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The Wild Within

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Dereck and Beverly Joubert

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of place, people and history



Neil Jacobs launches Wild Origins, an advisory collective that champions a future of tourism grounded in purpose, performance and positive impact

ORIGINS OF NOTE

Known for shaping the world's most influential hospitality brands, Neil Jacobs is entering a new chapter with the launch of Wild Origins—an advisory collective grounded in the belief that the future of tourism lies at the intersection of purpose, performance and positive impact

Neil Jacobs has been a pioneer of purpose-led hospitality for over three decades, and he shows no signs of slowing down with the launch of Wild Origins, an advisory collective and creative studio that brings sustainable, soulful projects to life. Through Wild Origins, Jacobs is responding to a broader evolution within travel, as guests, owners and communities increasingly expect tourism to deliver social, environmental and cultural value alongside financial returns.

The new company has a compelling philosophy: “Waste less, wonder more and live with reverence for the land, for us all, for the future.” It’s the type of thinking that has guided Jacobs’ ventures from seedlings to stalwarts, making such an impact that it changed paradigms within the hospitality industry. His leadership has consistently focused on embedding wellness and sustainability into the DNA of organizations, aligning purpose with performance, and creating meaningful value for stakeholders while strengthening the human and environmental systems around those businesses.

At Wild Origins, that approach translates into helping hospitality and tourism brands cultivate conscious leadership, implement sustainable practices and growth strategies, and build values-led cultures that generate both long-term positive impact and commercial success.

Jacobs is most closely associated with Six Senses, which he acquired with Pegasus Capital in 2012, when the company operated eight properties and had limited global visibility. Over the next 13 years, Jacobs led its expansion to 29 operating hotels, and in 2019, he facilitated the sale of the company at a highly favorable valuation. By the time he stepped down in 2025, the brand had a development pipeline exceeding 30 projects worldwide, validating its strategic positioning and operating model.

“It starts with a relentless focus on employee well-being, especially in service industries, and on developing people to their full capacity,” Jacobs explained. “That creates healthy economics, not money for money’s sake, but profit as the result of running a business that does some good in the world while still delivering stable returns to owners and shareholders.”

Regarding sustainability, a key value at Six Senses, he explains that for any program to be meaningful, it has to be driven from the top down and woven into the culture of the organization. “It’s not just the data, it’s the doing on the ground. Companies can’t change everything overnight, but even small steps matter, especially when they’re acknowledged and celebrated.”

That perspective was shaped early on in his career. In the 1990s, while serving as General Manager of Four Seasons Bali, Jacobs created the brand's first spa offering in Asia. "There was a whole cultural framework around wellness in Bali and Indonesia," he recalled. "It deeply resonated with me to create something rooted in traditional Balinese treatments. It was more than just pampering." Four Seasons subsequently asked him to oversee spa and wellness for the entire company, where he infused local healing arts into well-being treatments across the brand. Roughly a decade later, Jacobs played a central role in expanding Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts into China, helping establish the brand's presence in what would become one of its most important global markets.

His tenure at Starwood Capital Group provided further grounding in investment strategy, capital structuring and large-scale development. Along the way, Jacobs learned from mentors like Francesco Pecorelli, Isadore Sharp and Barry Sternlicht, as well as his own missteps. A failed café venture in London taught him the importance of staying closely engaged in his investments. Labor challenges in India underscored the need to fully understand geopolitical and union dynamics before entering a market. In Vietnam, he learned the cost of insufficient diplomacy after alienating a key ownership partner.

It's the full breadth of experience that seasons a great leader, and Jacobs is putting those lessons to use in an advisory capacity for a roster of Wild Origins clients. He's serving as a senior strategic advisor to the Capella Hotel Group, supporting its international growth strategy in Europe, and as a board member of Baccarat, the world-renowned crystal company. He is also an advisor to Desa Potato Head, working with the team to expand its Balinese beach club and hotel into a global hospitality player rooted in sustainability, irreverent fun, and price-accessible cultural programming, and to Luxe Nomad, an upscale apartment rental company with a growing presence in Asia.

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Left: Enveloped by the majestic Arabian desert, Six Senses Southern Dunes, The Red Sea blends visionary tourism with sustainability and heritage

Opposite: At Six Senses Southern Dunes, The Red Sea interiors echo the desert outside, with soft furnishings drawn from rich Bedouin colors and patterns

IMAGES Courtesy of Six Senses Southern Dunes, The Red Sea.

The projects are as diverse as Wild Origins' handpicked global network of leaders. The firm operates as a true collective of experts across a range of sectors, including hospitality, wellness, lifestyle, and regenerative development, positioning it to advise owners, developers and brands on everything from concept development and brand strategy to growth planning, financing advisory and long-term operational positioning. The aim is to help businesses evolve thoughtfully and strategically, in step with environmental realities, to act as an innovative driver of responsible progress.

At present, Jacobs is particularly focused on the evolution of lifestyle hotels and the increasingly fluid boundary between lifestyle and luxury. "Even high-end hotels need to be fun," he noted, pointing to the next iteration of Delano Miami Beach and the Patina Hotels brand, which currently operates properties in Osaka and the Maldives, with further expansion underway.

He also led Six Senses' expansion to Saudi Arabia, where he serves on two advisory boards under the umbrella of Wild Origins. One is Tourise, a large-scale tourism and hospitality conference that debuted last year, focusing on policy, strategy and long-term thinking for the sector. The second is the Riyadh School of Tourism and Hospitality in Qiddiya, which aims to train more than 20,000 students. "It's an extraordinary country, and there is real reform happening. The change is palpable," Jacobs observed. "It's cultural tourism at its finest. I think they're going to achieve in 15 years what took Dubai 50."

As for his mission and legacy, Jacobs points to advice he once received from a coach: not to listen to advice. Instead, he follows his own set of tenets. "Dream big. Never give up. Include love in the mix. Innovate systematically and contribute," he reflected. "Moving forward, I want to keep developing people, do some good and enjoy the process." ◀