

Luxury Travel: Tourism's Reigning King?

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Across the MarketHub's three regional events (Asia, February; Europe, April; the Americas, June), the topic of luxury loomed large, with HBX Group's Chief Distribution Officer, David **Amsellem**, sharing how the embrace of this lucrative market isn't just a matter of remaining in profit, but future-proof.

Through the Regional Update at the MarketHub Americas (Panama), Amsellem revealed how **Panama's premium property market - 4* and 5* hotels - accounted for 65% and 20% of bookings** respectively. With the **global luxury travel market projected to reach \$2150 billion by 2035** (with a compound annual growth rate of **7.4%**), what better time to lean in and grasp the opportunity?



“HBX Group is betting big on luxury - a direction we're supporting with the Luxurist, an increasingly significant segment of our retail offering.”

David Amsellem

This is a sentiment echoed by HBX Group CEO, Nicolas Huss, who [shared via a June press release](#): ‘Luxury travel is the fastest-growing segment in our industry, [and] we are investing in the future of high-end travel services. By integrating The Luxurist into our global retail portfolio, we're empowering our worldwide network of travel advisors to excel in the luxury segment.’

The Luxurist represents one of several actions taken by HBX Group to both accelerate growth for its partners, and to meet the demand of an increasingly discerning audience base: looking to Latin America alone, high-value travellers are driving demonstrable growth, with demand for premium cabins increasing significantly in early 2025. Across the region, bookings of this variety were **up 17% year-on-year**, with premium flights to Panama **increasing by a notable 79%** - this was according to **ForwardKeys' Olivier Ponti**, who took to the stage to reveal prime opportunities in travel in the coming months, as evidenced by flight bookings.

‘It's not just about bringing travellers to your destination,’ Ponti said, ‘it's about identifying the biggest opportunities, and in luxury travel, there is a lot to be done. These high-value travellers are driving overall growth [in the LATAM region], but where are they coming from? Mainly the US - Orlando, New York and Miami, but also Bogota and Buenos Aires.’

Expanding his view beyond the LATAM region and typical travel corridors, Ponti implored his audience to think bigger, and to explore novel concepts - namely, attractive visa programmes, or simply the correct facilities to host high-spending travellers for the long term; among them, digital nomads and remote workers. ‘These travellers have a high economic impact - if the destinations you

work with have such programmes in place, there's the opportunity to attract those who spend a lot of money and time in a destination.'

Destinations crafting policies to appeal to high-spending travellers

Curaco: 'Their 'At Home in Curacao' programme is very successful at attracting young professionals and families', said Ponti, with data revealing that approximately 60% of high-end tourists brought to the region by such policies are aged 45 and under, with a particular concentration in the 26-35 age bracket. Costs for the programme start at approximately \$300 USD, depending on the traveller profile, with permits granting stays from 6 months to 5 years, conditional on status (remote workers versus high-net investors).

The Cayman Islands: 'They decided to focus on the older demographic with their 'Global Citizen Concierge' programme,' added Ponti, demonstrating through data that 50% of those partaking in such programmes were aged 46 and upwards. Applications for the Global Citizen Concierge programme ran from October 2020 to October 2022, entitling applicants with an annual income upwards of US\$100,000 (plus an application fee of US\$1,500) to live and work remotely on the islands for up to two years.

'Looking at the outcome of those programmes, we can see that both have managed to increase expenditure in accommodation and overall, at a destination level,' shared Ponti. Indeed, ForwardKeys' figures readily revealed a meaningful year-on-year increase in travel spend for both destinations: an increase of 5.1% for Curacao, and 10.8% for the Cayman Islands. Only a snapshot of a much bigger picture, Ponti's keynote at the MarketHub Americas hinted at a growing propensity for high-end spending - from which, it would be reasonable to deduce a growing appetite for high-end travel at large. **Enter the Luxurist.**



The Luxurist: Luxury Travel Experiences for Retail Travel Agents

As the **world's first all-in-one luxury travel ecosystem**, the Luxurist [caters to the fastest-growing segment in the travel industry](#). Those who utilise this powerful arm of the HBX Group product offering will equip themselves with the ability **effectively sell a wealth of premium products from a creme de la creme portfolio, including 5000+ exceptional properties**; additionally, agents will benefit from the Luxurist's **unique value proposition**: exclusive privileges, ranging from welcome treats (such as champagne on arrival) to complimentary late check-out (excluding peak season), and a 24/7 concierge service.

Post-MarketHub, the brand has officially integrated into HBX Group's Retail arm (Bedsonline), and has continued its expansion into key markets such as Spain, Mexico and Australia. Not a luxury specialist? No problem – **the Luxurist's immersion into the wider HBX Group offering empowers travel agents worldwide to excel in offering a premium offering, regardless of their historical brand positioning or client base.** Rather, the luxury traveller has been brought into reach, democratising the ability for all agents to capture their share of the high-end wallet.

Similarly, all traveller profiles can now sample a taste of affluence, with **products across the Group's wider portfolio able to be cross-sold:** via the Bedsonline website, an agent can feasibly mix-and-match their offering, injecting a stint in the lap of luxury to an otherwise more affordable itinerary. For example, one might book-end a 5* resort stay with a couple of nights in a city B&B, where comfort plays second fiddle to convenience; alternatively, travellers may choose to stretch their budget post-backpacking adventure to top off their trip in one of the world's top-rated hotels. **Ancillary products - experiences, transfers, car rentals - can also be booked via the platform,** across a range of price points.

Ready to lean into luxury? Support your clients in maximising both budget and enjoyment via Bedsonline, or carve out your luxury niche directly with the Luxurist. [Learn how in our guide to B2B Travel Solutions for Retail Travel Agencies.](#)

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