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EHL CASE STUDY



# Educational Real Estate: How to design a hospitality university that has a positive environmental, social and economic impact?

## The MARAEY Hospitality Management University Project

# Tourism recovery in Brazil, Latin America

In Brazil, the hospitality industry's market size is estimated to be USD 9.14 billion in 2024, with expectations to reach USD 12.35 billion by 2029, demonstrating a CAGR of 6.23% during the forecast period (2024-2029). Various government initiatives aimed at reviving tourism post-pandemic are driving factors for the Brazilian hospitality industry.

At the onset of 2020, the tourism industry in Brazil was poised for growth, with expectations of increased travel and tourism revenue. However, the COVID-19 pandemic brought operations to a standstill in the first quarter, causing significant disruptions across the sector. The pandemic's impact led to closed borders, limited movement, and a sharp decline in demand for hospitality services in Brazil and worldwide.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the hospitality industry in Brazil is witnessing a steady recovery. The number of international tourists to Brazil is on the rise, with business travel emerging as the primary contributor to this trend, followed by leisure travel. In 2019, Brazil welcomed more than 6.6 million international tourists, marking a five-year trend of increasing tourist arrivals. While the industry faced setbacks due to the pandemic, there are signs of recovery as international tourism rebounds globally.

## The hospitality industry, a driver of social and economic growth

The hospitality industry holds a pivotal position within the global economy, exerting a profound influence through its multifaceted contributions. Not only does it serve as a crucial provider of employment, offering diverse opportunities across a spectrum of skill sets and backgrounds, but it also serves as a dynamic catalyst for tourism, igniting wanderlust and facilitating cultural exchange on an international scale.

Furthermore, its impact resonates deeply within local communities, where it fosters socio-economic growth, supports small businesses, and enriches the fabric of neighborhoods through its presence and engagement. In essence, the hospitality industry stands as a cornerstone of economic vitality, weaving together threads of opportunity, cultural exchange, and community resilience on a global stage.

**It is with this in mind that MARAEY approached EHL's Education Consulting branch to collaborate on their innovative project in Maricá, Rio de Janeiro.**



# An all-round development project: MARAEY

MARAEY, situated in Maricá on the Sun Coast of Rio de Janeiro, stands as a pioneering sustainable tourist-residential project developed by IDB Brazil. Embodying principles of environmental conservation, academic research, community engagement, and economic development, MARAEY aims to become a global reference for environmental awareness, innovation, and sustainability across economic, cultural, and social domains.

Nestled just 45 km from Rio de Janeiro, Maricá boasts a unique topography featuring vast mountainous areas, six lakes, and a temperate climate year-round. The region's diverse landscape offers a plethora of recreational activities, from water sports in the lakes to hiking, mountain biking, and cultural excursions. Notably, MARAEY's attractions extend beyond its pristine coastline to encompass historical sites, rural tourism initiatives, and cultural heritage, including the Zacarias fishing community and the Guarani indigenous population.

Maricá is undergoing significant economic development, driven by its strategic location and large-scale infrastructure projects such as port construction and airport expansion.

**MARAEY Rio de Janeiro, recognized internationally as the leading Sustainable Tourism and Residential Project in America, strives to establish an intelligent, sustainable, safe, and efficient destination, prioritizing minimal environmental impact, resource efficiency, and advanced technological solutions to foster holistic environmental, economic, and socio-cultural development.**

Covering 845 hectares, MARAEY intervenes in only approximately 18.78% of the total area, with a mere 6.6% dedicated to building occupancy. The project emphasizes preservation, boasting an 81% preserved area, including a 440-hectare Private Reserve of Natural Heritage and a Research Center dedicated to local fauna and flora conservation. Designed to the highest sustainability standards, MARAEY represents an ambitious, modern, and innovative endeavor toward creating a Smart Destination, integrating cutting-edge technologies to enhance energy efficiency, security, sustainable mobility, and connectivity.





