

# NOESIS THURSDAY SPOTLIGHT

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# Biophilic Design in Hospitality:

Merging Nature with Modern Comfort

Biophilic design has recently surged in popularity within modern architecture and interior design, especially in the hospitality industry. Biophilia comes from the Greek words for “life” and “love”. This trend is not just about bringing plants indoors but fundamentally rethinking how we interact with our built environments. By integrating natural elements into the design of hotels and resorts, biophilic design enhances both aesthetic appeal and the psychological well-being of guests, leading to increased satisfaction and a deeper sense of comfort. As travellers increasingly seek experiences that connect them with nature, the hospitality industry is turning to biophilic design as a key strategy to meet these evolving expectations.



# Understanding Biophilic Design

Biophilic design is grounded in the idea that humans have an inherent connection to nature, a bond that has been central to our survival and well-being throughout history. This design philosophy incorporates natural elements—such as light, greenery, water, and organic materials—into the built environment, creating spaces that nurture and inspire. Historically, the concept of biophilia was popularised by biologist E.O. Wilson in the 1980s, but its principles have been used in architecture for centuries, from ancient gardens to modern-day green buildings. The core idea is to create environments that reflect and integrate with the natural world, promoting physical and mental well-being.



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# Biophilic Design Elements in Hospitality

Several key elements define biophilic design, each contributing to the overall experience of connecting guests with nature.



## Natural Light and Views

One of the most impactful elements of biophilic design is the use of natural light. Large windows, skylights, and glass walls not only illuminate spaces but also provide guests with unobstructed views of the surrounding environment, whether it's a lush garden, a tranquil ocean, or a bustling cityscape. This connection to the outdoors fosters a sense of openness and relaxation.





## Indoor Greenery

Incorporating plants and living walls into hotel interiors is another hallmark of biophilic design. Beyond their visual appeal, indoor plants improve air quality and create a soothing atmosphere. Whether it's a single potted plant or an entire green wall, these natural elements soften the lines of architecture and bring a touch of nature into the guest experience.



## Natural Materials and Textures

The use of natural materials like wood, stone, and textiles derived from nature helps to create a tactile experience that resonates with guests. These materials evoke a sense of warmth and comfort, making spaces feel more inviting. The textures and patterns found in natural materials also add depth and interest to the design.





## Water Features

The sound and sight of water have a calming effect, making water features a popular element in biophilic design. Whether it's a fountain in a lobby, a pond in a courtyard, or a waterfall in a spa, water elements introduce a dynamic sensory experience that enhances the overall ambience of the space.



## Biomorphic Forms and Patterns

Inspired by natural shapes and patterns, biomorphic design incorporates organic forms into architecture and interior design. This could include anything from curved furniture to fractal patterns in floor tiles, all designed to evoke a connection to the natural world and stimulate a sense of familiarity and comfort.



# Case Studies: Successful Implementation in Hospitality

Biophilic design is making its mark across various segments of the hospitality industry, from urban hotels to remote resorts.

## Taj Madikeri Resort & Spa (Coorg, Karnataka)



Nestled in the midst of a rainforest, this resort offers an immersive experience in nature. The architecture is designed to complement the surrounding environment, with minimal disturbance to the natural landscape. The resort is elevated and uses local materials like stone and timber. Floor-to-ceiling windows, open spaces, and natural materials bring the surrounding nature indoors. The resort offers panoramic views of the mist-covered hills and lush forests.



# The Oberoi Vanyavilas Wildlife Resort (Ranthambhore, Rajasthan)



Located near the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, this luxury resort incorporates biophilic elements in its design, with vast gardens, water features, and proximity to nature. The architecture blends with the natural surroundings to offer an immersive wildlife experience. Extensive use of water bodies, garden spaces, and outdoor terraces ensures guests feel deeply connected to the environment around them.



