

# LIVING

MEET THE COMPANY RUNNING A LUXURY ATELIER ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD



By Euronews Living  
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*In partnership with*



In anticipation of their upcoming Biennale, 1.618 are partnering with euronews Living to tell the environmental, social and essentially human stories behind their unique collection of international brands.

From the heights of the Tibetan Plateau to the cosy warmth of Scandinavian hygge, we'll be asking 1.618's big names in sustainable luxury all about their inspiration.

Behind each brand is a story of determination and dedication to social and environmental issues, a story that reveals the changing face of luxury.

Created around the yak herders that provide their raw materials, Norlha is a brand with an exceptional story. As life on the Tibetan Plateau faced the unstoppable forces of modernisation, the company's founders were inspired by the joy of the nomadic herders when they saw what they had created with their wool. We asked them to tell us a bit more about providing opportunity in the community and the natural way they collect the softest baby yak fur.



**What inspired you to start making clothing?**

"We wanted to make a beautiful textile that combined a rare fibre and the work of skilled artisans while providing employment to nomads on the Tibetan Plateau."



### **How does social responsibility factor into your production?**

"To Norlha, being socially responsible means treating your employments fairly by giving them a steady job with fair wages, one that they will value. It also means making a product that has a long life and will not harm the environment."



### **What is the story behind your brand?**

One of our goals was to give the nomads on the Tibetan Plateau an opportunity to change their lives; younger people are looking for occupations other than herding and Norlha's job opportunities allowed many to pursue a career while remaining in their environment. Having a workshop with over 100 people with salaries in a small village also had a snowball effect, allowing others to open small businesses to cater to those with the spending power, giving new opportunities to all.



### **Tell us about the materials you choose to use?**

Norlha predominantly uses yak wool khullu, which is local to the Tibetan Plateau.

This fibre has many properties:

Khullu is a fibre of many virtues, one of which is durability. This comes from the natural quality of the fibre which yields from a careful selection from thousands of animals across the Tibetan Plateau and the natural processing of the fibre. The result is a textile that retains its shape, resists pilling and will last long enough to be passed on to the next generation.

Norlha carefully sources its khullu, seeking out the softest, the baby yak's first moult. Baby yaks, called yeko, are born at the end of winter covered in a soft layer of down they will discard at the beginning of their second summer. This khullu is of



exceptional quality and can come detached in a single piece if collected as it comes loose.



Yak are neither clipped or combed for their fibre and animals are never deprived of their natural protection. Khullu is a moult, and if not gathered on time, it naturally falls, lost to everyone. Khullu begins to loosen in June, leaving a narrow window for collection, which is done by prying the loosening fibre.

Khullu is the warm layer of down-like fibre that grows below the yak's characteristic black hair to protect it from the extreme winters of the Tibetan Plateau. Norlha collects the best fibre, which is processed naturally and never bleached, retaining all its bounce and insulating properties.



### **What does sustainable luxury mean to you?**

To Norlha, sustainable luxury means making a product that has innate qualities and is ethically made by skilled artists in a way that respects the environment. To be successful, a company making sustainable luxury goods should not only please the customers and benefit the company but should fulfil the needs and expectations of the makers.

*You can find more information about Norlha [here](#) and check out the 1.618 guide featuring all of their sustainable luxury brands [here](#).*