



What does 'luxury' mean today?

We surveyed dozens of members of the fashion industry to find out. These days, the word "luxury" has been used to describe everything from Birkin bags to toilets. (Seriously: One element now in the spotlight in luxury bathroom design is the " minimalist toilet bowl." Sorry, maximalist outhouses!)

Luxury for some is a subdued secret language of wealth, the knowledge of the right restaurants, sweater brands, natural deodorants or matcha orders; for others, it's an Oval Office freshly festooned in gold. Whether that gold is 24 karat or plastic from Home Depot may destroy the illusion completely, or may not matter at all.

In other words: luxury is a word as overused as it is undefined. Every person, and every brand, seems to have a different idea of what "luxury" means today. When a brand markets a \$2,000 handbag to you, what are they asking you to buy into? Status? Quality? Hype?

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In the coming weeks, over a dozen designers will present debut collections for some of the biggest fashion houses in the world, including Dior, Chanel, Balenciaga, Gucci, Bottega Veneta, Maison Margiela and more. In the midst of this shake-up, the fortunes of the world's biggest fashion conglomerates, LVMH and Kering, have been dinged as consumers facing tariffs and price hikes feel a growing ambivalence around expensive stuff. Can these designers reignite our interest in their world of beauty and rarity?

And what is that world, after all? We canvassed dozens of members of the fashion industry — designers, editors, stylists, artists and even a very fancy dog — to ask what they believe luxury means today.

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Responses have been lightly edited for length and clarity.

Luxury is life without a phone

"Luxury today is living in real time , off the phone. I recently found some freedom from the bondage of my phone addiction via the Brick app. I've currently been Bricked for 24 hours, 50 minutes and 35 seconds. Pure luxury." — Mel Ottenberg, editor in chief of Interview Magazine

"Luxury is being about to put my phone away for at least 72 hours (or thereabouts). I want to let go of feeling the pressure of time, or having to answer to anyone. Luxury for me would be having the people I love right by my side, ideally in a cozy home surrounded by nature, and lots of yummy food within reach. It is a total palate cleanser from the busy, buzzing, exciting world of traditional 'luxury' that I usually inhabit, which is why I cherish these moments as much as I do." — Chioma Nnadi, British Vogue head of editorial content

Luxury is freedom

"Luxury is the freedom to take your time." — Sara Moonves, editor in chief, W Magazine

"To me, luxury in 2025 has a lot to do with escapism. On a basic level, this might look



like a weekend trip without email, taking an hour out of your day for a procedure like a massage, or spending an afternoon at a store. It escalates from there: longer, more exotic trips and retreats (to move freely and easily through the world is an incredible privilege), and spending more time on yourself and with loved ones. Of course, the more luxurious your life is, the less likely you are to have a nine-to-five job — the pinnacle being a complete detachment from reality. I'm not saying this is something to aspire toward. Luxury has never been righteous; it refuses to engage with the news or even social media. In this way, luxury can be gross and lonely, too. It's the ridiculously rare and expensive thing that no one else has, but it's also the life no one else has — the castle on a private island, or the apocalypse bunker in New Zealand. The kind of luxury, or escapism, that I'm looking for, instead, is the freedom to ditch convention — to sleep until noon or eat dessert before dinner — and reassimilate at my leisure.” — Emilia Petrarca, writer

Luxury is not fashion. It's business.

“For the most part I think fashion and luxury and are two distinct things. They can overlap, of course, but something luxurious is not necessarily in fashion and something fashionable isn't always luxurious. I think luxury now really speaks to quality, material, and craft. It is the pursuit of the best; a perfect white cotton shirt, the perfect beach towel, the perfect leather bag. I also think it can be very personal and extend well beyond clothing and accessories. A frying pan that cooks perfectly every time can be a great luxury to one person. A great speaker system can be an amazing luxury for someone else ... it's not always universal. I think it's almost about something so well-crafted it becomes nearly essential.