# Oasia Hotel Downtown (Singapore)



Known for its striking vertical garden, this hotel is a biophilic design masterpiece. The building's facade is covered in 21 species of climbing plants that grow throughout its height, creating a living, breathing skin in the middle of Singapore's urban core. Extensive greenery, sky terraces, and open-air spaces invite natural light and ventilation, while the vertical garden reduces the urban heat effect and improves air quality.



# VIVOOD Landscape Hotel (Alicante, Spain)



Though located in a remote area, this hotel demonstrates how biophilic design can be applied to a luxury hospitality experience. The hotel is designed to blend with its natural surroundings, utilizing natural materials and offering unobstructed views of the landscape. Open architecture that maximizes exposure to the surrounding environment, floor-to-ceiling glass windows, and outdoor terraces all help create a seamless connection with nature.





# Benefits of Biophilic Design for the Hospitality Industry

The advantages of biophilic design extend beyond guest satisfaction, offering significant benefits for the hospitality industry as a whole.

## Enhanced Guest Experience:

By fostering a connection to nature, biophilic design enhances the guest experience, leading to higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty. Guests are more likely to return to a hotel where they feel relaxed and rejuvenated, and they are more likely to recommend it to others.

## Sustainability and Environmental Responsibility:

Biophilic design often goes hand-in-hand with sustainable practices. By using natural materials, promoting energy efficiency, and incorporating green spaces, hotels can reduce their environmental footprint. This commitment to sustainability is increasingly important to travellers, particularly those who are eco-conscious.

## Competitive Advantage:

In a crowded market, biophilic design can serve as a unique selling point (USP) that differentiates a property from its competitors. Hotels that offer a deeper connection to nature can attract a growing demographic of wellness-focused and environmentally conscious travellers, providing a competitive edge.





# Challenges and Considerations

While the benefits of biophilic design are clear, there are challenges that hoteliers must consider.

## Cost and Budgeting:

Implementing biophilic design elements can require a significant upfront investment. However, this cost can often be offset by long-term savings through energy efficiency, increased guest satisfaction, and reduced marketing expenses due to positive word-of-mouth.

## Maintenance and Upkeep:

Natural elements require care and maintenance. For example, indoor plants need regular attention, and water features must be properly managed to prevent issues such as algae growth. Hoteliers must factor in these ongoing maintenance costs and logistical challenges when planning their biophilic design.

## Climate and Location Constraints:

Biophilic design must be adapted to fit the local climate and geography. What works in a tropical resort may not be feasible in an urban hotel in a cold climate. Therefore, it's important to consider local conditions when designing and implementing biophilic elements.





# Future Trends in Biophilic Design

Looking ahead, several trends are likely to shape the future of biophilic design in hospitality.

## Integration with Smart Technology:

Advances in smart technology are enabling more sophisticated biophilic design elements. For example, lighting systems that mimic natural light cycles can enhance the connection to nature, while smart irrigation systems can support extensive green walls and gardens with minimal water usage.

## Evolving Guest Expectations:

As more travellers seek out nature-inspired environments, hotels will need to continually evolve their biophilic design strategies to meet these demands. This might include more personalised biophilic experiences or the integration of wellness-focused amenities.

## Expanding Beyond Luxury Markets:

While biophilic design has traditionally been associated with luxury hotels and resorts, there is growing potential for its adoption in mid-range and budget hospitality sectors. As the benefits of biophilic design become more widely recognised, we'll likely see its principles applied to a broader range of properties.