MARAEY features a distinctive hotel proposition comprising four 5-star hotels. It is anticipated to mark the introduction of the exclusive Ritz-Carlton Reserve brand to Brazil and South America. In addition, the planned JW Marriott is expected to be one of the brand's first all-inclusive hotels in the world. The innovative Rock in Rio, Autograph Collection, is slated to be the first thematic hotel bearing the name of the popular festival that attracts thousands of fans.

**Complementing this offering is the introduction of Hospitality Management University in MARAEY aiming to have significant impact on the education sector in Rio de Janeiro and beyond. Indeed, MARAEY will create an enormous demand for qualified tourist and service professionals with the opening of various hotels and one Convention Center.**

Additionally, MARAEY plans to develop a residential complex comprising nearly 8,000 homes alongside essential amenities such as schools, hospitals, shopping centers, and a plethora of sports, cultural, and leisure facilities.

“Establishing the standards and criteria of excellence of EHL in MARAEY will contribute decisively to the Rio de Janeiro state, to Brazil, and the region, reaching an unprecedented level of quality in hospitality services, expanding its importance as a required sustainable tourist destination for the world. We, together with the State Government and EHL, are committed to the beautiful challenge of potentializing, via a professional view of excellency for the sector, one of the most beautiful places on the planet.”

Emilio Izquierdo, CEO of MARAEY

# A real estate and education collaboration

Recognizing the absence of Latin American representation among the top hospitality universities globally, MARAEY aims to address this gap and elevate the standards of hospitality education in the region.

MARAEY envisions a vibrant university campus, encompassing a School of Hospitality. The union of these centers will enable access to all levels of professional development within the hotel sector, as well as a unique range of hotels where to intern.

With a focus on creating the premier hospitality institution in Brazil and the broader region, MARAEY sought a partnership with an internationally renowned hospitality university: EHL (Founded Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne).

This collaboration aims to develop a curriculum and graduate profile tailored to local specificities while integrating best practices from global hospitality education. It will leverage two key aspects:

- the transfer of knowledge in hospitality center development and management
- the international recognition associated with the EHL Group brand

Considering the typical duration of educational projects, especially those incorporating higher education components, EHL Education Consulting proposed a structured approach. The project will unfold across three macro axes, to be sequentially implemented for optimal effectiveness.

## 1. Conception of a leading hospitality university

- Assess the project's potential and garner stakeholder alignment through comprehensive evaluations of feasibility, viability, and sustainability.
- Tailor the academy concept to address geopolitical challenges and meet the specific needs of the local hospitality industry.
- Formulate a robust business model to ensure the long-term sustainability and financial viability of the project.



This phase includes the definition of an Education Philosophy:

- Knowledge-Centered: Design a curriculum that upholds the highest standards, equipping learners with essential knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for success in the hospitality industry.
- Learner-Centered: Prioritize experiential learning, fostering a social learning environment that emphasizes leadership development and cultivates an appreciation for lifelong learning among students.
- Community-Centered: Create an inclusive infrastructure both inside and outside the classroom, facilitating collaborative learning, technological proficiency, and the cultivation of lifelong learning skills within a supportive community environment.
- Locally-Centered: Develop an authentic educational experience deeply rooted in Brazilian culture, ensuring alignment with local customs, values, and industry practices.

## 2. Progressive, Swiss approach to quality hospitality education

- Offer progressive solutions tailored to meet the evolving needs of students, drawing upon best-in-class Swiss education expertise
- Facilitate the transition from traditional teaching methods, to an education model encompassing not only knowledge but also competencies and mindset.
- Training educators to become facilitators and prepare learners with the skills and outlook necessary for success in society.
- Assist in defining and implementing the appropriate student and graduate profiles, ensuring alignment with industry demands and student aspirations.
- Offer comprehensive support in management and marketing to optimize the operational efficiency of educational institutions.



### 3. Continuous Support: A 360° Approach

- Perform regular academic audits to assess the implementation of standards, evaluate progress towards defined targets, and anticipate and address potential issues in a timely manner.
- Support in entering the EHL Network of Certified Schools, a quality assurance framework addressing the needs of hospitality and tourism education institutions to continuously improve their educational provision and internal organization. The Scheme is intended as a journey towards quality improvement, with the objective to support excellence in hospitality education with the seal of EHL.
- Provides access to EHL's diverse pool of students, faculty, and industry specialists in formats tailored to specific projects to support the mission and goals of partner institutions in their respective markets.

