

SUMMER 2014

ASIA: MAJESTIC PRIDE  
WORLD CLASS HOSPITALITY  
WELCOMES MENA

MEDITERRANEAN: AESTHETIC TRIUMPH  
OFFERING A TIMELESS FORM OF  
OPULENCE

US: INSPIRED GLAMOUR  
A SURPRISINGLY UNDERSTATED  
GEM ACROSS THE WATERS

PLUS  
TAILOR MADE  
GOLF

ttg mena  
luxury

for premium travel professionals

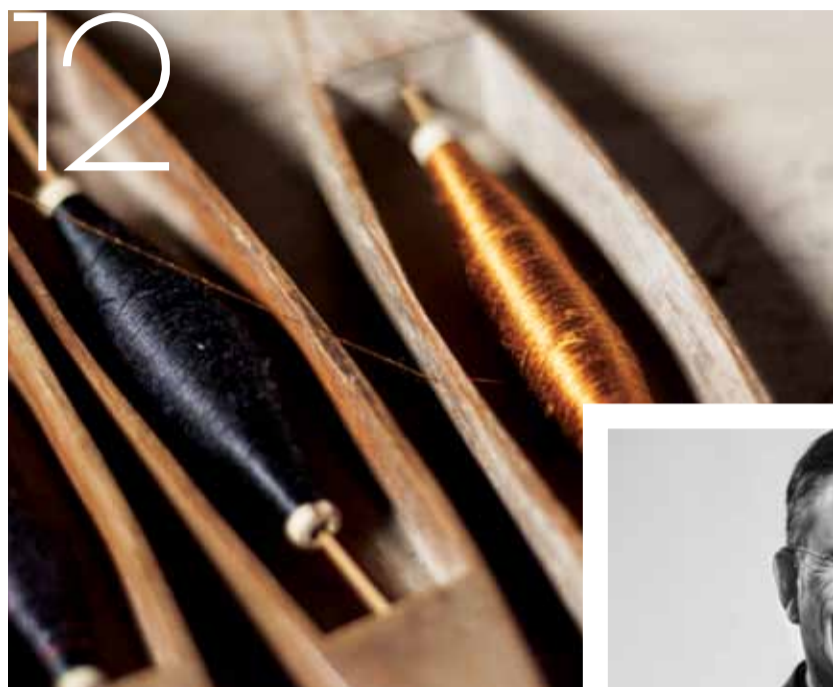
# INSTINCTIVE FINESSE

INSPIRED BY A KALEIDOSCOPE OF COLOUR INFUSED WITH ELEMENTS OF VIBRANCY, THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY ANTICIPATES THE FRESH HUES OF SUMMER WITH HEIGHTENED ENTHUSIASM



# CONTENTS

ttgmena luxury issue 14 summer 2014



- 06 Summer Selection** Amplifying its surroundings, Raffles Istanbul is set for a summer opening, Dubai awaits the launch of a Sofitel and China welcomes Waldorf Astoria Beijing
- 08 News** Fresh enhancements highlighted
- 11 Viewed and Reviewed** The *ttgmena luxury* team uncovers its most noteworthy travels across the region
- 12 Tailor Made** Revealing how design connoisseurs harmonise aesthetics with a brand's vision
- 14 Feature Asia** The ever burgeoning luxury segment of this destination is honing in on MENA
- 18 Profile** Anthony Ross, executive vice president - Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa, Preferred Hotel Group
- 20 Feature Mediterranean** A timeless and graceful beauty unveils its secrets

- 22 Profile** Steven Rice, CEO, RAK Tourism Development Authority
- 24 Feature US** With an unexpected discreet luxury appeal, this destination beckons to the MENA market
- 26 Feature Golf** The Middle East is flourishing into a world class golfing destination
- 28 Feature Corporate Travel** Technology is enlivening the experience of business travellers
- 30 Premium Picks** Presenting the most inspiring experiences to be had in Finland and Lapland
- 32 Gallery** A look through the lens into the most recent and lavish events both in the region and internationally
- 34 Diary** A tour of the US's most prestigious and evolved exhibition, LE Miami and a round up of shows for the travel sector



## Q&A

Stretching the length and breadth of the globe, Preferred Hotel Group's unrivalled and unique service continues to burgeon into key destinations in Asia. Its recently-appointed executive vice president – Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa, **Anthony Ross** speaks to **Stefanie Saghbini** about the growing Asia region

**As the new executive vice president for Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa, how do you plan on moving the hotel group forward in line with its mission and vision?**

We have a great portfolio of hotels in the region which includes the most renowned independent hotels in a number of key, gateway cities. Our first priority is to ensure that we are providing focused attention on the needs of those hotels.

We also see great opportunities to expand our portfolio in China, Australia and the Middle East. China will be a particular focus as we seek to develop our brand recognition among the Chinese travelling public.

**With so many hotel giants proliferating across these regions, how would you define your competitive advantage at present?**

Business and leisure travellers are becoming more receptive to the unique experiences that independent hotels or small hotel groups offer. When it comes to loyalty programmes, Preferred

Preferred Hotel Group is looking into increasing the company's footprints in Vietnam.

Hotel Group's member hotels are now able to compete with the existing programmes that hard brands offer with our new iPrefer loyalty programme.

At the same time, travellers are embracing the idea of interesting, unique, independent hotel experiences; hotel owners are re-evaluating the substantial costs and dilution of control over their assets that they are subject to with hard brands. Soft brands, such as Preferred Hotel Group, provide the brand endorsement, international connectivity, sales and marketing support of hard brands, but at a fraction of the cost.

**Preferred Hotel Group recently debuted in Myanmar, Vietnam, China and Indonesia. What were the reasons for entering these specific destinations?**

There is a growing demand from business and leisure travellers for new options in these destinations, in particular Vietnam and Myanmar. According to the latest studies by the Incentive Research Foundation, North America, Caribbean and Europe remain the top regions for Group Incentive Travel, while emerging markets in Asia, in particular Vietnam, are fast gaining popularity. The study strongly shows growing interests from incentive travel participants for destinations that offer authentic cultural experiences and recent improvements in hotel and travel infrastructure.

While there is still more room for improvement where travel connectivity (domestic and internationally) is concerned to compete with established destinations like Singapore and Thailand, Vietnam is fast becoming a preferred choice for MICE travel and activities in this part of the region. Preferred Hotel Group is looking into increasing the company's footprints in Vietnam as well as the other up-and-coming destinations in Indochina within the next two years.

**Please outline in detail the company's strategy for 2014.**

We are very focused on China and we aim to expand the portfolio from the excellent platform we have developed in Beijing to other first and second tier cities. With 100 million outbound departures, China also represents a major and growing opportunity for Preferred Hotel Group's member hotels globally. In the past year, we have been increasing resources in the market and this will continue throughout 2014 in order to build brand recognition, visits to our China website and bookings for both domestic as well as international travel.

## ABOUT...ANTHONY ROSS

A veteran of the hospitality industry, Ross brings over 25 years of international experience to his new responsibilities with Preferred Hotel Group. Most recently, he served as vice president of operations for Marco Polo Hotels, where he assisted in developing a new luxury hotel brand.

His education in the industry began at Victoria University in Melbourne where he obtained a Bachelor of Business, Catering and Hotel Management.

Ross described what aspects of his profession inspire him: "I love to travel, to experience new cultures and I am a little bit of a hotel junkie. Our hotels are managed by some of the best professionals in the business and very often their creativity and passion are what makes their hotels successful. I find meeting, learning from and supporting our hoteliers inspiring and energising."