment, society and culture. Ultimately, sustainability is about doing the right thing, which starts with us. We will never be a fully sustainable industry—that would be impossible. However, we can take the critical steps as a business to act in responsible ways to limit our negative impact and increase our positive impact.

By 2025, all Mandarin Oriental properties will be Global Sustainable Tourism Council-certified. We have implemented initiatives across all hotels, such as the elimination of 99 percent of all single-use plastic and the elimination of endangered species from all our menus. One of the biggest projects we took on at the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London, for example, was the decision to install a cutting-edge

solar heat technology on our rooftop. We will be the first U.K. hotel to use Naked Energy's VirtuHOT, which will cut our carbon emissions by 7.3 tons annually, aligning with our vision for achieving reductions in carbon and energy intensity.

Our dedication also extends to reducing food waste and serving as a pilot for Winnow Vision, a food-waste management system. I encourage all departments to source responsibly, prioritizing fair trade and certified products, including MSC-approved seafood. Over the past few years, we have implemented a rigorous supplier onboarding system that ensures compliance with environmental and ethical standards, contributing to responsible procurement practices while sourcing from local suppliers where possible. Although there are external elements we cannot control in terms of packaging within the supply chain, we are making conscious efforts to push sustainability as far up and down the supply line as we possibly can. Our team that oversees this seeks out suppliers who offer the most sustainable options.

One of our newest initiatives encourages all colleagues to volunteer one day, fully paid, for a charity of their choice. Throughout 2023 in London, we donated 4,800 hours of paid charity work and more than 69,000 charity hours across the group.

Sustainability is a global issue that the entire world is facing together. We must collectively join forces for the greater good to successfully tackle this and protect the future and generations to come. The hospitality industry, of course, plays a massive part and there are critical sustainability practices that must be addressed: by continuing to implement energy-saving practices, by reducing single-use plastic, by sourcing local and organic products, by promoting water conservation, and by engaging and encouraging guests and employees in eco-friendly initiatives. Additionally, we should always be mindful and budget accordingly to invest in renewable energy, enhance waste-management systems and support community development projects. Ultimately, it's about doing the right thing while crafting unforgettable guest experiences and preserving resources for the benefit of future generations.

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Torsten van Dullemen is group director of sustainability at Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group and oversees the company's sustainability commitments and initiatives. He is also the general manager for Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London, and area vice-president for the United Kingdom and Northern Europe. Previously, he held senior positions across the group's Asian properties.