

## The Importance of Rewarding Hotels That Give Back

BY MEI ANNE FOO

JULY 10, 2017 11:12 AM

*Preferred Hotels & Resorts recognises exceptional deeds of member hotels and employees in the areas of philanthropy and community.*




The sad truth is your standard sun-and-fun vacations hardly benefit local communities and economies of host countries. In developing regions, only US\$5 out of every US\$100 spent by tourists stays in the country's economy, according to Preferred Hotels & Resorts. The remaining revenues would likely be siphoned out of the country via foreign tour operators, airlines, hotels and imported goods.

This 'leakage' has led CEO of Preferred Hotels & Resorts Lindsey Ueberroth and her family to launch GIFTTS, which stands for 'Great Initiatives for Today's (Tomorrow's) Society'. The programme recognises exceptional deeds of member hotels and employees in the areas of philanthropy and community.

Ueberroth says: "I am so proud to say that, in the past 10 years since the programme was introduced, we have recognised



Lindsey Ueberroth, CEO of Preferred Hotels & Resorts.

 Like Sign Up to see what your friends like.

hundreds of our hotels around the world doing incredible, selfless work in [such] areas. These hotels that take the time to give back are the real leaders in their communities and in our industry.”

Some examples include Hotel Carlton in Madagascar, which since 2007 has supported Operation Smile, a medical organisation offering free surgical acts for people struck by a facial infirmity; and The Siam Bangkok owned by the Sukosol family, who have long been behind many charity works in Thailand.

In addition, as an organisation, Preferred supports several critical global initiatives, including stopping human trafficking through partnerships with Love146 and The Code; and improving drinking water through working with Wine to Water.

Ueberroth adds: “Our global team of associates and member hotels are passionate about these causes, and when we identify a cause to support, we truly dedicate our time and efforts to helping these important partners succeed.”

Moreover, each associate of Preferred receives two paid days every year that they can use specially to volunteer towards a cause of their choosing. These efforts range from associates of the Hong Kong office taking an afternoon to volunteer at a food rescue organisation, to four members of the European team completing a three-day, 500-mile charity bike ride to raise funds for Love146.

Ueberroth also leads by example. “I am now in Colombia, preparing to leave for an eight-day trip in the Amazon to do boots-on-the-ground work with Wine to Water.”

The company allows its member hotels to utilise joint global sales, marketing, revenue management and loyalty services, reducing individual costs and strengthening efficacy while maintaining the individuality and autonomy of the different properties.

“Our biggest challenge is that the major chains have entered into our space by launching brands that, on paper, appear to deliver the same experience. But this proliferation of soft brands has boosted awareness for Preferred as a company. Yes, it has created more competition, but we have a 50-year head start and consistent track record of excelling above others in our space.”

Asked how Preferred Hotels & Resorts will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year, Ueberroth says: "Internally, we like to refer to '50 as the new 30'. We want to celebrate our heritage but we have never felt younger and more nimble as a company. We will be celebrating our anniversary with fun and innovative ideas through social media, special gatherings such as culinary events, and promotions to our loyal iPrefer customers."

*preferredhotels.com*