

INDEPENDENT HOTEL SHOW

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Independent Hotel Show Miami 2026 Report: What Independents Should Be Watching

Hamish Kilburn, the Hotel Travel Editor, brings his experience speaking on the global hotel design circuit to write this year's pre-show trends report, sizing up what's shaping Independent Hotel Show Miami 2026, on stage and on the floor, ahead of its return to Miami Beach...

Miami has always sold itself on substance. Gearing up for its fourth edition, Independent Hotel Show Miami, fuelled by the city's thriving art and design scene, is a useful barometer for where independent hospitality is putting its energy and its budget.



Here is a read on the themes shaping the seminar program, and on what the 200+ suppliers on the show floor are telling us about where product innovation is heading next.

5 trends from the stage

The speaker line-up this year resists the easy sustainability-and-technology binary that has defined hotel conferences for the best part of a decade. Instead, it has been designed as a compelling way to answer a harder question: what, specifically, does an independent hotel need to get right to flex against its branded competitor?

1 Emotionally intelligent hotel design

Guests rarely explain why a hotel feels right – they just know when it does. This theme will thread itself through the show and set out to unpick that instinct – the point where thoughtful design and a sharp brand identity stop being separate briefs and become intertwined as one feeling. The show will explore atmosphere, materiality and the small emotional cues that turn a check-in into the first line of a memory.

2 F&B on the map

Large hotel groups have long used food and beverage as connective tissue between properties – a familiar concept repeated across a portfolio, consistency as the sell. The show will argue independents hold the opposite advantage: locality itself, served with an authority no corporate concept can meet. The properties getting talked about on the independent hotel scene are the ones guests would visit even if they weren't staying there.

3 AI reshaping hotel discovery

The discovery conversation has moved on from OTA rankings to something closer to conversational search – guests asking an AI assistant where to stay rather than scrolling to find out is, indeed, a trend we cannot ignore. For independents, that is a levelling of sorts: a well-told story can now compete with a marketing budget it could never outspend. Whether that promise survives contact with the algorithms remains an open question that this session is built to interrogate.

4 Cultural infrastructure of independent hospitality

The framing is ambitious, but the underlying shift is real: hotels are being asked to function as civic and cultural spaces – think galleries, meeting points, local archives – rather than simply as places to rest. Independents are arguably better placed to do this than brands built on consistency, since cultural infrastructure, by definition, has to be specific to somewhere.

5 Sustainability in independent hospitality

Sustainability sessions have historically struggled to move past intention. This year, the show is framing the topic around the business case, which is the right instinct – independents don't have ESG mandates handed down from a parent company, so the argument has to work on margin, not morality, if it's going to change anything on the property.

6 trends from the show floor

The exhibitor list tells a quieter but no less pointed story. Across categories, the same pattern recurs: suppliers are competing less on price and more on how precisely a product can be tailored to a single property's identity and need.

1 Uniform as brand

Cargo Crew's presence reflects a broader repositioning of hotel uniform away from generic corporate wear and toward something closer to a wearable brand asset – cut, colour and fabric chosen to immediately say something about a property's personality.

2 The bathroom experience, elevated

Nowhere do details matter more, arguably, than in the bathroom – it's the one room on the floor plan guests inspect at close range. A soft-bristled toothbrush or a paste sachet that won't reseal tells a guest something about a hotel's standards before breakfast does. Curaprox, via Curaden,

treats that detail with the seriousness it deserves: Swiss-engineered dental care built to be a marginal gain in the bathroom. Groupe GM and Public Goods apply the same discipline further along the counter – refillable systems, considered formulation, packaging guests are increasingly willing to judge a stay by. None of it is extravagant, and yet all of it is noticed.

3 Scent as signature

Scent is the branding tool hotels have been slowest to take seriously – odd, given how thoroughly the perfume industry has already proven the argument. A signature note lodges in memory in an unparalleled way. This year's sensory design conversation puts scent at the centre of that logic, and Evermere's ambient systems are a clean example of the shift in practice – fragrance treated as infrastructure, tuned to a space and its personality.

4 Walls that work harder

The demand for open-plan lobbies and softer, more residential public spaces have created an acoustic problem – noise, and how badly it can undo an otherwise well-designed public area from making revenue. Belli Arti's decorative surfaces and Momentum's acoustic wallcoverings are both responses to that pressure, treating the wall as a working surface – art outside the frame – rather than a backdrop. Acoustic performance, once buried in back-of-house specification, is now a visible design decision – and, done properly, an invisible one where guests instinctively feel calmer.

5 Merchandise as revenue

Hotel retail spent years locked in the confines of the hotel corridor – a rack of branded tote bags nobody asked for, marked up and mostly ignored. That era, thankfully, is ending. Independents are starting to treat merchandise as a legitimate revenue line, which changes the brief entirely. Oblisque's presence on the floor speaks to that professionalisation directly – retail built to be judged on its own terms, not purely on the strength of the logo.

6 Indoor-outdoor ambiance

The line between indoor and outdoor is the one lifestyle and independent hotels are pushing hard. Terraces, courtyards and pool decks are being specified with the same rigour as a lobby – lighting layered and furniture built to hold its own against the interior. Lotus Hospitality Products' ambient lighting and Esti & Esta's outdoor furniture are both working that blur directly, treating the outdoors as a fully specified room rather than a view from one.

The takeaway

Strip away the session titles and stand names, and this year's show is making one argument from several directions: independence is no longer a limitation to be designed around, but an asset itself. The suppliers rewarded with attention on this floor, and the sessions drawing the largest audiences, will be the ones treating specificity – of place, of guest, of identity – as the product. For an independent hotelier, it's a reminder of that their greatest advantage has been there all along.



**Cargo Crew
Booth #526**



**Groupe GM
Booth #326**



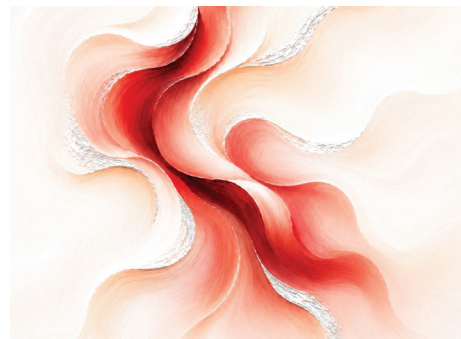
**Public Goods
Booth #332**



**Curaprox
Booth #454**



**Evermere
Booth #437**



**Belli Arti
Booth #250**



**Momentum Textiles and
Wallcovering, Booth #622**



**Oblisque
Booth #456**



**Lotus Hospitality
Booth #213/313**



**Esti & Esta
Booth #413**

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