Fashion, by contrast, is always moving rapidly and completely fluid. It almost feels like a moving target, or a wave, and chasing it can feel like a sport.” — Brian Molloy, stylist

“In 2025, luxury is a business term — it's a specific category of retail, namely the very high end, which includes the global fashion houses and their peers across other product categories including watches, jewelry, handbags, etc. It explicitly signals a high price point, and implies a level of heritage and craftsmanship. It also implies a specific audience: the so-called luxury consumer, who is interested in these designer brands and the goods they make, and likes to associate high-end brands with their own personal brand and lifestyle. These days, when I hear the term luxury, that's what I think about: an industry.” — Will Welch, GQ and Pitchfork global editorial director

“We both just finished the Michael Grynbaum Condé Nast book. Something that hit home for us reading it is that Condé magazines were seen as 'luxury' products because the company spent money so extravagantly — not just on outsize marketing exercises like the Met Gala and the Vanity Fair Oscar party, but, crucially, on the quality of the magazines themselves. They hired canny editors, put brilliant writers and reporters on lavish contracts, hired great photographers to do enormously costly shoots and then enormously costly reshoots. In Grynbaum's phrasing, S.I. Newhouse ultimately didn't care about profits as much as he cared about status, and actually creating something top-notch, not just the veneer of it, was central to that sense of status for him.

What we see these days at the big “luxury” conglomerates is different. Brands will still spend extravagantly on the marketing part of things — celebrity endorsements, blowout runway shows, splashy hires — but when it comes to the actual products they sell, it's clear they care intensely about margins

This contempt is palpable, and it makes “luxury” seem like smoke and mirrors. LVMH paid LeBron James god knows how much money to pose with Rimowa luggage in its ads. Meanwhile the company moved its North American manufacturing from Germany to Canada to increase supply-chain efficiencies. Now they sell a bunch of laughable cash-in Rimowa branded ‘peripherals,’ like iPhone cases and, at the same time, the



latches on the classic carry-ons don't click shut as cleanly as they did back when they were made in Germany, before LVMH bought the brand and went margin-maxing mode on it." — Erin Wylie and Jonah Weiner, writers, Blackbird Spyplane

Luxury is not stuff — it's a feeling

"The meaning of luxury has shifted from what you have to how you feel." — Raul Lopez, designer, Luar

"Luxury progressively feels more tied to freedom of ideas and less about materiality." — Mike Eckhaus, designer, Eckhaus Latta

"I did not invent this concept but agree with it wholeheartedly now more than ever: Time is the ultimate luxury ." — Zoe Latta, designer, Eckhaus Latta

"We are seeing more consensus and bandwagoning than ever. People seem frantic to weigh in with opinions that will be the most rewarded socially. It's an impulse born of insecurity. Everyone wants to have the correct take and to be a part of the dominant narrative — all to gain likes, subscribers, or whatever remuneration they can by articulating the obvious. In creative fields, ideas that 'have worked' are repeated ad nauseam and beaten into the ground until there is no more blood to wring from the stone. There is a lack of ingenuity across the board — one that renders true vision as something of a priceless fluke ." — Patrik Sandberg, writer and producer

"Luxury is poetic and emotional. It makes you feel something — empowered and excited. Personally, I start with inspirational research and original fabric development." — Frances Howie, designer, Fforme

"For us, luxury is quality and craftsmanship — the feeling of something that's really well made, rather than a status symbol ." — Margaret Austin and Hannah Rieke, owners, Outline

"Luxury is having fascinating, complex and interesting clients who inspire, challenge and support you. It's having a thoughtful, wise and diverse team to work and share your purpose with. It's learning, it's time. It's time away from screens experimenting. And sleep!" — Rachel Comey, designer

