



## MAYAH BRANDON

**Passion: Sustainable cuisine**

Some may think Mayah Brandon's measures are towards the extreme end of the sustainability spectrum but she's proved it's possible to create unique luxury experiences without sacrificing comfort.

At Laguna Lodge, Brandon and her husband Jeffro do not offer guests fish or meat. In an effort to reduce carbon emissions, their menu is 100 per cent vegetarian and they are looking at becoming vegan (they already have vegan wines on the menu).

Laguna Lodge Eco-Resort & Nature Reserve is nestled on the shore of Lake Atitlan in the Mayan Highlands, Guatemala. It takes local

traditions very seriously and Kevin Tuerff, chief executive of Green Canary Sustainability Consulting, says it "may be one of the most authentic green hotels in the world". Even the power, website server, Wi-Fi and clocks are carbon-neutral, powered by either solar or water.

Zatz is Laguna's distinctively designed restaurant, complete with a riverstone and jasper fireplace and antique candelabra. All ingredients are organic and picked fresh from the hotel's gardens or from local farmers. Other fruits or vegetables come from home-grown suppliers on the Pacific coast a short distance away. [thelagunalodge.com](http://thelagunalodge.com)



FROM LEFT: Zatz restaurant; Laguna Lodge on Lake Atitlan; Karen Lewis sold everything to start Lapa Rios Eco Lodge; eco-architect Hitesh Mehta; he has worked in more than 55 countries.

## KAREN LEWIS

**Passion: Wildlife and habitat conservation**

In 1993, Karen Lewis and her husband John sold all their assets to build a small property in Costa Rica that became a blueprint for sustainable luxury lodges. Lapa Rios Eco Lodge, on a 375-hectare nature reserve, was among the first to offer active guests the opportunity to become truly sustainable tourists. "Education was our hook for eco-tourism as locals were going to be with the guests, interpreting the rainforest with them and serving them, so we had to learn how to bridge those two worlds," Lewis says.

The lodge committed early to the community by only hiring locals, building and maintaining a primary school and honouring architectural design of the area using sustainable construction and renewable materials. Locals have also learnt how to make bio-gas and compost with organic waste.

This award-winning model of eco-tourism maintains Costa Rica's highest sustainable tourism certification, complete with full-service luxury dining. [laparios.com](http://laparios.com)

## HITESH MEHTA

**Passion: Planning and design**

Hitesh Mehta is an eco-architect responsible for projects, including Lapa Rios and Nihiwatu, in more than 55 countries. The ethos of his firm HM Design, which he founded in Nairobi in 1990, is "more eco – less ego". Now based in Florida, he takes a spiritual approach to work, breaking down the fundamentals in his eco-planning and design to respect physical, metaphysical and cultural layers.

Mehta believes his greatest achievement is the "beautiful integration of 'eco' and 'luxury', creating a truly holistic experience". He notes a significant problem



during the 1980s and '90s was the term "eco-lodge" being synonymous with downscale accommodation and horrible shared facilities.

Some of his work has created what we now enjoy as eco-luxury and considers aspects from alternative technologies such as non-HFC air conditioning, rainwater harvesting, grey-water toilets (even no-water toilets) and environmentally friendly sewage systems.

It is refreshing to hear his point of view on the future of eco-luxury because, after many years, the efforts of influential individuals, including Al Gore and Leonardo DiCaprio, have created a "tipping-point among the main financial decision-makers, where the people who acknowledge the importance of sustainability, and are doing something about it, are outnumbering those who don't", he tells *Luxury*. [h-m-design.com](http://h-m-design.com) ✕




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