



10 questions with ... Lindsey Ueberroth, President & CEO of Preferred Hotels & Resorts

LATTE chats with Lindsey Ueberroth, President & CEO of Preferred Hotels & Resorts (<https://preferredhotels.com/>), during her first visit to Australia in 10 years (<http://latteluxurynews.com/2017/03/17/first-ever-preferred-hotels-resorts-media-event-australia/>) about how her passion accidentally found her profession, and how she stays relevant in the ever-evolving travel industry.

1. Tell us about your career progression. How did you get started in tourism?

I often joke that I was born into it because my mum was a flight attendant, and she was pregnant with me when she was flying. For most of my life, my father in particular was always in travel and hospitality. We weren't hoteliers by trade, but my father ran an airline and an incentive travel company, so I grew up with travel being very much a part of our family life. I didn't have aspirations to be in the hotel and hospitality space. I graduated and I went to work for Accenture Consulting. I loved it; the aspect of change management was very much a personal passion of mine. But it's funny how life has a way of sorting itself out, and your passion finds your profession. My father had started acquiring some small travel incentive related companies and he was in the process of merging all of them, and being in the change management space, he said to me, "Would you be willing to be to work for me for a little while and help with the process?"

That was how I accidentally ended up in the travel industry. I realised that travel is a wonderful place to be in. It's multifaceted. I worked with my father at an incentive travel company, and then with the purchase of Preferred, we continued that journey. It's not a job when it's your passion. I realised it is something I've always loved, and I sit here today feeling like I'm in a dream when I realise the journey that got me here. It's had some twists and turns, but it's been an exciting one.

2. Along the way, have you had people who have inspired you or challenged you?

Every day. It's interesting working for my family; my parents have a pretty amazing story themselves. They themselves have inspired me when I look at their past and how they have built what they have. But I find now that it's the everyday conversations that I have with people that inspire me. It's people within our company that built their lives out of nothing, so I take inspiration in a lot of different ways with a lot of different people. I just love hearing people's life stories. That's what keeps me inspired and motivated.

3. What have been the highlights of your career?

I'm lucky to be able to say that there has been a lot. A fun personal favourite this year was when I was invited to go to speak at Cornell, a very well known hospitality school, for their Dean's lecture series. That was a pretty cool moment, to sit in and talk to a class of 300 up-and-coming future hospitality professionals.

4. What lessons in leadership have you learned over the years?

It's a constant progression. It's a humbling experience because you learn that you constantly have to evolve, constantly have to change. Embracing change is one of those big things that you have to learn. You have to be authentic, walk the walk.

I've learned that it's also really about investing in others. It's not about being in charge. It's getting the best, and giving yourself to get the best of the people around you. It's easy to think that it's just about being in charge and telling people what to do, but I actually like to lead with love. This is the concept of listening, understanding, validating what you're hearing and then encouraging people to keep doing that. When you encourage that process of open communication, you constantly learn as a leader. You're taking the best ideas and inspirations, and it just creates a very positive way to work with people. It creates an open culture, which I think is very important to the success of a workplace.

5. What are your top three tips for work-life balance? How do you stay grounded in the third space between work and home?

This is controversial, but I don't actually believe in work-life balance. I believe in energy management. I believe that there are ebbs and flows, and I think that the goal is to manage your energy throughout the stressful times, but definitely take advantage of when you have down time. I have no problem going from a thousand miles an hour to a dead stop. I believe in investing in yourself: hire your personal trainer if you can; get the masseuse if you can. Your body takes a toll when you're working at that pace and I think it's important to pamper yourself and not feel guilty about it.

6. How have you seen the travel industry change and what do you do to stay ahead of these changes?

I think that's the benefit of having so many hotels around the world. Having 650 hotels globally, you see trends. Preferred has hotel partners around the world that are telling us what's happening, so we have the benefit of the sheer amount of information allowing us to stay ahead of the curve. Hospitality has definitely shifted from an emphasis on physical facilities to more about the holistic experience. It's about personalisation. It's about having the different healthy menu options, having local running routes and not just a gym with a treadmill. It's a continuation of your life, which I think is nice.

7. What's the story behind Preferred's pineapple logo?

The pineapple is a very iconic symbol in the hospitality industry. It dates back to when Christopher Columbus was sailing the Seven Seas. The pineapple was considered a very rare and exotic fruit, so in terms of hospitality, it's like people bringing out their best wines. People in the areas where they were landing would put pineapples at their doors to signify that they were welcome into their home as guests. So it became a symbol of hospitality, a symbol of, "I'm opening up my home to you, and I will be hospitable while you're here," which I think Preferred embodies spectacularly.

8. What would you say that Preferred offers travellers that a chain cannot?

A lot of things. For starters, by nature of being a chain, there's a level of consistency and predictability that on one hand is good, but on the other hand, you could be anywhere in the world and it still looks the same. Preferred gives you a breadth of experiences depending on why you're travelling, who you're travelling with and the purpose of it, but also knowing that every property is truly one of a kind. They're little gems in their destination. I always say that you could stay at one, and it's an experience in its own right. I think that that's what travellers are looking for now. Even if it's a business trip, they're looking for something that gives them a sense of place and connectedness, and I think that's what chains have a hard time delivering.

9. What sort of travel experiences do you seek out?

I'm an adventure junkie. I like off the beaten path. I'm very into experiences that infiltrate your mind and soul. I love India, South Africa, Bhutan. I'd love to go to Antarctica. I love extreme travel, jumping out of planes, that's my favourite sort of travel.

10. What's the best coffee experience you've ever had?


We were in Bangkok about a year ago and the hotel that we were staying at had an elephant dung coffee, which is surprisingly very good. While I'm not a great coffee connoisseur, I do have an appreciation for very unique experiences when it comes to coffee.


Want to know the latest from Preferred Hotels & Resorts? We joined Ueberroth and her team for Australia's first-ever Preferred media event and discovered all the details, including "aggressive" plans for Australia. (<http://latteluxurynews.com/2017/03/17/first-ever-preferred-hotels-resorts-media-event-australia/>)

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