"Luxury in 2025 isn't about excess or spectacle. It's about intimacy — the small details you discover only when you live with a piece, the sense of care and intentionality that connects you to the hand that made it. True luxury is rooted in uncompromising quality: the best materials, the best craftsmanship, and the precision that ensures something lasts. Today, it feels less about ownership or status, and more about connection — whether through a garment that reflects your individuality or an experience that resonates with your values. For me, luxury is defined by purpose and meaning: choices that feel curated, bespoke, and deeply personal. At its core, it's anything that makes you feel profoundly special. " — Joseph Altuzarra, designer

"Luxury for luxury's sake seems outdated and unnecessary. It almost seems that the most luxurious touches to one's life can be applied in moments of pure necessity . If luxury denotes distinction, in the form of a unique visual point of view, then we feel that the pursuit of luxury can be important to delineate fashion and clothing." — Laura and Deanna Fanning, designers, Kiko Kostadinov womenswear

"It's for me to know and you." — Eli Russell Linnetz, designer, ERL

"Luxury is a girl's trip with seated meals, empty beaches, rowdy nights, daily outfits and lots of kissing. Luxury isn't something material, it's a feeling of ascendance, an understanding that you are at the top of your life in comparison to no one. It belongs to you and only you." — Fran Tirado, editor in chief, Them

But it can be stuff — if you're really discerning



"For me, luxury is enjoying a summer swim in the North Sea and drying off on an empty shingle beach whilst being warmed by the sun. And in winter, one of our cashmere sweaters ." — Margaret Howell, designer

"The first time I went to Japan, there was a sign in the Park Hyatt that said 'Luxury is Personal.' I think about that a lot, I even stole it for the title of an artwork. Sartorially, I like a rare garm made of fine fabrics that fits and moves well. My goal has always been to be able to look the way I want. I'm a shopper so there's always a piece I'm on the hunt for — longing for pleasure is the only real pleasure. Otherwise I've more or less achieved it. I also love being given clothes because my friends have the best taste on planet Earth. ABUNDANCE . In life, being an afternoon man is my biggest delight." — Martine Syms, artist

"In 2025, luxury will be an old monument But it should be used, reused, smuggled and hidden in plain sight. Luxury is a metallic fragrance layered with delicate vetiver notes activated by human sweat. Imagine a composite perfume that is spatial, to smell like frankincense from midnight mass as you walk through a crowd, and the smell of a patchouli bouquet on your neck and wrists." — Eric N. Mack, artist

"Trying to find anything that's not dusty or overpriced on any designer resell site seems like luxury at this point. I'm happy I got all my shopping in before the tariffs eventually bullied me out of buying anything from the Vestiaire Collective. On the upside my Y2K obsession has now become an extremely luxurious hobby and side hustle, especially now that the things in my storage bin are worth more than they were when I was watching Beyoncé wear them on MTV twenty+ years ago." — Rashida Renée, fashion archivist and collector

"In our industry, the word luxury has been so overused it has been stripped of any deeper meaning; it's used to sell desire. But luxury, as I experience it, is something deeper. It's about intention and presence. It's putting on a coat and discovering it has a pocket in exactly the right place for my keys and a few dog treats , it's looking out a window and realizing it has been positioned to frame the horizon line, it's eating a beautifully grown tomato and noticing it needs nothing besides a little olive oil. Luxury is specificity. It is a relationship between creator and consumer: you can feel the thoughtful choices of the person who made them, and they speak to you. And the hit of pleasure that comes makes you feel both kindred with the maker, and more seen." — Kristen Naiman, chief brand officer, The Real Real

"For me, luxury in 2025 isn't just the fancy dresses or front row seats. It's being cozy in a sweater on a chilly Montreal morning, having cuddle time with my dads, my little brother and sister, and feeling totally loved . Fashion is fun, but real luxury is family time." — Tika the Iggy, dog, as told through an interpreter

For Rick Owens, who writes in all-caps, it's taking a nap

"TAKING A NAP EVERY DAY IS MY MOST EXTRAVAGANT LUXURY. WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE MORE PRECIOUS THAN TIME, PEACE AND PERSONAL SPACE?" — Rick Owens, designer

