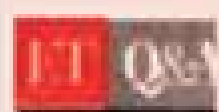


# Six Senses to Bring Slow Life to Mumbai



Six Senses Resorts & Spas, a \$150-175 million international luxury spa and resort chain, will open its first spa in the country at Lodha's World One at Worli in Mumbai by 2015. Spread across 20,000 sq ft over three levels, the spa will redefine luxury for Indian consumers, says Six Senses Chairman and CEO **Sonu Shivdasani**. A non-resident Indian businessman, Shivdasani and his wife Eva opened their first resort, Soneva Fushi, in the Maldives in 1995. Since then, the couple's couture approach has grown Six Senses into a chain of 26 resorts and 41 spas. Besides World One, Six Senses has also signed on two other projects in India, in Delhi and Pune. Decarbonising its projects is the group's next goal, the Oxford University graduate and Eton College alumnus told **Nandini Raghavendra** in an interview. Excerpts:

## Do you think the Indian consumer is ready for luxury spas such as Six Senses?

Certainly. Indians are travelling 300 hours a year just like our European customers; packing their suitcase full of black shoes or high heels from Tods or Jimmy Choo's, jackets and ties. When you pack on a holiday to stay with us, the only shoes you pack are the shoes you are wearing or snorkeling thins for yourself. That's the essence of intelligent luxury. And I think this applies to Indians as well because they are going through exactly the same exposure as the stressed out executives in London, Paris or New York. Mumbai and Delhi are no different from big global cities when it comes to the profile of our consumers... They all live in similar size apartments, eat similar food, have similar concepts around them. The restaurants that were successful 5 or 10 years ago in London or Paris are now here. So, there's that sort of globalization that becomes one culture in a way. The Indian traveler we're aiming at is that global elite in a way. Given the pace of growth in India, I think Indians are going to want intelligent luxury more and more. And we're also going the sustainable way.

## How do you define luxury in the 21st century?

When we say intelligent luxury, we are questioning and challenging what's truly luxurious in the 21st century. We are trying to do it in a sensitive way taking into account issues like global warming very seriously. The wealthy of today, unlike the Maharajas of yesteryears, are staying in apartments and paying multi-million dollars for them, and are exposed to pollution—air, noise and smog. When they are having a fresh salad, it's probably taken a week to come to their plate. 'Fresh' today in cities means it hasn't been frozen; it doesn't mean that it's been plucked that morning from the garden. Privacy too is an issue. So, intelligent luxury for us is

really keeping all this in mind. When people come to our resorts, like Soneva Gili (in Maldives), just the open air is a luxury. Our emphasis on natural materials like wood rather than marble is a little more in keeping with nature and bringing people back to nature. It is important so you know that a thing like the water garden where the shower is in Soneva Gili, is something you can't get in Mumbai, London or Paris. That's why we do it like that, rather than a closed, sealed bathroom.

## Is this what Six Senses calls 'Slow Life'? Will it be part of the World One project?

Yes. 'Slow Life' (or, 'Sustainable, Local, Organic, Wholesome, Learning, Inspiring, Fun Experiences' which has been patented) means to create innovative and enlightening experiences that rejuvenates our guest's love of slow life which is the core purpose of our group. At World One, we are creating a sanctuary, an oasis. You will be going into a different world, which is exclusive, which means it's not for everyone. For those who can sample it, we're talking about this big green house, which will be about 2,000-3,000 square meters and will have fresh vegetables, herbs and botanical garden... We'll have a big palm collection and an orchid collection, and there will be this oasis where the air is fresh because you've got natural plants growing.

## Tell us about your initiatives towards sustainable development. How will you implement it in the World One project?

As a group, we want to decarbonise by 2020, so we don't have to use excess energy for cooling it or for water. We've come up with a very natural system with restaurants that serves salads fresh from the garden. The martini bar at World One will have a cold distillation machine. We will take the herbs from the garden and co-distill it with the martinis. So one evening we'll have a lemon grass martini and the next evening we'll have a lavender martini or chocolate vodka. And then, during the day, it will be fresh foods and herbs, using local herbs and having an active salad bar. We are being sensitive about the use of air conditioning as we want to turn off our generators by end next year. We are certain about a green house. We want to make it a zero-carbon building. It's going to be a space where you could possibly take your shoes off, feel casual and comfortable. Even the spa will be a space that will relax people, where the treatment rooms will feel like the inside of an egg, so you feel like you're in a little cocoon. The dining pods will be in the big green house like you have at Soneva Kiri, which is a sold out dining experience where you rock in this pod. With people like I M Pei to work on the architecture (he created great icons such as the Bank of China building and extension to the Louvre in Paris), I think World One will be a fantastic space in the middle of the city of Mumbai.