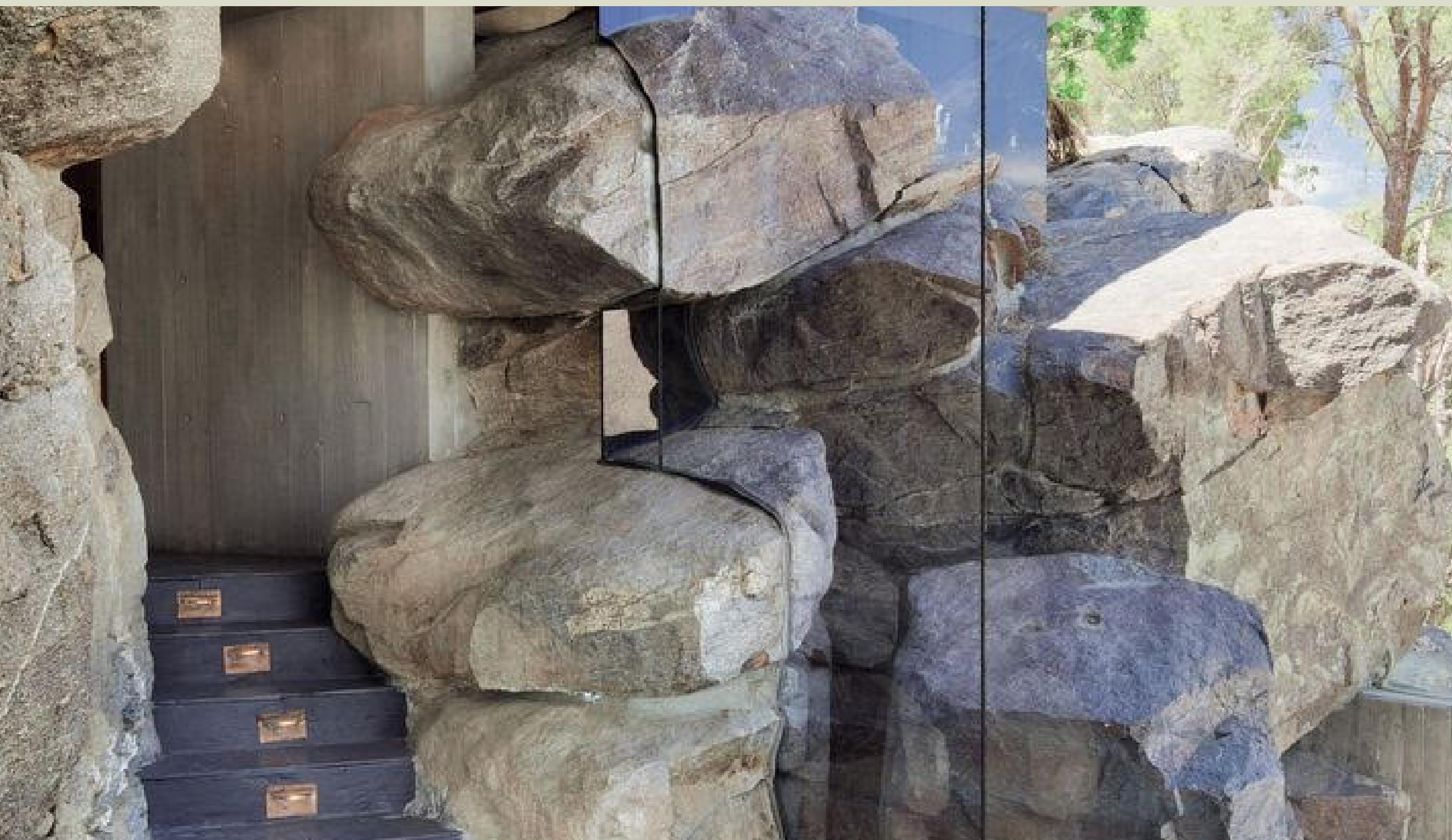


# Conclusion

Biophilic design is more than just a trend; it's a transformative approach to hospitality that enhances the guest experience by reconnecting people with nature. By incorporating elements such as natural light, greenery, water, and organic materials, hotels can create environments that promote relaxation, well-being, and environmental responsibility. As the hospitality industry continues to evolve, biophilic design offers a path forward that aligns with the growing demand for sustainable, nature-inspired experiences. For hoteliers, investing in biophilic design is not just about staying ahead of the curve—it's about creating spaces that resonate with guests on a deeper, more meaningful level, ultimately leading to greater success and satisfaction.

Sources- Karwaan, Conf Series- Earth and Environmental Sciences, Taj, Oberoi, Oasia Hotel Downtown, VIVOOD Landscape Hotel

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