

Interview: Lindsey Ueberroth

October 24, 2017

Being the daughter of John Ueberroth, who has spent more than 30 years in the industry, hospitality for Lindsey Ueberroth came as a natural choice. Today, as president and CEO of **Preferred Hotels & Resorts**, she's spearheaded the rebranding of Preferred Hotels, which is owned and operated by her family. The company represents more than 650 properties in 85 countries with 33 new openings this year alone (70-plus hotels have also joined the luxury hotel collection) and includes five distinct collection: the ultra-luxury Legend; the service-oriented LVX; the casual luxury Lifestyle collection; the well-appointed and welcoming Connect in secondary and tertiary markets; and Preferred Residence where guests get residential living but with all of the services and amenities of a hotel.



Ueberroth has big plans for the company, which already has some of the most innovative and distinct hotels to its name. Here, she talks about the future of the industry, finding what makes Millennials tick, and how she was born into the industry.

How did you end up in the hospitality industry?

I joke, but not so jokingly, I was born into it because my mother was a flight attendant for TWA when she was pregnant with me. My father has always been in the travel industry. He's run incentive travel, corporate travel, ran Hawaiian Airlines, and so as a child growing up, it was just ingrained in my blood. Ultimately, I ended up going to work for my father who was acquiring a series of travel-related companies, using my change management skills. People say your passion connects you with your profession. And then almost 15 years ago, my family purchased Preferred.

Where does your passion for hotels and the travel business come from?

It's two core things. One is that it's a global business. It's really mentally and emotionally stimulating to work in a global environment. And the other is the people in the hospitality industry, who I find are very curious by nature. They're very passionate. You put a bunch of hospitality people in a room, and it's an engaging party out of the gate.

We hear the words authentic and local, which are not easy to do well, yet everyone is trying to achieve that. Are you doing anything that sets you apart in that realm?

We're certainly a unique space because we don't own or manage [our hotel partners]. We celebrate their independence. We give them the seal of approval and the brand standards, and the platform to be a part of a global brand. The people I talk to, they look at where they stay as an extension of who they are and people want to stay at places that inspire them. We've got this great platform of 650 hotels that cater to all sorts of lifestyle choices and we can be that one-stop shop for somebody who's looking for an exceptional independent hotel experience.

What do you think Millennial or those with the Millennial mindset are looking for today?

[They] do incredible research, and they like crafted experiences. Our brand and collections lend themselves very nicely to that group who might want to stay in a design-oriented hotel one day and a unique adventure lodge the next. They're a group we want to continue to communicate with and figure out how we can win their loyalty.

What trends are you seeing?

For sure this concept of total wellness. Hotels can't only have a spa but have an integrated approach through their F&B, through more tailored classes or programming. That is something that is here to stay for a very long time. I think the concept of philanthropic travel is going to grow.

Any new additions to Preferred?

The Pendry San Diego and the Pendry Sagamore Baltimore have both come online. They're beautifully designed and incredible F&B outlets. The NOPSI Hotel in New Orleans, which just opened, was a 90-year-old former headquarters of the New Orleans Public Service. It's probably one of the city's most exciting luxury hotels that's opened.

The adults-only Iberostar Grand Hotel Portals Nous in Mallorca, Spain is just about to open. It's small with 66 rooms, and the hotel staff has been trained by the British Butler's Guide. It's not the usual butler service that's just about unpacking, but they've got sleeping coaches, they've got smartphone and tablet cleaning. They're kind of taking the butler thing to a new level. They've come up with all these themed suites like the Naughty suite, the Stargazer suite, the Heritage suite. They're doing some very clever fun things.

What are the biggest challenges you see day to day?

On an internal side, it's how to hire and retain great talent. To have an epic guest experience, you have to have really good people and finding them and retaining them can be challenging. It's what sets us apart. Our hotel partners refer a lot of talented people to us, and I find that we get the best candidates when we do that.

What's next for Preferred?

We [plan to grow] internationally for sure. We look at Southeast Asia, China obviously, and there's a lot of room for growth. Interestingly, we've seen a lot of growth in the Middle East, but I think now a big area of growth for us is going to be in Africa.

Recent Projects: Preferred Hotels & Resorts

The bar at Only You Atocha
Lázaro Rosa Violán
Madrid



The restaurant at NOPSI Hotel, New Orleans — a Salamander Hotel
Woodward Design + Build



Mountain Shadows Resort's presidential suite
Allen + Philp Architects and Mark Zeff Design
Paradise Valley, Arizona



A lobby seating area at the Pendry San Diego
ACRM Architects + Interiors and Rottet Studio



At Six Stockholm's lounge
Universal Design Studio