

# The Luxury Travel Bible

The World's Ultimate Destination Guide

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## Q&A LINDSEY UEBERROTH,

### PRESIDENT & CEO PREFERRED HOTELS & RESORTS

The energetic and innovative Lindsey Ueberroth is President & CEO of Preferred Hotels & Resorts and a member of its Board of Directors. Since joining the company in 2004, she has helped solidify the position of Preferred as a global hospitality brand, a preferred partner for independent hotels and resorts, and a trusted resource for travellers seeking an authentic, independent luxury hotel experience. Under her direction, the company also launched the points-based iPrefer guest loyalty program; executed the introduction of three distinct brands in the design, boutique, and serviced residences niche categories and marked first-time presence in more than 20 new countries. In March 2015, Lindsey spearheaded the rebranding of Preferred Hotel Group to Preferred Hotels & Resorts, which represented the onset of a new consumer-facing strategy for the company. The new brand architecture redefined the way the hotel experience is rated, not by tiers or stars, but by experiences. She has travelled to more than 100 countries.

#### Why did you decide to enter the family business?

Growing up we didn't have a family business. Both of my parents were always in the travel industry so we travelled extensively as a family, and we often visited hotels like they were museums or other "must see" sites when travelling.

When my family purchased Preferred in 2004, I spent time travelling with my father meeting hotel partners and learning about their challenges, needs, and passion for being independent hotels. It was then that I realized travel was in my blood, and that I had a true passion for the business. There was no arm twisting involved in getting me to join the "family" business by the end of that year.



#### Preferred is a real family run company – your parents, your brother - what are the advantages of that?

I think the major advantages of being a family-run business are core values, trust, and a desire to do right by your associates and partners because your legacy and name are attached to the business. As key executives in the business, our values are already aligned and those permeate the culture. The trust factor is very high so decisions can be made faster, and, I believe as a privately held company, we make decisions differently because they aren't based on a stock price, but rather a long term investment and vision.

#### What is the single best/defining thing about Preferred Hotels & Resorts?

The best thing about Preferred Hotels & Resorts is that we represent true "independence." Our brand represents 650 unique experiences and hotels around the world that ensure every trip (whether for leisure or business) is the antithesis of "cookie cutter," with each property serving as an extension of what people want in their personal lives – the freedom of choice, authenticity, experiences, and a sense of belonging.

**Preferred has a pet program and you have the cutest dog. How often does pup come too when you are travelling? What's in the pet passport?**

My dog Piper truly likes to live #ThePreferredLife. She probably travels with me 10% of the time. There are so many properties with amazing pet friendly programs that make it easy to bring her with me because I know she will be comfortable and well taken care of when I cannot be with her. There have been many times I know she was sad to leave one of the properties within our Preferred portfolio because she was pampered and enjoying a new setting.

Destinations on Piper's travel log include Chicago, Illinois; Sundance, Utah; Tucson, Arizona; Vail, Colorado; Oregon's wine country; and many great resorts in our home state of California.



**Post Ranch Inn, Big Sur, California, United States**

**Preferred represents 650 member hotels in 85 countries. Are you aiming at 1,000 hotels in 100 countries?**

We are being very strategic about our growth and looking to add the right hotels in the right markets. That being said, the world is a very large place, and we think getting to 1,000 hotels in 100 countries is very achievable and would give us the ideal exposure. Ensuring there is a Preferred Hotels & Resorts property in every destination a traveller would like to go is a core strategy of our growth plans, and we are looking to expand our presence in both markets where we currently have hotels but limited reach and those where we have yet to make our mark. Markets where we see a lot of opportunity include Australia, Scandinavia, parts of Africa and South East Asia, and the Middle East

**What is the next big luxury travel trend?**

I see three major trends in luxury travel:

- Emerging Markets. In the past these markets generally didn't see luxury hotel product right away, but this is changing. The luxury traveller wants to travel and explore an emerging destination before it becomes too mainstream or over exposed. The markets I would keep an eye on include: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Cambodia, Bhutan and Myanmar.
- Active/Adventure Travel. Active and adventure travel is on the rise from gorilla trekking in Uganda and helicopter skiing in Switzerland to dog sledding in Canada and kayaking in Antarctica to skydiving in Mauritius... the list goes on. Today's luxury travellers want to push their physical and mental limits during the day and be able to come back to an incredible hotel or resort to enjoy wonderful food, wine, and service during their downtime.
- Eating Like a Local. Culinary and cooking programs are becoming more prevalent than ever and activities like foraging for the ingredients that will go into your dinner that evening create a new way for the luxury traveller to "live like a local" or have that authentic experience that cannot be replicated in other destinations.

**What is your own personal litmus test for whether a hotel is worthy of the 'luxury' tag?**

It's all about the service and experiences. You can tell if a hotel is going to be a luxury experience the minute you walk into the lobby, judging by the sense of arrival and the first person on property to greet you. If the service is intuitive and personal, specifically if the hotel staff knows how to tailor an experience depending if you are there for business or pleasure and makes you feel taken care of, the hotel will win my "luxury" tag.

**Apart from your own, what are your favourite hotels/resorts (and why)?**

I think Aman resorts has created something very special and unique that hasn't been replicated, and this ultra-exclusive and private nature has created a bit of a cult following. Each Aman property blends seamlessly into its environment and is truly a destination in its own right.

**What is your favourite city to visit?**

It's so difficult to pick just one! However, I think Hong Kong is always at the top of the list. Great energy, food, and shopping, and I love being near the water. Taking the Star Ferry across Victoria Harbour over to Kowloon is one of my favourite experiences there.

**What is your best overseas restaurant experience?**

I love the Spice Route in The Imperial Hotel in New Delhi, India. The design of the restaurant takes you into another world, and the culinary experience captures all of your senses. It is designed to take you through a journey along the spice route from Kerala to Malaysia and Indonesia to Thailand and Vietnam - all of my favourite foods!



Zemi Beach House Resort & Spa, Shoal Bay Village, Anguilla



**What is your favourite airline for business or first class? Why?**

Emirates Airline. The seats, food, and entertainment are excellent, but they also hire incredible people. Their stand-up lounges in the back make it fun to connect with other travellers and I find that the flight crew are just as interesting. They have such varied backgrounds and interests and very focused on giving you a one-of-a-kind experience during the flight. I once took a flight on Emirates when the staff took a polaroid picture of me with my travel companion (they did this for any business or first class passenger), which was a fun throwback twist.

**What three things do you never travel without?**

My noise cancelling headphones, my iPad, and Think Thin protein bars.

**What is the one luxury travel experience you will never forget?**

Going on an African safari is truly one of the most incredible luxury travel experiences. I have done several and each one was unique and exceeded every expectation. A game drive with a sundowner cocktail in the Serengeti is hard to beat, and one of the most unforgettable once-in-a-lifetime memories is hot air ballooning during the wildebeest migration when we landed in the middle of it for a home-cooked breakfast.

**What is the most important thing (travel wise) that money CAN buy?**

Access to behind-the-scenes experiences the public doesn't have the ability to see. Examples include a private dinner with a world-class chef, entrance into a museum or venue before it opens with private guides or speakers to give you the inside story, and courtside tickets to the most highly sought after sporting events. When you travel, it's all about the experience and that includes the people, places, and things involved in creating memories.

**What is the most important thing it can't?**

Time. We are all time deprived and money cannot buy you more of it or fix the delayed flight or other travel interruptions that limit the amount of time you have when travelling to enjoy a special experience.