And for Thom Browne, who writes in lowercase, it's doing as he pleases

"to me, luxury is getting to do exactly what you want to do at the highest level ... no compromise ..." — Thom Browne, designer

And for Law Roach, it's just being able to afford something

"In this economy anything you can afford that makes you happy is luxury." — Law Roach, image architect

For many, luxury is synonymous with quality



"I think about luxury a lot. For me, luxury continues to be about quality over quantity. And it's the privilege of being able to choose quality over quantity. In 2025, quality has layers. It's not just how something looks or feels, it's the story behind it, the designers that made it, and the life it will have with you." — Willa Bennett, editor in chief, Cosmopolitan and Seventeen

"In 2025, luxury means inherent value: quality and design, handmade by people treated with dignity and credited for their work — objects that endure, grow more meaningful over time, and are passed down from generation to generation. It's a system where makers are visible, valued, and fairly rewarded for creating beauty that outlives the moment. Anything else is just a product." — Imran Amed, founder, CEO and editor in chief, Business of Fashion

"In the early 20th century, luxury goods included things such as bespoke Savile Row suits, small Patek Philippe watches, and custom Louis Vuitton trunks. These things were desirable because they packaged a few things into one offering: exclusivity, craftsmanship, cultural capital, and a high degree of personalized service. Over time, luxury brands have unbundled this package to maximize profits, focusing on one or two aspects while discarding the others. Balenciaga's ready-to-wear line may trade on cultural cachet, but not personalization or craft. Hermes ties are well-made, but hardly rare outside of the price. A lot of luxury today has been mass-produced. It's not uncommon to see luxury-tier suits with chests that have been machine-padded and edges that have been machine-sewn. In some ways, this has made luxury more democratic and accessible for the middle class, but it has also flattened some of the distinctions. So the meaning of luxury today depends on which parts of that earlier bundle you value. For some, it's spectacle and cultural cachet; for others, it's about craftsmanship and personalized service." — Derek Guy, writer, @dieworkwear

"Luxury today is refinement: every piece in its place, the perfect something (white T-shirt, moisturizer, water bottle), a totally controlled atmosphere, a remote yet sustained destination, locally foraged and freshly served food. Because everything, from the everyday technology we use to the car services we book, can be upgraded by minute degrees. That term now touches all aspects of life, which leads to a reassessment of what, of those upgrades, actually feels like luxury as compared to empty posturing. I see this as a reason for the continued prestige of minimalist, expensive pieces like those made by The Row or by smaller, more special-feeling brands, styled with low-end basics (a canvas sneaker, a cozy hoodie) that simply perform better than their high end counterparts. Plus, everyone has a brand, now, and maybe you'd rather buy a friend's merch than that of a legacy house, if it's all the same. There is more to spend on, and in selfie videos, we see it all, which partially explains younger generations' growing interests in, say, designer furniture, vintage watches, cosmetic procedures, good cookware. Plus, the constant, multiple streams of shopping suggestions through which we sift don't exactly make us want to purchase less, but the saturation might inspire us to buy smarter, thinking of a bigger picture (one's entire persona, as presented to peers and strangers). It's about way more than the clothes." — Natasha Staggs, writer

"To me, luxury is timeless yet forward-looking. Rooted in quality and trust, it elevates itself through innovation, creating beauty that lasts both conceptually and materially." — Olympia Gayot, creative director and head of design, J. Crew womenswear

"Luxury to me begins with craft, is grounded in responsibility, and shaped by creativity. It is thoughtful, conscious, connected, and accountable to the future. It values the hands that create it as much as the campaigns it celebrates. Storytelling, sustainability, and responsibility are expected in the definition of luxury, reminding us that more is not better." — Maria McManus, designer

"Luxury isn't about cost, craft, or materials; it is simply about how something makes you



feel. I love my Lemaire sweaters and boat shoes from The Row, but confidence, choice, and time are the true luxuries ." — Chris Black, cool guy