## Expected project environmental, social and economic impact

### **Tourism:**

The creation of a new international tourism destination is poised to revolutionize the Brazilian tourism landscape. With the establishment of four luxury resort-type hotel complexes, featuring over 1,500 keys, the project will attract a significant influx of tourists, stimulating economic growth and job creation in the region. The partnership with Marriott International, the world's largest hotel operator, ensures global recognition and quality service delivery, enhancing Brazil's reputation as a premier tourist destination.

### **Education:**

The establishment of a hotel training pole of excellence for Latin America will have far-reaching implications for the hospitality industry. By hosting a university for 700 higher education students, in collaboration with the prestigious EHL Group, the project will elevate the standards of hospitality education in the region. Agreements aimed at promoting quality training in the tourism sector will further enhance the employability and skills development of local communities, fostering sustainable socio-economic development.



### **Local Communities:**

The project's holistic approach to community engagement includes provisions for environmental, cultural, and heritage preservation, as well as the integration of local communities. By safeguarding the interests of the Zacarias fishing community and the Tupi-Gua-Rani indigenous community, the project demonstrates respect for indigenous rights and cultural heritage, fostering social cohesion and inclusivity. Additionally, initiatives aimed at environmental conservation and heritage preservation will ensure the long-term sustainability of the project and its positive impact on local communities.

### **Commercial and Services:**

The integration of essential services within the new destination, including an international school, state-of-the-art hospital, and commercial center, will enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. The presence of luxury housing, offices, and a representative shopping mall will stimulate economic activity and create employment opportunities. Furthermore, the inclusion of sports and cultural facilities, such as an equestrian center, golf course, and museum designed by renowned architect Oscar Niemeyer, will enrich the cultural fabric of the community and promote healthy lifestyles.

### **Residential:**

The development of a low-density residential complex, comprising 8,000 homes of various typologies, underscores the project's commitment to providing diverse housing options in a secure and aesthetically pleasing environment. With a focus on the Smart City philosophy, the residential complex will offer modern amenities and sustainable living solutions, catering to both primary and secondary homebuyers. Additionally, the incorporation of branded residences managed by international brands such as Ritz-Carlton Reserve and JW Marriott will add prestige and exclusivity to the community.

“EHL is proud to contribute to this educational project and join forces with MARAEY in their mission to elevate hospitality education to new heights of excellence and empower future generations of industry leaders.”

Benjamin Robert-Charrue, EHL Consultant





### **Infrastructures:**

The implementation of new road and network infrastructures, constructed according to stringent quality and sustainability standards established by the Sustainable SITES Initiative Certification, signifies the project's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable development. These infrastructural improvements will enhance accessibility, connectivity, and resilience, laying the foundation for long-term growth and prosperity in the region.

## A design project prized

The MARAEY project, spanning from urbanization and infrastructure development to full implementation, is slated for completion by 2035. The MARAEY Hospitality Business School university is in the first phase of the project and expected to welcome its first students by 2027

Already, MARAEY is garnering recognition for its significant economic impact while upholding environmental stewardship and promoting social inclusion. Through ongoing efforts to foster social inclusion, the project aims to ensure that all members of the surrounding community benefit. MARAEY represents an exceptional opportunity for comprehensive sustainable development in the region.

**Moreover, the design project for the MARAEY Hospitality Management University has been honored with the prestigious Property Award for :**

- **Americas Property Awards - Best Public Service Development Americas - 2023-2024**
- **International Property Awards - Best International Public Service Development - 2023-2024**

**further solidifying its status as a beacon of excellence in the field.**

The Abacus Group has comprehensively supported MARAEY since its creation and, in partnership with the studio TOSEN Architecture & Design, is responsible for the technical development of two award-winning projects for innovative and sustainable design.

Learn more about

