

Hospitality

Revitalizing the Human Spirit

An Interview with Bernhard Bohnenberger,
President, Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas



The panoramic ocean view of a pool villa at Six Senses Yao Noi in Thailand

EDITORS' NOTE *Bernhard Bohnenberger joined the company that would eventually become Six Senses in 1991 as Development Director and was appointed Managing Director in 1996 and President in 2011. Bohnenberger graduated from Lausanne Hotel School. His hotel operations' experience prior to joining Six Senses includes Hilton Geneva and Hong Kong, Marco Polo Group in Hong Kong, Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten in Munich, Hotel Baur au Lac in Zurich, and The Peninsula Hong Kong.*



Bernhard Bohnenberger

COMPANY BRIEF *Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas (sixsenses.com) is a hotel and spa management company comprised of nine operating resorts and 28 spas under the brand names Six Senses, Evason, and Six Senses Spa. Set to double in size over the next three years, Six Senses resorts can be found in far-flung locations of incredible natural beauty. Known for its unique and diverse design personality, each property is supported by a leadership commitment to community, sustainability, and wellness.*

Would you provide an overview of Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas and how the company has grown?

The vision of Six Senses began with the takeover of a small defunct property on an island in the Maldives. Then, as a hospitality industry pioneer of sustainable practices, the company saw an opportunity to create Vietnam's first beach resort, as well as to reinvent two distressed properties in Thailand.

Recognizing the trend towards spas early on, Six Senses incorporated a Six Senses Spa into each property that has the same environmental and community values we instituted at the resorts. We also saw the opportunity to have Six Senses Spas hosted in prestigious properties other than our own.

As Six Senses' uniqueness gained accolades, invitations to develop branded resorts and spas followed and has expanded into new and exciting locations. However, the enduring Six Senses mission of helping people reconnect with themselves, with others, and with the world around them remains as strong as ever.

How do you define Six Senses' DNA?

Whether it be a Six Senses resort with a Six Senses Spa, or a Six Senses Spa hosted by a prestige property, the touch-points are always

consistent with our DNA. While being part of the local fabric and culture, Six Senses is very much in tune with the wider world. It offers crafted guest experiences that stimulate, energize, and revitalize the human spirit. These are delivered by experts from a wide range of backgrounds. Six Senses resorts are intimate, offering an emotionally intelligent approach to service that begins with empathy. The aesthetics have a touch of quirkiness, which supports delightful and unexpected surprises delivered with constant curiosity and a willingness to challenge the norm.

What are the plans to expand the brand?

There is no limit to growth provided it happens in a controlled fashion that secures the integrity of the brand. Some of the destinations of incredible beauty in which developments are underway include China, France, Seychelles, Portugal, Bhutan, Taiwan, St. Lucia, Indonesia, Tunisia, and India.

Would you discuss your service standards and how service remains a key differentiator for Six Senses?

A common thread running through our business is a celebration of the rich variety of diverse cultures in which we operate. We embrace those cultures with dignity and respect, which translates into how we treat our guests and each other. Through our hiring practices and training programs, we have built a culture of openness, encouraging staff to empathize with guests and subtlety and consistently anticipate their needs. People are at the heart of our business. The experiences we craft, the service we deliver, and the connections we build are only possible based on a deep commitment to nurturing our staff and becoming positive participants in the communities around our locations.

Six Senses has been recognized as a pioneer in sustainable practices. What makes this so important for the brand?

Six Senses is widely recognized as having established the initial sustainability benchmarks for the hospitality industry. We have shown that sustainable practices can be successfully embraced by the very top tier of resorts, and that showing respect to nature actually enhances the guest experience.

Through careful consideration of the impact that operating systems, materials, and purchasing

policies have on the environment, we continually develop new initiatives and procedures to minimize our ecological impact. These sustainable tourism best practices include environmental performance reviews of each property, support for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, and enhancing the social and economic benefits local communities receive in the locations where Six Senses operates.

Responsible purchasing ensures that only eco-friendly chemicals are used in operations. We use food and beverage products that are produced locally and work to keep packaging to an absolute minimum. With locations in places of great beauty that are close to nature, our resorts often have opportunities to preserve biodiversity and protect and rebuild environments that range from coral reefs to pristine jungle. We also have an unwavering commitment to protect endangered species. Six Senses deals only with suppliers who share this commitment.

How do you define your role in leading Six Senses?

I feel fortunate to have been in leading roles with the various incarnations of the company since 1991. I am very proud that, during this time, the principles of our philosophy have remained constant. I am passionate about Six Senses and what we stand for, and see my role as inspiring all of our hosts to live and breathe our vision and values.

What are your key priorities for Six Senses as you look to the future?

We have seen tremendous interest in the Six Senses brand from leading hotel, resort, and spa developers. It is key to select the right projects and partners in order to ensure sustainable and strategic growth. We are one of a few hotel companies to have a Vice President of Sustainability seated on our Executive Committee, as well as Sustainability Champions at all of our properties. This keeps us at the forefront of the best global practices and will continue to do so in the future.

Great focus and effort is also placed on pioneering wellness at all Six Senses resorts and spas. We spend a lot of time developing tailored treatments for our guests and will be launching some very interesting advanced beauty, anti-aging, functional fitness, and nutritional programs in the years ahead. We believe not just in creating a few paths to wellness at Six Senses, but in making those guided paths for all guests in search of learning, growing, and reconnecting. ●