Sometimes that's not just physical quality — but intellectual or even spiritual

"Something that feels complete, not high quality but made with intention ; the authentic make for the right kind of thing. Things like that feel like they have a soul, you can have an experience with them." — Nicholas Aburn, creative director, AREA

"I think the most luxurious thing I saw all year was Bunny Mellon's linen closet. So deeply personal, so perfectly her. Luxury is never a formula. It must be highly specific, deeply considered. It needs to somehow cocoon us from the world but still feel connected to it and of its time. The luxury experience, now and always, whatever form it takes, must anticipate all needs and desires — what will they want? What might they want? What will make them happy? Curious? Delighted? Surprised? (Surprise is vital. The right curveballs, thrown at the right time, after all expectations have been met, are important defenses against boredom, which is not luxury.) But perhaps most importantly luxury needs to be smooth, no bumps in the road, because once you have one, the spell is broken, (it is indeed a spell!) and once it's broken, the luxury is gone." — Stellene Volandes, editor, Town & Country magazine

"Fashion over the past 10 years or so has sometimes surprised and sometimes enticed, but rarely has it done both. Surprise has been flattened for virality, and desire has been conflated with discretion and ease. Luxury, materially and spiritually, is contained in that feeling of 'oh, now I need a big change! I need a whole new wardrobe. I've been doing it wrong! I've been doing too much or too little or a little bit of both.' This isn't really something that can emanate from good 'product' alone; great style has to contain it. Maybe, amid a glut of "fashion," "style" is the most luxurious thing of all." — Hari Nef, actor

It can even be quintessential human experiences

"At a time when both money and knowledge have become inflated to the point of meaninglessness, I would say that friendship is the ultimate luxury. On average, people have fewer friends now than at any time in human history. And friendship is the only form of access that can't readily be bought, sold, or researched. When I was 10 years old, my mother took me to dinner at her friend's apartment near Boulevard St. Germain in Paris. On the way there, she said to me, "What you are about to experience is very special. People can come to this city for their entire lives, stay at the fanciest hotels, eat at the best restaurants, and they will never eat dinner at a real Parisian person's apartment." That is the luxury of friendship." — Thom Bettridge, i-D editor in chief

"Ultimately, regardless of who you are, luxury could be anything that brings you true joy. It could be a perfect potato chip or a giant bowl of caviar. It could be jeans that make you feel more confident or a hand-tailored suit. It could be a day with nothing on your calendar and no devices nearby, or a night spent with loved ones and pets. I personally feel that if luxury is something that focuses on a purchase, it should never be thought of as something you use only for special occasions. The idea of being able to wear your favorite piece that makes you feel great on a regular basis for years to come, that's luxury." — Michael Kors, designer

"Due to a mix of postpartum hormones wreaking havoc on my moods and hairline, and the horrible headlines every 30 seconds — luxury in 2025 is a day (hour?) without any dread crawling into my personal space . Luxury is singing Minnie Riperton's 'Lovin You' with my baby and watching her tongue-out grin because she's very into her whistle tones right now." — Cecily Strong, comedian

Others put it more directly: Luxury is beauty



“For me, luxury speaks of a quiet ease that fascinates the eye .” — Nancy Pearlstein, owner, Relish

“Luxury is finding beauty in both the extraordinary and the everyday .” — Tory Burch, designer

“ I think the word ‘luxury’ is often used too broadly — encompassing a handmade suit from Savile Row along with a pair of sunglasses you’d find in duty free shops at the airport. Simply put, to me luxury is found in beautiful things , particularly with a storied or meaningful provenance, that can be used everyday and will age gracefully.” — Evan Kinori, designer

Or information. Or a future.

“Luxury is not having to get your news from papers owned by enablers of fascists.” — Justin Vivian Bond, singer

“Today, the greatest luxury for humanity would be simply having a future . All other luxuries have cost us our souls and our very humanity.” — Michèle Lamy, designer

