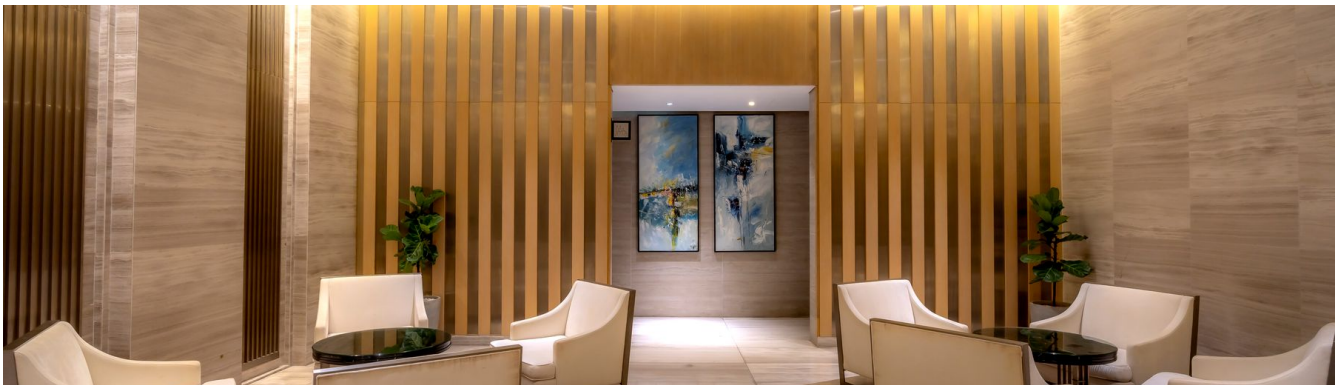
FIELD NOTES 01 / DESIGN & ATMOSPHERE

Layered lighting for luxury interiors

A practical framework for balancing architecture, comfort and decorative light.



Luxury lighting begins with a hierarchy: what should people notice, where will they spend time, and how should the space feel after dark? A successful scheme gives each luminaire a purpose. The aim is a composed environment in which materials, faces and focal points remain comfortable to view.

Start with the experience

Mark the arrival view, seating positions, circulation routes and principal artwork on the plan. Review these views at standing and seated eye level. Identify where a visible lamp, reflected downlight or bright strip could compete with the architecture. Make these observations before setting out a ceiling grid.

Give each layer a separate role

Ambient light establishes the background; task light supports activities; accent light creates focus; decorative fittings contribute character. One fitting can serve more than one role, but a chandelier should not automatically carry the whole lighting requirement. Use a separate task source where reading or detailed work requires it. [1]

Design the detail before the fixture

Coordinate cove dimensions, recess depth, aiming clearance, driver access and surface finishes with the interior team. A beautiful reflected ceiling plan can still produce visible LED dots, harsh scallops or glare if the construction detail is unresolved. Review a full-size sample of the most important junction before procurement.

FIELD NOTES 01 / IN PRACTICE

A starting scene schedule

Layer	Design purpose	Commissioning question
Ambient	A calm visual background	Can occupants orient themselves comfortably?
Task	Useful light at the activity	Is the work surface lit without reflected glare?
Accent	Emphasise one feature	Does the beam fall on the feature rather than the viewer?
Decorative	Create identity and rhythm	Can the fitting dim without dominating the room?

Worked design example: a hotel lounge

Begin with separately controlled wall washing, table lamps, artwork accents and decorative pendants. For an evening scene, adjust the background first, then add task light at occupied tables and accents at selected features. Finally bring in the pendants to a comfortable level. Record the approved scene settings during a night mock-up. These are design decisions, not universal dimming percentages.

Project checklist

- Review sightlines from every principal seat and entrance.

- Test material samples under the proposed lamps, including at low output.

- Provide independent control where lighting layers serve different purposes.

- Confirm access to drivers and replaceable components before closing ceilings.

- Record aiming positions and scene values for maintenance and handover.

A strong concept survives procurement when the lighting intent is documented. Issue the scene schedule, aiming sketches, finish references and accepted sample details alongside the luminaire schedule, so a proposed substitution can be judged against the experience it needs to deliver.

Sources & further reading

[1] CIBSE, Top Tips 2: Lighting in Buildings (2015)

Sources checked 2 November 2026. Original practical guidance by OMEGALUX Studio; examples are illustrative. Confirm project criteria against the governing standards and approved product information.